



# BMBA Guide to: The 'NO ZONE' Rule

Version - 2 - (01/05/21)

This document has been produced as a BMBA guide to the "No Zone" policy in our Domestic Competitions on a Saturday.

This guide is designed to assist with the implementation of Basketball Australia's "no zone defence" rule in the BMBA Saturday Competitions with an exemption for the U8 competition.

This document provides the following Contents:

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- Watch a Number of Play Phases
- Don't worry about the full court
- Don't penalise bad man to man defence
- It does not have to be aggressive defence
- What is the team trying to do?
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- Overload the Ball Side





## Part 1 – What is the “No Zone” rule?

Basketball Australia has implemented a “no zone” rule at the Australian Under 14 Club Championships. Basketball Australia recommends that this rule be implemented in all U14 (and younger) competitions.

Basketball Australia Definition of Zone Defence - *Any defence played inside the three-point line which does not incorporate normal ‘man to man’ defensive principles shall be considered to be a zone. Violations of the “no zone” rule will generally fall within one of the following categories:*

- One or more players were not in an acceptable man to man defensive position in relation to the player they are guarding and the player with the ball.
- A cutter moved all the way through the key and was not defended using acceptable man to man defensive techniques (for example, “bumping” the cutter, following the cutter or switching).
- Following a trapping or help and recover situation the team made no attempt to re-establish man to man defensive positioning.
- The team zone pressed and did not assume man to man defensive positioning once the ball had been advanced into the quarter court.

If you think a team is playing Zone, then feedback can be provided to the Game Day Referee Supervisor in charge in a polite/positive manner, at an appropriate time.

- Do NOT approach the game Referee in any manner
- Do NOT approach or speak to the Coach playing zone
- If there are ongoing concerns about the defence played by a particular team during the season, this will be communicated by the BMBA to that Club, who will be required to educate the respective coach on acceptable man to man principles.

This rule has been introduced for the development of individual and team skills and has not been introduced to penalize:

- Lazy defence;
- Poor coaching;
- Tired players; or
- Poorly executed man to man defence.

Accordingly, if there is any doubt as to whether or not a team is playing acceptable man to man defensive principles, the benefit of the doubt will be given to the defensive team to rectify the appearance.





## **Part 2 – Why has the policy been introduced?**

The “no zone” rule was introduced to the Australian U14 Club Championships in 1996, after considerable discussion by both Basketball Australia’s Coaches Commission and Junior Commission. Prior to the rule being introduced the views of coaches from around Australia were canvassed, with the majority of those coaches supporting the exclusive use of man defence at U14 and younger age groups.

Coaching resources produced by FIBA (basketball’s international body) also support this view. Prior to the rule being introduced a number of teams at the U14 Championships played zone defence and research indicated that proportionately few players from these teams (even when those teams had been successful) went onto national development programs such as the Australian Junior Camp.

The defensive principles of rotation, “help and recover”, containment, vision of the entire court and positioning relative to both your player and the ball are important fundamentals that underpin most, if not all, defensive philosophies. The basis for the introduction of the “no zone” policy is that zone defences at those age groups can limit the development of individual and team skills.

For example, driving opportunities are limited and players often do not have the muscular strength and coordination to shoot, with good technique, from the perimeter or throw “skip” passes. This reduces the need for defensive skills such as “closing out” and positioning.

Whilst the “no zone” rule focuses on the defence; it was introduced to enhance the development of both offensive and defensive skills. Indeed, as you will see later in this manual – it is up to the offence, through ball and player movement, to “prove” that it is a zone defence. It is important to remember that the “no zone” rule applies only inside the three-point line and zone presses and trapping defences are allowed, if they fall back to man to man principles inside the three-point line.

The BMBA have taken the view that this rule is an important factor in improving the standard of Basketball played in Bacchus Marsh and as such have implemented this No Zone rule as a trial for all Saturday based competitions for this current season, with the exemption of all U8 games, which have been deemed too young at this point.

