

by Evgeny Pashutin

THE FULL COURT 2-2-1 ZONE PRESS

Evgeny Pashutin started his coaching career in 2003 as the head coach of the CSKA Moscow Junior Team. Hired as the assistant coach of CSKA's senior team, he won a Russian Cup and a Russian Superleague title. Since 2005, Pashutin has been the head coach of the Russian Under 20 National team. They won the gold medal at the FIBA Under 20 European Championships 2005.

The full court zone press is used for several different and distinct reasons:

- ▼ Control game tempo.
- ▼ Create turnovers.
- ▼ Score easy and quick baskets.
- ▼ Take advantage of opponents with poor ball handling and passing skills.

The most common mistakes defenders make running this defense include:

- a) Letting the ball come or stay in the central lane of the court: it is a must that the ball should be passed or dribbled along the baseline.
- b) Lacking patience. Instead of gambling with the offense by pressuring them on defense and trying to cause turnovers, the players try for quick steals.
- c) Not playing a "position" or "area of competence" defense. Players rush to guard an offensive player. This is, as the word says, a "zone" defense, and it means each defender must cover his area of the court, and be responsible for any offensive player, who enters into that area. It does not mean guarding one particular player.
- d) Not staying in the passing lanes.
- e) Not moving and not adapting to the movement of the ball and the offensive players. It also means that they don't adjust to the movement of their fellow defensive players.
- f) Not possessing an aggressive attitude and playing without determination.

A final note for the coach: he must "sell" and

convince his players that this defensive system is a "team" defense, where each defender is a part of the system, where everyone must work for and with the other defenders.

We used this defense during the successful 2005 FIBA European Under 20 Championship and we had very good results during the course of the tournament, as well in the final stage.

INITIAL SET

We put two defenders at the corners of the free-throw lane, two others near the half court line, and the last one, the bigger player, just outside of the three-point line on our defensive end (diagr. 1).

We let the opponent make the inbound pass, and, as soon the ball enters the court, our goal is to trap and force a:

1. Lob pass.
2. Bounce pass.

These passes are slow and give the defenders the possibility to recover and rotate (diagr. 2).

We do not want to:

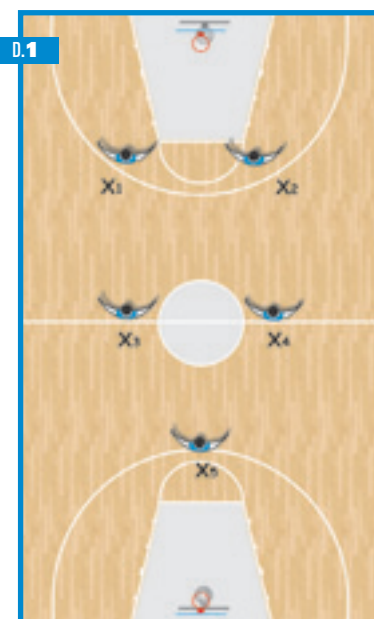
1. Allow an easy lay-up
2. Foolish and careless fouls from our defenders.

ROTATIONS

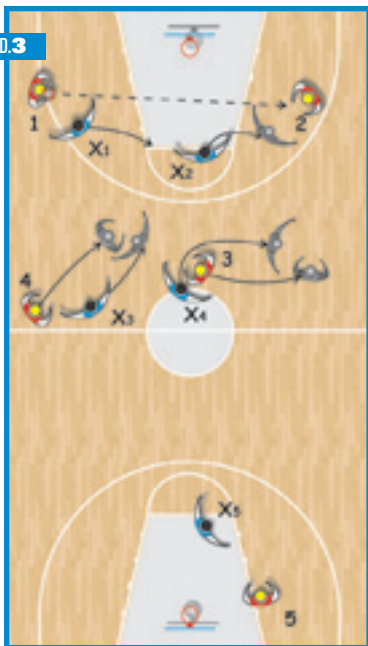
Let's now examine three different rotations of our defenders.

