



by Don Casey



by Ralph Pim

HALF COURT 3-2 AND 2-3 ZONE PRESS

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DOUBLE-TEAMS

Every team that wants to surprise the opponent must be able to double-team on every type of defense. How to double-team is the same for man-to-man defense and for zone defense. While two defenders double-team the ball handler, the other three have to form a triangle. One of these players floats and goes where needed, while the other covers all moves to the basket. When the basket is protected, any defense can risk to double-team the man with the ball.

DOUBLE-TEAM RULES

There are five basic double-team situations in every type of defense: the guard with the guard; the guard with the forward; the forward with the guard; the forward with post; and the guard with the post. Double-team is based on quickness and surprise, and all the defenders

should follow the following rules:

- ▼ Three steps rule. The defender, who goes to double-team, must be able to reach the ball handler in three rapid steps.
- ▼ Don't break up the double-team rule. The defenders must assume a large base and put one of their feet as close as possible to their teammate's foot.
- ▼ Active hands rule. The defenders must have their hands active trying to deflect the ball.

WHEN DOUBLE-TEAMING

The defenders must know when to go to double-team. Some of the best situations include the following offensive situations: a pick and roll; a dribbling wave; a guard passing the ball to the forward and follows the pass to receive a hand-off pass; a pass to the post and the passer goes to the angle.

When a team knows when and how to double-team, there are several tactics of double-teaming that can be used with every type of defense.

LEADING GUIDES TO DOUBLE-TEAM

Hubie Brown, two-time NBA Head Coach of the Year and member of the Basketball Hall of Fame, affirms that there must be guideline rules for double-teams, but also that coaches must be flexible and permit their players to be creative. Brown identified these as the most important principles to follow in order to double-team.

The best spots on the court where double-team are the sidelines, the baselines, the angles, and the half court line. Play at contact with the ball handler and close to him. Do not let the ball handler pass through the double-team. Once you decide to double-team, do not to stop or hesitate and stay in the "no men's land."

Teach players not involved in the double-team to understand what the double-teamed player may try to do. Once the double-team is done, let the most distant player from the ball free. Do not permit the offensive players on the help side to cut quickly toward the ball to receive a pass. Coach the defenders on the rotation on the help side. Keep the double-team until the ball handler passes the ball and the ball is in the air. Do not permit a penetrating pass that goes out of the double-team. If a back pass is forced, keep on playing zone defense, and try to double-team again. Guard the shooters closely and do not let them get free.

HALF COURT 3-2 ZONE PRESS

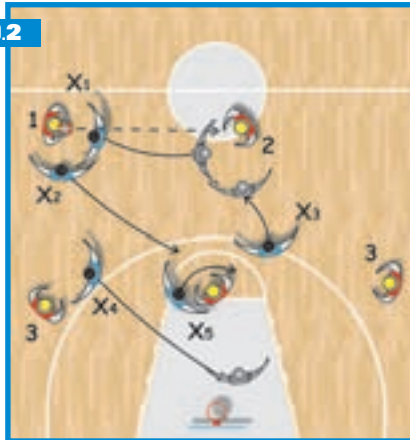
Half court 3-2 zone press can be both an aggressive defense and a passive one. You need this in your offensive arsenal because each opponent presents different challenges: there can't be only one defense that you use with every team. Created in the 1950s by John Egli, who coached at Penn State University, I expanded upon his basic concepts to create various options. When you adopt this 3-2 defense, it's fundamental to keep the ball outside the middle lane of the court and the post area. Once the ball goes to the high post, it can be easily passed to both the sides of the court and to the angles, making this very difficult to cover. The defenders must be trained to push the ball toward the sideline and to the angles, where there are excellent double-team opportunities. Moreover, the spots on the court where double-teams occur limit the spaces for the offense and permit the three defenders not involved in the double-team to set where they have major opportunities to intercept a pass.

