

Basketball Coach Handout

Types of Zone Defenses

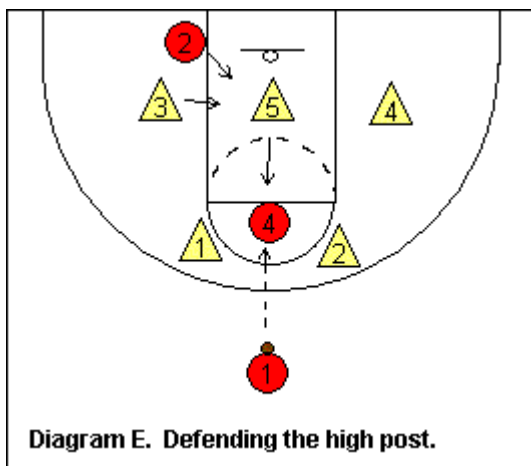
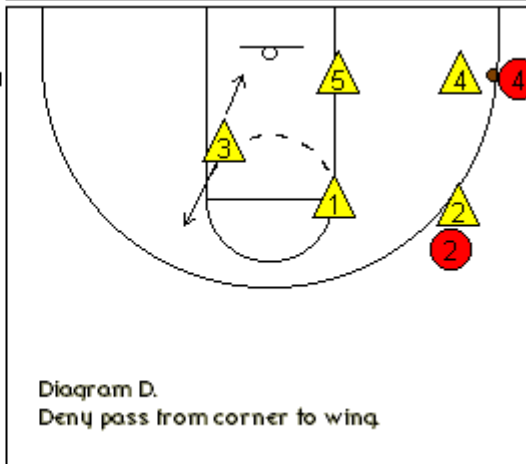
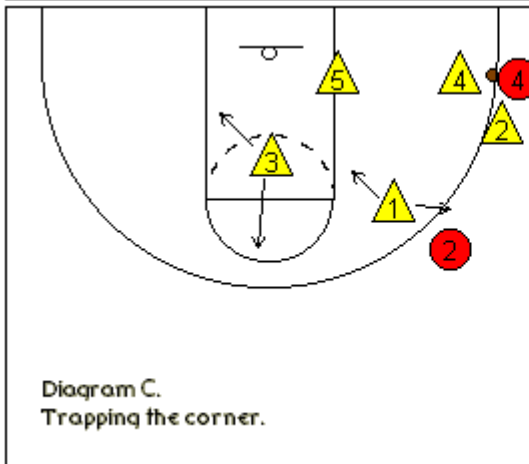
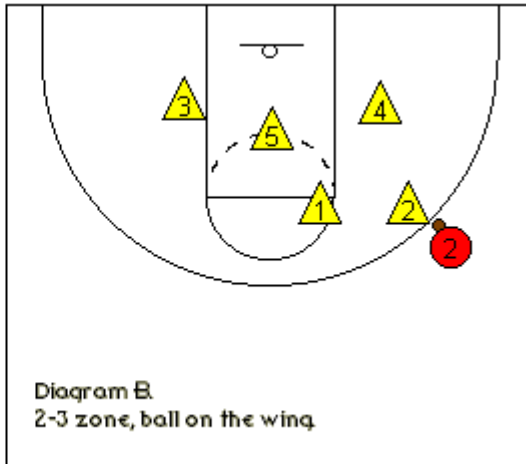
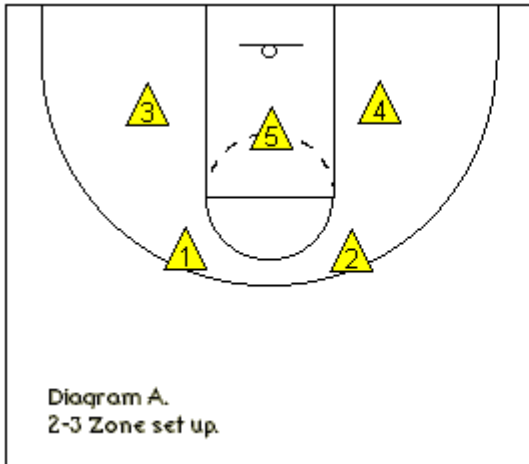
2-3 (or 2-1-2) Half-Court Zone Defense

The 2-3 zone has the advantage of protecting the inside, the "paint", and keeps your "big" inside. Its weakness is that it can be beaten by good outside shooting, with open areas on the wings, point and high post.

