2-3 (2-1-2) Zone Basketball Defense

Summary

This zone is similar to the 2-3 zone that Jim Boeheim uses at Syracuse. This is can be a very effective zone defense, because it still covers the 3-point arc as well as the inside game.

Youth Coaches: Even though, you CAN win more games, AVOID playing any type of zone defense, because it can teach bad habits and hinder the long-term development of your players. Our advice would be to focus on Man to Man Defense. If you would like to read a detailed explanation of why we advise youth coaches to avoid zone defenses, click here.

Instructions

This the original set on the 2-3 zone. The top two players will pinch towards the middle to stop dribble penetration.

Pass to the Wing:

Player 4 comes up to stop the outside shot and dribble penetration. Player 1 hustles over to the wing to guard the ball. Player 2 slides in front of the high post. Player 5 slides over a couple steps at first to cover the player on the low block.

The transition to the next diagram should only take a split second.

As soon as Player 1 recovers to guard the wing, he or she will push Player 4 down. Player 4 will slide down to cover the player in the short corner. Player 5 can step up towards the middle of the lane to guard the player in the high post if he receives the ball.

Player 2 has two options:
If the player in the high post is hurting you, he'll probably want to sink down and deny the entry into the high post. He'll want to stay on the top half of the player, so he can still rotate to cover the ball at the top of the key.

If the opposing team is hurting you from the 3-point arc or the opposing player in the high post is not a threat, you can have Player 2 cheat towards the top of the key. Generally, this will also enable him to create a few more turnovers during the game.

**Pass to the Corner:**

Player 4 guards the corner. Player 1 takes a couple of steps inside the 3-point line, but he should still be within reach to defend the shot on the wing.

**Entry into High Post from the Top of the Key:**

Player 5 steps up to guard the ball. Player 4 takes away the player on the block.

If you have trouble getting your players to pinch towards the player on the block, you can set a rule: Every time the ball is entered in the high post, Players 3 & 4 pinch no matter what. We've had to do this with our high school squads.

Players 1 & 2 have their hands up to defend the pass back out to the wings, but need to be ready to swipe at the ball if the player in the high post decides to dribble.

**Entry into the High Post from the Wing:**

Player 5 steps up to guard the ball. Player 4 pinches to deny the pass to the low block. Player 1 steps back into the lane a couple steps.
**Entry Pass into the Short Corner:**

Player 4 & Player 5 immediately trap the ball. Player 1 denies the pass back out to the wing. Player 3 rotates to deny the ball to the player in the high post. Player 2 plays center field trying to steal a pass thrown to either player.

**Skip Pass - Top of the Key to the Corner:**

Here's the proper rotation if a skip pass is thrown from the top of the key to the corner:

**Skip Pass - Wing to Wing:**

Here's the proper rotation if a skip pass is thrown from wing to wing:

Player 3 takes away the outside shot until Player 2 rotates over to guard the ball. Player 3 waits until Player 2 nudges him back down. Player 1 rotates over to the opposite side.

**Trap the Top of the Key:**

You can have your top two players trap the ball the second the ball is dribbled past half-court. Players 3 & 4 need to deny the pass to the wing and Player 5 needs to deny the pass to free throw line. If the players can't deny the wings in time, the trap will fail and the offense will get an easy bucket.
This is generally used only once or twice a game to surprise the offense.

**Trap the Wing:**

Players 1 & 4 trap the wing on the pass. Player 5 rotates over to deny the pass to the block. Player 3 rotates over to deny the pass in the high post and Player 2 denies the return pass to the top of the key.

**Trap the Corner:**

Players 1 & 4 trap the corner. Player 2 slides over to take away the return pass to the wing. Player 5 fronts the post to deny the pass. Player 3 plays center field and tries to steal a pass to the wing or the top of the key.

If a player slides into the high post, Player 3 denies that pass.

**Helpful Zone Defense Resources**

If you'd like to dig deeper and get more information about developing an effective zone defense, we highly recommend Al Marshall's Zone Defense. In our opinion, he runs one of the best zone defenses in the country and it gives you the most thorough explanation of zone defense we have seen.

Zone Defense Concepts & Tips