This is the initial set-up of the defenders

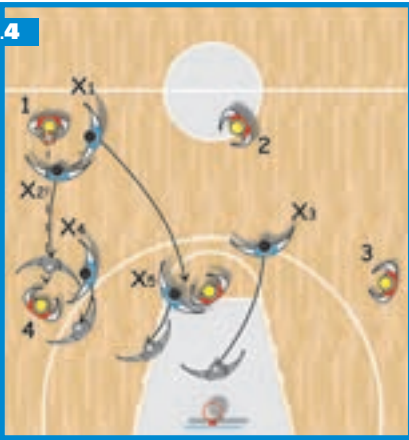
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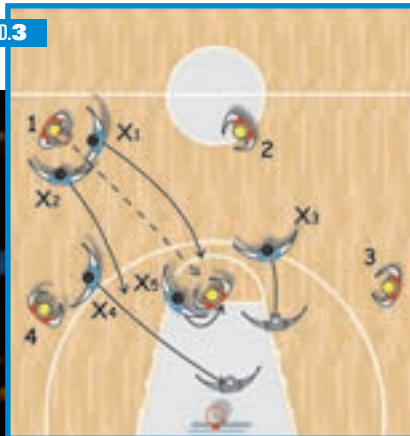
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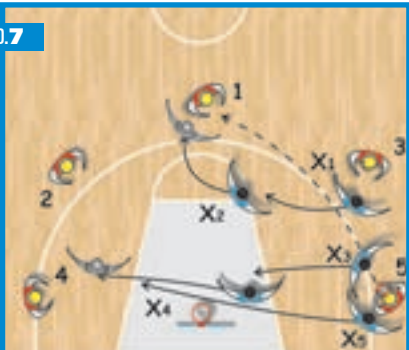
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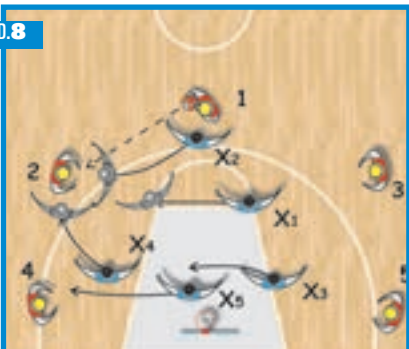
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D.8



and the double-team at the half court (diagr. 1). As the ball comes up the court, X1, X2 and X3 spread the defense quickly to the half court. X1 and X2 go to double-team once the ball handler drives to one side of the court and goes over the half court line, establishing the strong side. X3, who went initially toward the half-court line, goes back to play as an “interceptor” of a possible pass to the weak side. X4 slides to the wing, anticipating the pass in this area of the court. X5 comes up and anticipates the offensive player, who is on this side of the court. When the ball is passed from 1 to 2, these will be the defensive slides (diagr. 2). X1 follows the pass and double-teams with X3. X5 guards any opponent who, is in the high post. X4 slides in the low post, covering the basket, while X2 slides back to the elbow of the free-throw line.

Let’s see the defensive cover when the ball is passed from 1 to 5 (diagr. 3). X5 defends on 5 by using the fundamentals of man-to-man defense. X1 double-teams on the high post with X5, X3 slides down near the lane and he’s responsible for any passes on this side of the court. The ideal line drawn between the ball handler and the angle gives a landmark for how far X3 must slide down. X4 slides back covering the zone near the basket, while X2 slides and is responsible to cover any pass on his side of the court.

In diagram 4, defensive slides are shown when the ball is passed from 1 to 4. X4 defends 4 by using the man-to-man fundamentals. X2 double-teams the ball handler with X4, while X5 guards any opponent who comes in the low post. X1 slides back in the middle lane, while X3 covers the area near the basket.

2-3 ZONE PRESS

The initial set of the 2-3 zone press is the same of the classic 2-3 zone. The surprise element for the opponents begins when the ball is passed from the guard to the wing. At this time, the front court of the defenders double-team, instead of coming out and then comes back as in the regular zone defense.

DOUBLE-TEAM IN THE WING (AFTER THE PASS FROM THE MIDDLE LANE)

In diagram 5 the double-team on the wing is shown after the pass from the middle lane of the court from 1 to 3. X1 initially covers the high post area and then quickly goes to double-team the forward, 3, with X3, who comes up; X2 cuts in the lane and covers the elbow of the free-throw line on the double-team side; X5 is in a position where he can fake and steal

the ball on a pass to the angle. X4 sets up under the basket and defends against a possible lob pass.

DOUBLE-TEAM IN THE ANGLE (AFTER A PASS FROM THE WING)

Diagram 6 describes the double-team in the angle after a pass is made from the wing from 3 to 5. X3 follows the pass to the wing and double-teams with X5. X1 can set either on the passing line behind the wing, or at half distance between the wing and the basket (see the diagr. 3 for X1’s position); X2 covers the high-post area and guards the diagonal passes; X5 slides out of the lane and double-teams the ball handler, while X4 comes out of the three-second lane and sets up beyond the last block of the free throw line.

