

Basketball Defense - 2-3 Zone Defense

The 2-3 zone defense is the most common zone defense that we see. It 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. Read "Zone Defense" for detailed tips on playing zone defense, and Zone Rebounding for tips on rebounding out of the zone.

Oftentimes, we think of the 2-3 zone as a defense that less-athletic teams can use to force the offense to shoot from outside, while keeping the paint protected and your key rebounders inside. It is true that less athletic teams may have more success with this defense as it tends to shut down dribble-penetration and the inside post game. It usually requires the offense to be more patient in getting a good shot, and thus it gives you a way to help control tempo. On the other hand, if you have good, quick athletes, the 2-3 zone can also be a more aggressive, trapping style of defense, creating turnovers and steals... but you must have quick athletic players to employ this type of defense. You can aggressively trap the corners, wings, and occasionally the point guard. Below are situations, with and without trapping. Study the diagrams below to understand the how the zone shifts, or moves.

A critical point

When the ball moves into the corner and the X4 defender moves out to cover the ball, it is imperative that the X5 defender slides over immediately into the low block vacated by X4. If X5 does not get there in time, the offense may get an easy pass into the low block, and a lay-up.

Ball on the wing.

See Diagram B. The outside (top) defender on the ball-side will cover the wing. The exception is on the skip pass from wing to the opposite wing, where the low outside defender will initially run out and defend until the top defender can get there... then the low defender will drop back down low. This is also the case on a very quick ball-reversal (diagram F).