A critical point:

When the ball moves into the corner and the #4 defender moves out to cover the ball, it is imperative that the #5 defender slides over immediately into the low block vacated by #4. If #5 does not get there in time, the offense may get an easy pass into the low block, and a lay-up.

Study the diagrams below to understand how the zone shifts, or moves.



Pass into the high post. See Diagram E. Have your #5 defender come up to defend this (like a 2-1-2 zone now).

But watch out for the underneath cutter in the paint. Your #3 and #4 defenders may have to cheat into the paint when #5 moves high.

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1. Defending the point.

Defending the point is always problematic.

If you know that their #2 guard is their best shooter, then have #1 defend the point at first and allow #2 to sag toward their good shooter. And just the opposite applies if #3 is their best shooter.

At first you may decide to defend the point loosely, but if their #1 starts hitting some shots, you've got to get pressure there.

* Never let their point split the #1 and #2 defenders and dribble penetrate the middle.

#1 and #2 may really have to move quickly and work hard, and work together in order to cover the point and both wings.

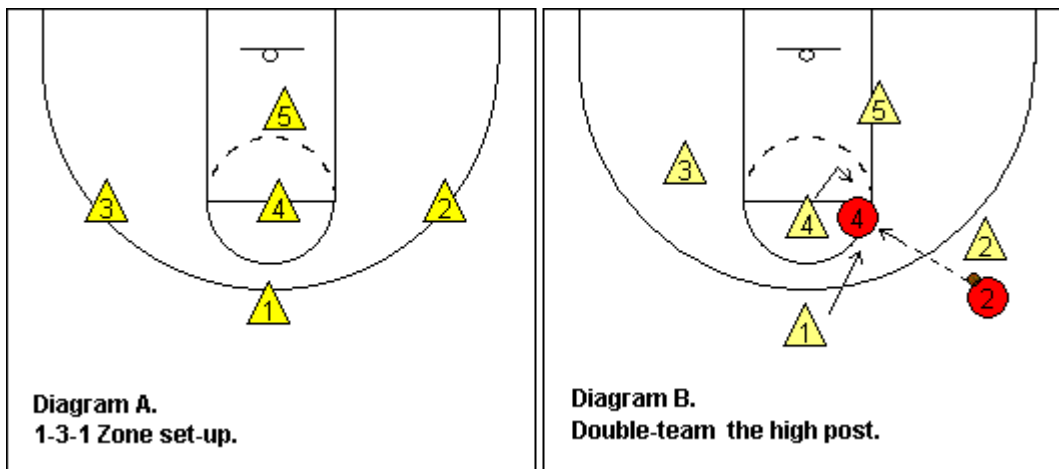
Players often think playing a zone is easier than man defense, but in fact, to play good zone, you may have to work much harder to be effective.

1-3-1 Half-Court Zone Defense

The 1-3-1 zone has the advantage of being able to apply pressure on the outside arc and high post, and allows for some trapping. The major weakness is when the offence attacks from the corners and into the low post. Coaches may differ on who covers what, but you have to decide which is best for your team and make sure your players all understand how you want them to shift and defend.

Study the diagrams below to understand the how the zone shifts, or moves.

Any time the ball goes into the high-post, #1 should drop back and double-team the ball (Diagram B).

