

WPBA No Zone Policy

Purpose & Scope

The purpose of this No Zone Policy is to support player development by requiring teams to use man-to-man defensive principles. This approach promotes fundamental offensive & defensive skills and provides all players with equal opportunities to learn and contribute to the game. The Policy also provides practical examples to help identify whether a team may be playing Zone Defence.

The aim of this Policy is to help parents, coaches and players understand how the rule is implemented. This Policy applies to all WPBA U10, U12 & U14 Age Group competitions.

Defining a Zone Defence

Any defence played inside the three-point line which does not incorporate normal man-to-man defensive principles shall be considered a Zone Defence.

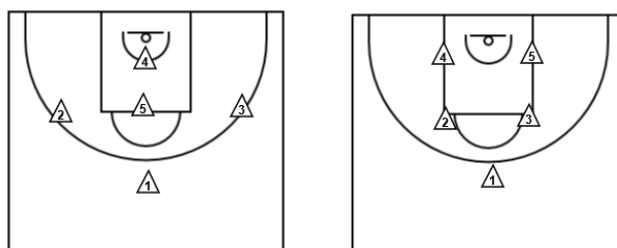
Violations of the WPBA No Zone Policy will generally fall within one of the following categories:

1. 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;
2. 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);
3. Following a trapping or help and recover situation the team made no attempt to re-establish man-to-man defensive positioning;
4. The team Zone pressed and did not assume man-to-man defensive positioning once the ball had been advanced into the quarter court.

Guarding an Area

When played within the boundary of the three-point line, Zone Defences primarily clog the keyway area. This often forces the offensive team to shoot from the perimeter, which can be detrimental to the shooting technique development of younger athletes. It also reduces driving opportunities which hinders the development of close-out and rotational skills.

There are a number of common Zone Defence alignments, such as:

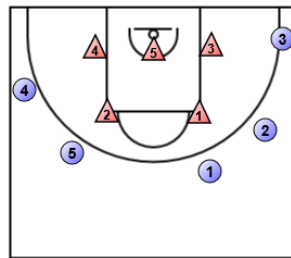


Guarding Many or Guarding No One

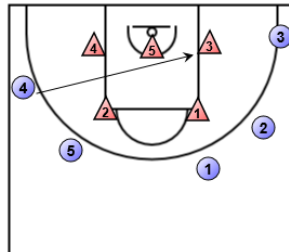
The principle of Zone Defence is that one player may be responsible for guarding a number of players or may not have anyone in their area at all.

For example, in the diagram below, the following defensive assignments would probably apply, if the defence were in a Zone Defence:

- 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 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 Defence. In man-to-man defence, whilst some players will undoubtedly “ball watch”, there is always a clear responsibility for who they should be seeing.

Benefit of the Doubt

The rule has been introduced for the development of individual and team skills. It has not been introduced to penalise:

- Lazy defence;
- Poor coaching;
- Tired players.

WPBA also recognises that poor or inexperienced man-to-man defence can sometimes resemble Zone Defence. Accordingly, where reasonable doubt exists, the benefit of the doubt will be given to the defensive team.

Onus of Proof

The onus of proof lies with the offensive team, which means they must pass the ball and move so that you can determine whether the defence is playing man-to-man principles. For example, if an offensive player stays on the weakside, their defender can legitimately stay in a “split line” position.

In addition, you cannot judge a Zone Defence from one offensive or defensive phase. Often the ball is shot or turned over before you can properly determine if a team is playing a Zone Defence. You will need to watch a number of game phases before determining if the defensive team is playing appropriate man to-man.

Trap Defence

Teams may trap in the quarter court and may stay in a Zone Defence alignment for one pass, after which all players must resume man-to-man positions. For example, on the trap, 2 players are on the ball, and the remaining 3 players may rotate to protect the basket.

Reporting & Enforcement

Reporting Concerns

If a team is believed to be playing Zone Defence, then feedback should be provided to WPBA. Please visit the WPBA website to complete the [Feedback Form](#).

Do not approach the Referees, Referee Supervisor, or Venue Supervisor regarding Zone Defence; they are not responsible for enforcing this Policy. Do not directly approach or speak to the opposition. There are no in-game penalties for playing a Zone Defence.

WPBA Response

The WPBA response is one of communication and education. While there is an expectation that all teams and coaches understand and abide by Competition Rules, we also understand that the majority of Junior Domestic coaches are parents or siblings, who are unlikely to knowingly or deliberately breach the rule by playing a Zone Defence.

If a team is found to be playing a Zone Defence, this will be communicated to their Club, who may be required to provide education to the coach on acceptable man-to-man principles. Coaches from Independent Teams (not affiliated to a Club) may be required to complete training provided by WPBA.

If a team is found to have breached this Policy for a second or more time, WPBA has the right to overturn the result of the game in question.

Ways to help prove a Zone Defence

Moving a Split Line Defender

In man-to-man defence, a key principle is positioning. Defenders should be closer to the player they are guarding than to the ball. The nearer the ball is to your matchup, the tighter you must be; the further the ball is, the more you can afford to sag off. When the ball is on the opposite side of the court (the weakside), defenders adopt a split-line position - standing roughly in the middle of the court to see both their player and the ball.

Cut to the ball side

Once you have identified a defender that you think might be playing a Zone Defence, 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 be difficult to determine what defence 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 need 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 a 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 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 defence to move. This movement can help to identify who each defender is guarding or whether they are playing a Zone Defence.

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 defence needs to adjust. If the low weakside defender was to stay where they are, it would not be apparent who they were guarding.