



SBA NO ZONE POLICY

At the 2015 Presidents and Secretaries meeting, the SBA informed all clubs of their intention to implement the Basketball Australia "No Zone" policy. The SBA has followed the lead of Basketball Australia, Basketball Victoria and the Victorian Junior Basketball League (VJBL) by banning Zone defence at the Under 12 and 14 age group in **ALL** grades and competitions.

The SBA hopes to encourage all coaches to teach their players better Man to Man principles at both the Defensive and Offensive ends, which will ultimately create a higher standard of basketball for the future of the association. This policy will be in effect from the start of the 2106 winter season.

Zone defence hurts the game. It hurts the development of junior players. It allows some coaches to choose not to teach defensive principles – therefore also not developing coaches.

There is a general acceptance that the constant use of zone defences in the younger age groups adversely effects the development of both defensive and offensive skills in younger athletes. Basketball Australia has introduced a rule banning the use of Zone defences at National level and has called upon all State bodies to assist with the implementation of this policy right throughout Australia. Basketball Victoria Country has placed a ban on Zone defences for the 12 and 14 year old age groups.

A Zone defence, for the purpose of this ban is defined as; Any defence played in the half court, which does not incorporate normal man to-man defensive principles shall be considered to be a Zone. For this purpose trapping principles, which rotate back to man defensive principles shall be acceptable

Here are three reasons for eliminating zone defence from junior basketball.

1. Zone defence doesn't teach good defensive habits

In junior basketball there are usually one or two strong players on a team. A zone defence should be one player guarding the ball and four players helping guard the ball and an area. However, in junior basketball zone defence turns into one player jumping out of position and going for steals while their teammates stand and watch that happen. The other four players end up standing still, upright, plugging the lane and ignoring the other four offensive players who aren't skilled enough to shoot from outside the three point line yet.

Most junior players have yet to develop a strong skill set, let alone the physical strength to execute those skills. Therefore most junior coaches and their teams tend to default into a zone in order to get cheap wins against teams that are playing with a three-point line that is too far out for the age and stage of the athlete. A zone defence does not demand the individuals in the zone to give effort or learn sound defensive principles.

The poor habits zone defences in youth basketball tend to promote are:

1. Lazy on ball defence
2. Standing and watching off ball
3. Poor closeout technique
4. Little accountability
5. Lack of communication
6. Minimal movement on defence
7. Fewer opportunities to guard different positions and areas of the floor
8. Fewer opportunities to practice communication in defensive transition
9. Fewer opportunities to practice decision making in defensive transition
10. Reduced accountability on box outs
11. Fewer decisions while playing help
12. Decreased repetitions of defensive rotations.
13. Fewer opportunities to learn what is acceptable defensive risk taking
14. Minimal opportunities to guard screens
15. Fewer opportunities for bigger players to guard the ball

Each of the above reasons not to play zone are also many of the same reasons some coaches choose TO play zone. Some coaches want to hide weak players rather than developing them. Some decide to remove decisions from players, which allow them to get away with poor habits. Instead of teaching players good habits, some coaches choose to play a defence that allows them to be successful (i.e. wins) without first building these key habits.

2. Zone defence doesn't prepare athletes for long-term success.

At the highest levels of play you see the least amount of zone defence.

At the highest level of play, with the most skilled players on the floor, you see the least amount of zone defence.

Zones work better against less talented players. That's why many coaches choose to use them. If you are a coach that plays a zone to win, or a coach who finds ways to disguise their zones to look like a man to man. Remember this:

“Junior basketball should be about developing players for life long success, not winning meaningless games played in front of a few parents.”

Every zone that is played at a high level and works well is based on man concepts. It is built with VERY GOOD individual defenders.

Each successful zone is based on active, communicating defenders who understand the positioning, movement, vision, decision making and on ball habits developed from years training how to guard in man to man. Well played zones are based on man principles. Man principles, taught first, create good zone defence. Every good coach will tell you that the toughest zone to play against is a well-taught matchup zone with players who have sound defensive habits like the ones listed above.

3. Zone defence robs the opponent of the opportunity for offensive development.

Many coaches do not consider this point. ***Choosing to play a zone defence at the junior level is incredibly selfish and short-sighted. Be good to the game.***

When a coach chooses to play zone against a junior team, who again, can't shoot well from three, has few experienced players and lacks the physical strength to make the long hard passes needed to punish a zone, they rob that team of an opportunity to develop offensively.

A zone defence will lead to the offensive team standing around and watching the one or two good offensive players over-dribble and attempt tough shots against multiple defenders. This creates bad habits for the offensive players - most of the team standing and watching the good players forcing bad shots. The weaker players will touch the ball less, get fewer opportunities to move and lose the joy of the game as they fail to make the shots they are forced to take that are well outside their effective range.

There will be many coaches that will read this and immediately begin to justify why their zone is actually good for their players or come up with excuses/reason as to why they play zone.

Common things coaches say "it's not a zone it's a lazy man" or "it's not a zone, the player is just sagging off". It is the duty of a coach to teach players how to play a man, not make excuses for poor defensive principles.

Please consider ways to teach players to be great, think about your long term impact in the game, think about your legacy as a coach to the sport and development of your players, DO NOT just find a reason to justify why playing a zone is OK.

We can do better. We can do this by changing the rules. One simple change. Protect the game, be better, teach more and DON'T PLAY ZONE.

"In 10 years' time you won't remember how many games you won in a domestic season. You will remember how many players you developed who went on to play at the next level."

A copy of the Basketball Australia “No Zone” policy can be found at the following link:

http://www.sportingpulse.com/get_file.cgi?id=3652465

The VJBL also has a no Zone policy.

Basketball Victoria Country has ruled that all country association MUST ban zones in all domestic competition.

The following are examples of associations who have banned Zone defences in domestic U/12 and U/14 competitions:

Dandenong

Frankston

Knox

Melton

Kilsyth

Bendigo – have done for 2 years

Geelong

Ringwood

Eltham

Nunawading – have done for over 5 years

Ballarat – have done for 3 years

Werribee

Southern Peninsula

Resources & Links

Information, coaching resources, videos, drill and technical information on teaching Man to Man defences can be found at the following links:

The SBA has the VJBL No Zone DVD that can be distributed to all club Junior Delegates as requested.

<http://www.coachesclipboard.net/M2MDefense.html>

<http://www.coachesclipboard.net/M2MDrills.html>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UKGkBTCJ-EE>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hxdiz8BuYOY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eR8Tu88af5k>

<http://www.hoopsu.com/4-on-4-closeout-basketball-drill/>

<http://www.coachesclipboard.net/DefenseShellDrill.html>