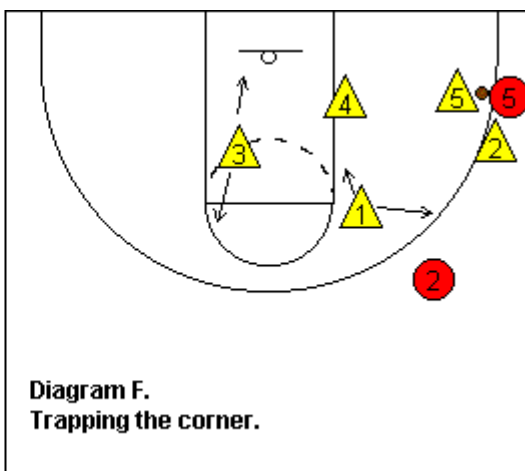
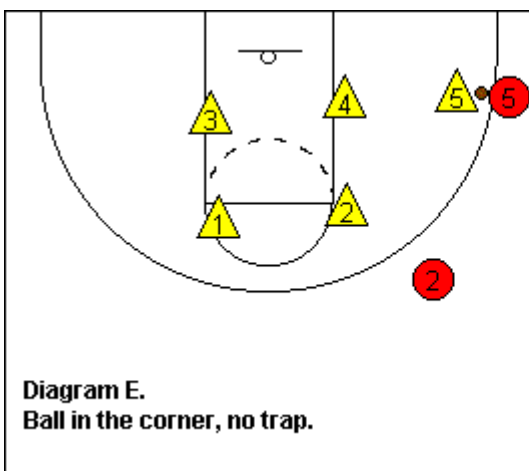
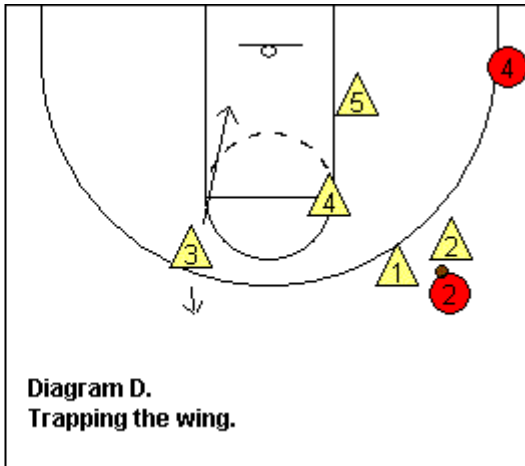
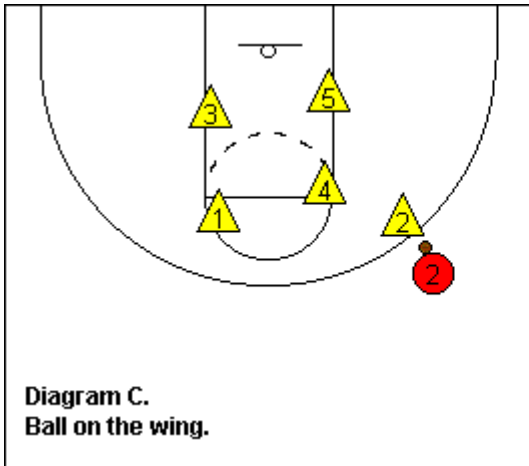


If the ball is on the wing, #5 should be defending the ball-side low post, and #4 covers the ball-side elbow, and the weak-side wing slides down to the opposite low post (see Diagram C)... then when the pass from the wing to low post occurs, you should be in pretty good position to stop them. If you want to gamble a little and trap the wing, have #1 and wing defender make the trap and have the opposite wing stay outside a little to deny the pass back to the opposite guard. The corners are vulnerable here, but hopefully the player with the ball will not see this while under the pressure of the trap (See Diagram D).

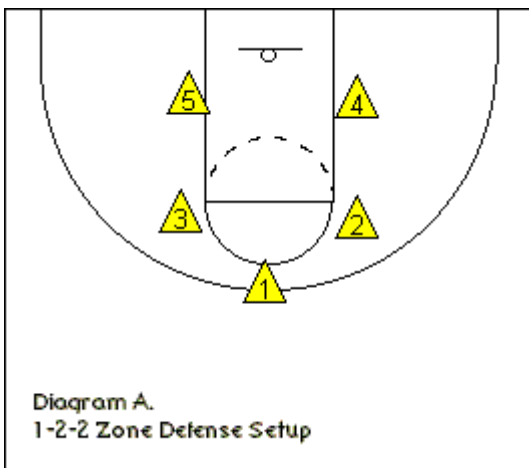
Now, when the ball is in the corner (Diagram E), I have #5 go out and defend the ball-handler, and #4 goes to the ball-side low block, and the ball-side wing sags toward the ball-side elbow. Diagram F shows one way to trap the corner, provided #2 can get there quickly. #4 stays on the ball-side low block and #1 fills the gap between the ball-side elbow and three-point arc. The opposite wing (#3) has the entire weak-side, backside coverage.