Ball Reversal (Pass)

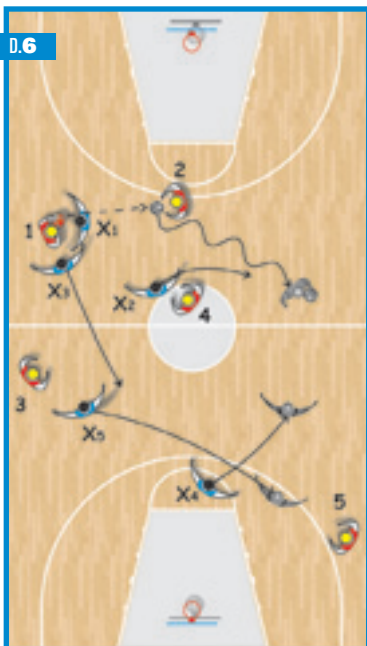
If 1 receives the inbound pass, X1 will run to guard him and force him towards the baseline for a trap. In this case, 1 immediately reverses the ball to the other side of the court: X2 then runs to guard 2, while X1 replaces X2. X3 goes up toward the ball, anticipating 3, who goes to the middle of the court to receive a pass from 2. X4 follows 4, who



0.3



0.6



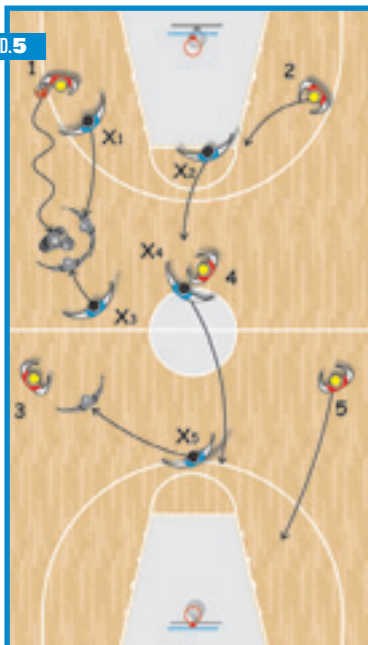
0.7



0.4



0.5



moves to the sideline towards the ball (diagr. 3 and 4).

Ball Reversal (Dribble)

Let's assume that X1 and X3 traps 1 before the mid-court line. This is how we rotate: X2 covers the middle of the court, X5 rotates on the sideline toward the ball, while X4 replaces X5 near the basket (diagr. 5).

If 1 passes the ball out of the trap to 2, X2 goes high to cover 2. X1 replaces X2 in the middle of the court, while X4 runs high to trap 2 with X2. X5 first goes back to cover the basket, and then outside for guarding 5, while X3 runs down in the lane to protect the basket (diagr. 6 and 7).

Dribble Penetration in the Middle

When 1 receives the ball and then drives to the middle of the court past X1, he kicks off the pass to 2 after X2 comes to help. X2 plays help and recovers, X1 goes down in the middle of the court, X3 goes in the middle of the lane and up, while X4 goes up and near the sideline, ready to trap 2, if he drives near the sideline (diagr. 8).

ADJUSTMENTS

I would like now to review some other situations that can happen on the court. X1 and X3 has trapped 1 on the sideline and the other three defenders have rotated (diagr. 9).

1 kicks the ball out of the trap and passes to 5 on the other side of the court. X2 runs to guard 5 and traps him with X5. X1 runs to the middle of the court and X3 covers the wing 4, while X4 protects the basket (diagr. 10).

Special Adjustment

Here are some special adjustments. We anticipated the two wings, and the offensive player in the middle of the court receives the ball, and then he kicks the ball back to the inbounder (diagr. 11).

As soon as the inbounder gets the ball back, the defender on the right wing runs to cover the opponent with the ball, forcing him to the left (diagr. 12).

As soon the ball handler passes the ball to his teammate on the wing, the defender runs to cover the receiver, and the defender of the other wing goes in the middle of the court. The defender in the middle of the court rushes to the ballside, while the last defender protect the basket (diagr. 13).