## **Part 3 – How is the Rule to be administered/implemented?**

This will come under the management and control of the game referee, they will adjudicate whether or not a zone defence is being played, using the tools shown in Part 6.

The BMBA has adopted the philosophy that zone defence should not be played from Under 10 upwards. As a competition rule, the BMBA has excluded the U8 competition with this trial and are conscious that most coaches are unlikely to knowingly, deliberately breach the rule by playing a zone defence.

However, the following will be the course of action, should it be deemed by the game referee that a team is playing a Zone in the first half of any BMBA Game:





**Rule:** *No team will be allowed to play a zone defence within the 1<sup>st</sup> half of any game. After half time should a team wish to play a zone, then that will be allowed.*

**Action:** *Should a team be deemed to be playing a Zone in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of any game, then the Referee of the game will give the Coach involved a verbal warning to correct the situation. Should the Team continue playing a Zone, then a Tech Foul may be called and 2 free frows given to the opposing team. This process will continue until the team playing a Zone ceases same.*

*Note: All other current Tech Foul protocols remain in place and that this rule trial will only apply to all BMBA Saturday junior games played at this point, excluding all U8 competitions.*

We appreciate that some Coaches may be a mother, father, family friend or older brother or sister, with limited Coaching experience, so it would not be surprising if they needed some help. If there are concerns about the defence played by a particular team during the season, then this should be communicated to the BMBA who will endeavour to support all coaches by running No Zone specific courses throughout each season.





## Part 4 – What is a “Zone Defence”?

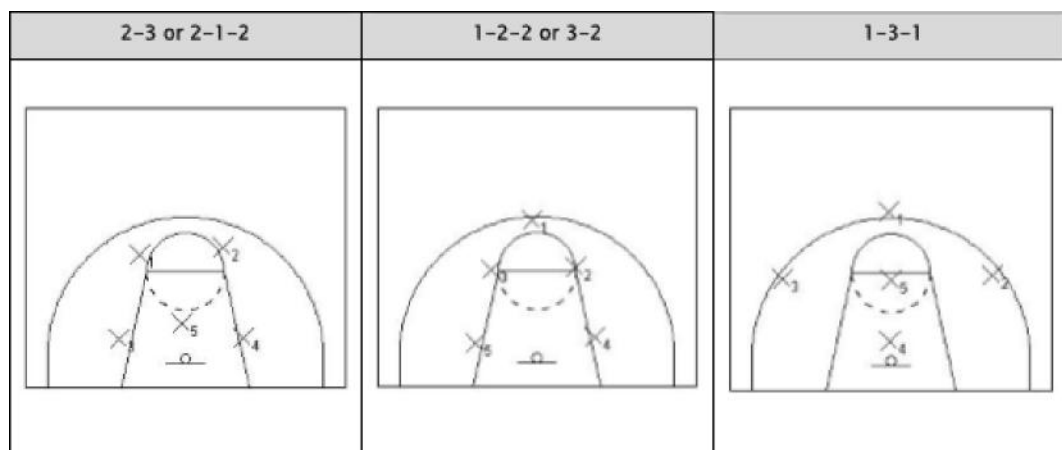
### Guarding an Area

Zone defense is a form of team defense where each player becomes responsible for defending both an area of the court, and any opponent who may be in that area. When five players work together in a zone it can become a very formidable defense.

Zone defenses are primarily designed to protect the area near the basket. This essentially means that the offensive team will be forced to take lower percentage, perimeter shots”.

### Common examples

There are (3) of common zone defense alignments, such as:



These defenses when played within the boundary of the three-point line primarily clog the keyway area. This often forces the offensive team to shoot from the perimeter (and indeed are designed to have this effect), which can be detrimental to the technique development of younger athletes. It also reduces driving opportunities which hampers the development of close-out and rotation skills.