All these movements have to be made quickly... a split second too late can make the difference in the opponent scoring. Defenders must "get there" quickly.

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1-2-2 and 3-2 Half-Court Zone Defenses



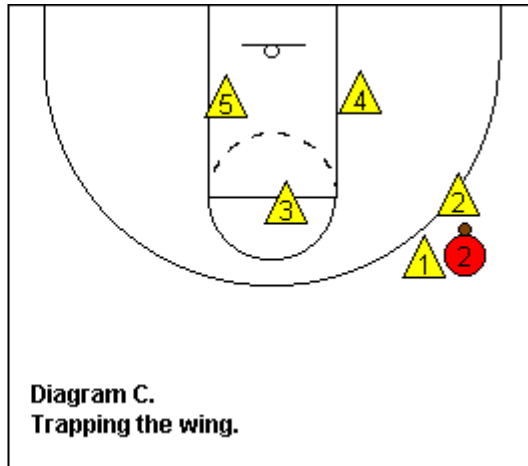
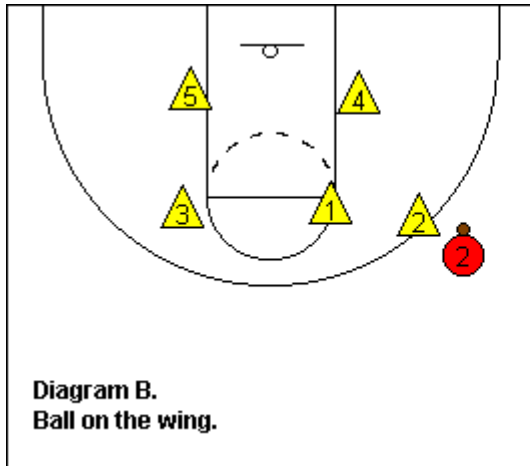
The 1-2-2 zone has the advantage of being able to apply some pressure on the ball on the outside arc, and allow for some trapping. This zone is more effective against a good outside shooting team, whereas the 2-3 (or 2-1-2) helps shut down inside scoring.

The major weaknesses are the high post area, and this defense can also be attacked from the corners. Study the diagrams below to understand how the zone shifts, or moves, and see the animation also.

1. Ball on the wing. See Diagram B.
The wing defender covers this and #1 drops down to the ball-side free-throw line area.
2. Trapping the wing. See Diagram C.
If you want to gamble a little and trap the wing, use #1 and the ball-side wing to make the trap. The opposite wing slides into the high post. Although trapping the wing adds an element of risk to your defense, you might consider this when the ball-handling skills of the offensive perimeter players is suspect, or if you are behind and need to get pressure on the ball.

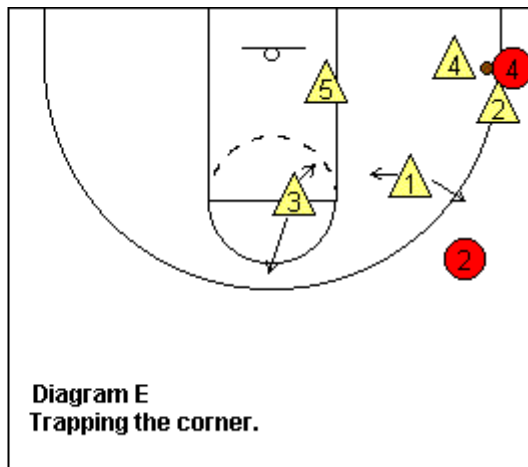
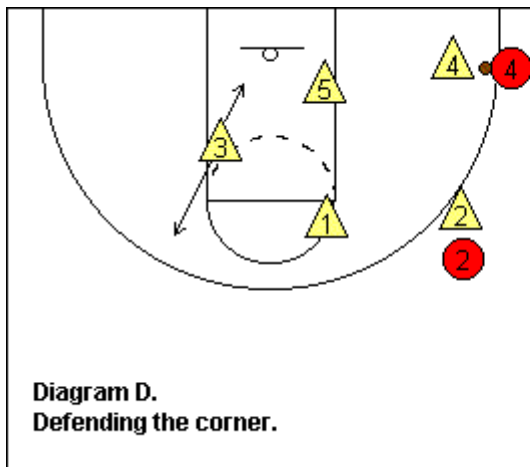
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Many teams will try to attack this zone from the corner. Your defenders must shift quickly to prevent the pass from the corner to the low post.

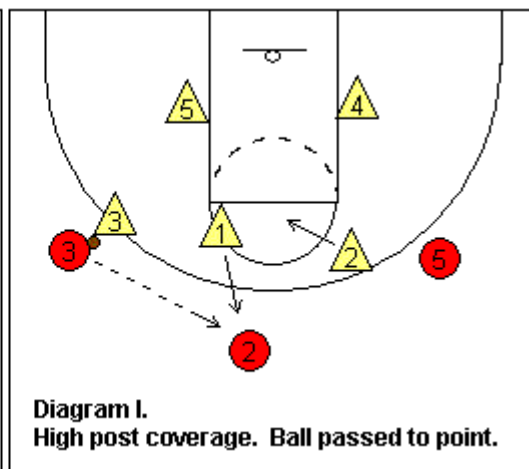
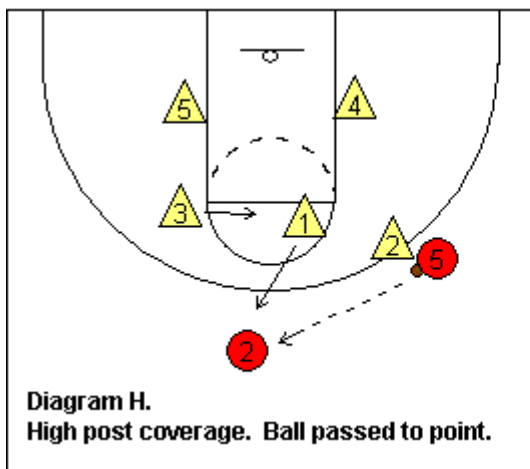
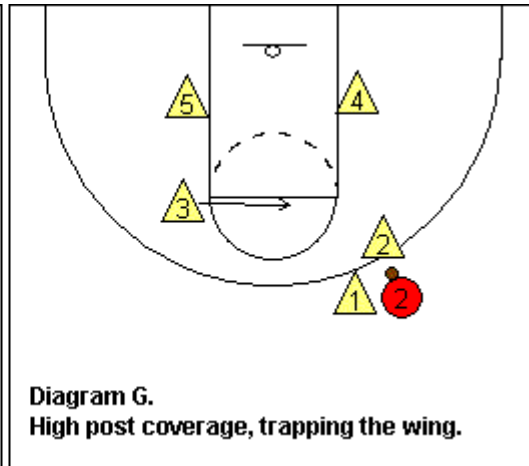
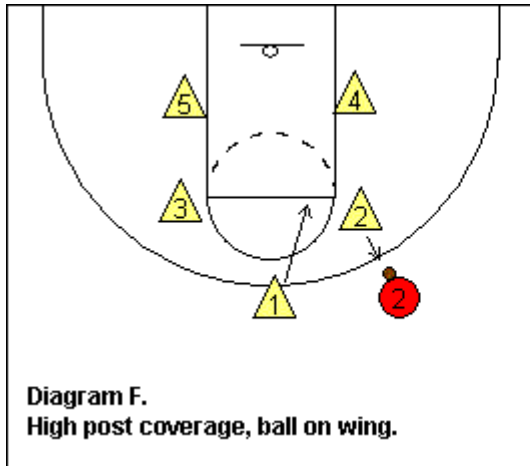
3. Ball in the corner, no trap, deny the corner to wing pass. See Diagram D.
#4 will come out on the ball, and #5 must really move and "get there" to defend the ball-side low post. The weak-side wing (#3) will drop down to the weak-side low block and cover the backside. #2 will deny the pass back out.
4. Trapping the corner. See Diagram E.
You can try trapping the corner if #2 can get down there quickly. Once again, #4 will come out on the ball, and the ball-side wing (#2) will drop down and create the trap. #5 must really move and "get there" to defend the ball-side low post. #1 fills the gap between the ball-side elbow and the three-point arc. The weak-side wing (#3) will move just inside the free-throw line and cover the high post and backside.