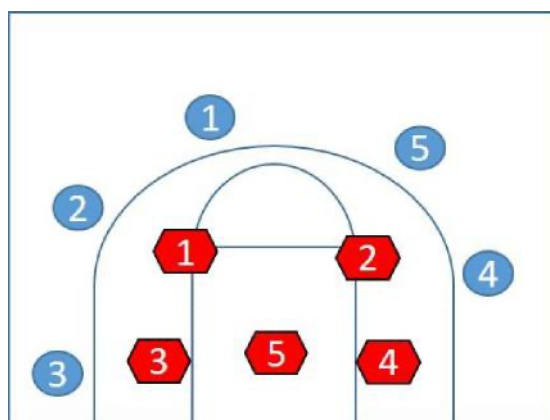
### Guarding Many or Guarding No One

The result of the zone defense is that one player may be responsible for guarding a number of players, or may not have anyone in their area at all.

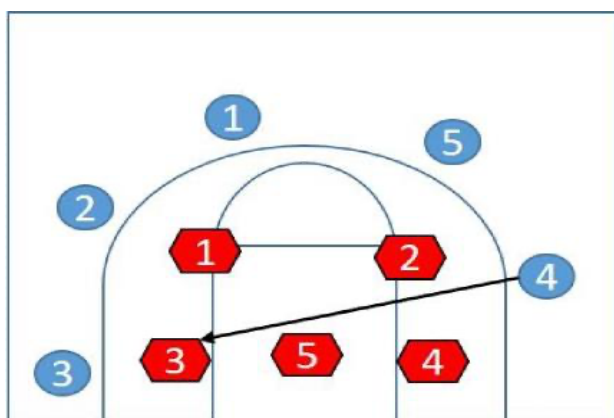
For example, in the diagram below, the following defensive assignments would probably apply, if the defense were in zone:

- Red 1 would guard Blue 1 or Blue 2 if they receive the ball
- Red 3 would guard Blue 3 if they receive the ball
- Red 2 would guard Blue 4 or Blue 5 if they receive the ball
- Red 4 and Red 5 have no particular defensive responsibility





It would be particularly obvious that Red 4 is not guarding a specific player if Blue 4 were to cut.



Commonly Red 4 and Red 5 will “ball watch” rather than maintaining vision of their area (as there are no players in this area). This is poor defensive technique, which is accentuated by playing a zone defense. In man-to-man defense, whilst some players will undoubtedly “ball watch” there is always a clear responsibility for who they should be seeing.





## **Part 6 – Proving it's a zone**

### **Moving a Split Line Defender**

A basic principle of man-to-man defense is that the closer the player you are guarding is to the ball, the closer to them you need to be. Conversely, the further away they are from the ball, the further away you can be.

When players are on the weakside (opposite to the ball) a man-to-man defender will adopt a split line position – in the middle of the court. To prove a defender is playing zone defense requires specific movement from the offence. Here are some ways to do it:

### **Cut to the ball side**

Once you have identified a defender that you think might be playing a zone, have a player cut to the ball side. This will require movement by the defender and they cannot stay on the split line.

### **Move to the perimeter – ball side**

If the offensive player cuts to a post position, it may still be difficult to determine what defense is being played as many teams guard a post player from behind.

By moving to the perimeter, the defender must leave the key – they do not have to be in a denial position, but they must be outside the key.

### **Cutting from low to high**

Having a player cut above the foul line forces the defender to step away from in front of the basket. Although the defender may stay on the split line, if the offensive player cuts as high as the top of the circle, the defender must clearly react to the cut.

### **Have player trail high in transition**

Quite commonly, a team's centre will run back to the basket once their team has lost possession. If the player he is guarding also runs straight down the court into a post position, then the defender can stay in the key! However, if the centre "trails" the break and stays high then once the ball reaches the wing, the defender must move away from the basket.

### **Reverse the Ball**

Simply reversing the ball from one side of the court to the other requires the defense to move. This movement can help to identify who each defender is guarding (or whether they are playing a zone defense).

### **Pass and Cut to the Basket**

If the person passing the ball then makes a strong cut to the basket, it will quickly be obvious if their defender does not follow them.

### **Overload the Ball Side**

By having players cut to the ball side, the defense needs to adjust. If the low weakside defender was to stay where they are, it would not be apparent who they were guarding!