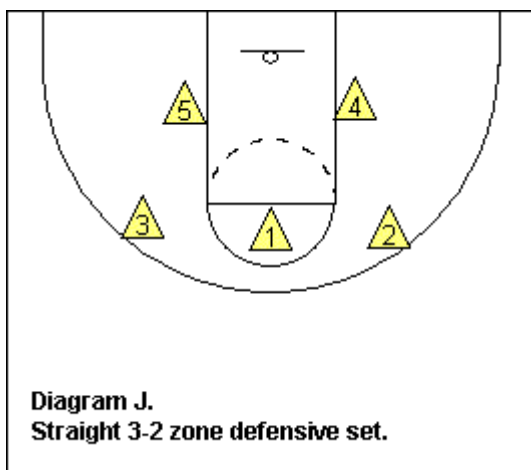
5. Defending the high post.
This can be a real problem with this zone. We'll discuss some strategies for stopping this.
 - a. When the ball is on the wing, and you are not trapping the wing, #1 should slide down and deny the pass to the high post. See Diagram F.
 - b. When the ball is on the wing, and you are trapping the wing, then the opposite wing must defend the high post. See Diagram G.
 - c. When the ball is passed to the point, if the pass to the point came from a wing, then the opposite wing must defend the high post (if there is a high post player there). See Diagrams H and I.
 - d. If you are still having difficulty stopping the high post, and if the opponent's point guard is not a strong outside shooter, then consider going to a straight 3-2 zone.

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3-2 Zone Defense



With the 3-2 zone, you drop the point defender (#1) down to the free throw line. Because of this, you can also position your wing defenders out a little wider.

This will help in your defense against the high post, but allows the point guard some open shots.

With the 3-2 zone, you can still cover the wing the same as in the 1-2-2 zone seen in Diagrams B. You trap the wing with the wing defender and the middle defender, while the opposite wing slides into the high post (Diagram K below).

You can cover the corner by having the ball-side low defender (#4) come out and the weak-side low defender (#5) go to the ball-side low block... exactly the same as with the 1-2-2 zone (Diagrams D and E above).

Optionally, instead of #5 sliding over to cover the ball-side low block, you can cover the ball-side low post with #1 sliding down (see Diagram L). The weak-side wing (#3) will move to the ball-side elbow.

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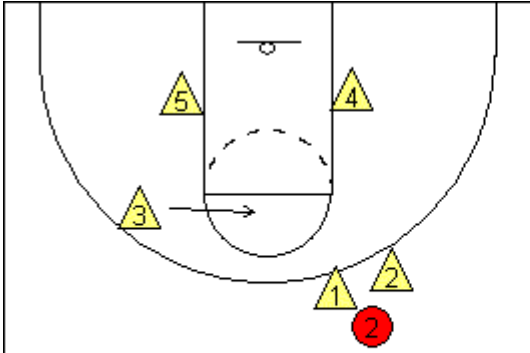


Diagram K.
3-2 zone, trapping the wing.

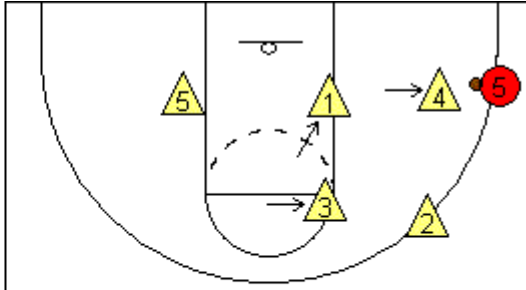


Diagram L.
3-2 zone, optional way to defend the corner.