EXIT PASS FROM THE ANGLE TO THE MIDDLE LANE OF THE COURT

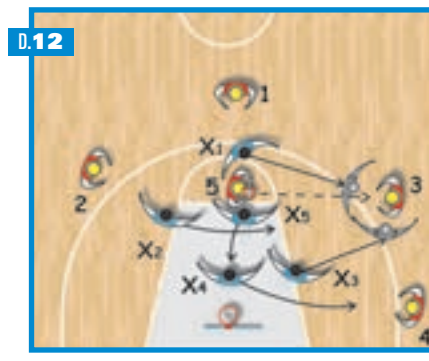
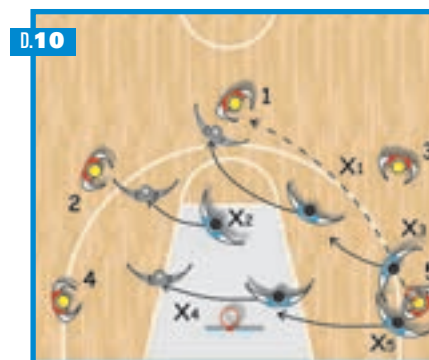
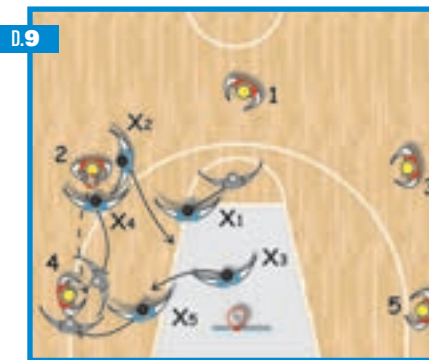
In diagram 7 we can see the position on the court of the defenders when the ball goes out of the double-team and reaches the middle lane of the court, with a pass from 5 to 1. X2 slides out the lane, sets near 1’s outside shoulder, and tries to get the ball from him. X1 defends on the wing; X4 cuts in the lane, comes out and sets up in an in-between position between the angle and 4, ready to fake and intercept a possible pass from the middle lane to the wing on the help side. X5 cuts quickly in the lane and sets up on the last block of the free throw line, while X3 does the same thing on the weak side.

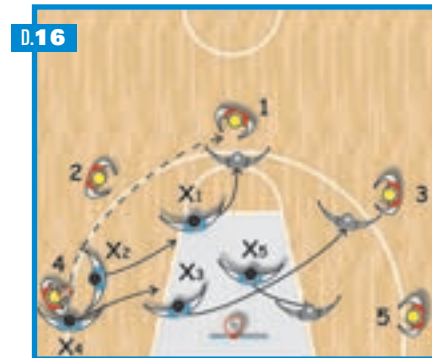
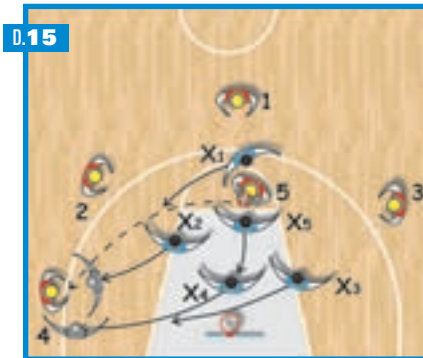
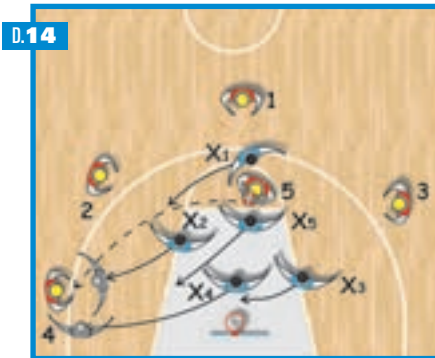
DOUBLE-TEAM IN THE WING (AFTER A PASS FROM THE MIDDLE LANE OF THE COURT)

When the ball goes out the double-team in the angle, and is passed to the middle lane and again to the wing on the weak side from 1 to 2, the following moves have to be made by the defenders (diagr. 8). X2 slides to the high post area, near the elbow of the free-throw line, and then runs to double-team 2 with X4. X1 cuts in the lane and sets up on the elbow of the free-throw line on the strong side. X5 goes to an in-between position between the angle and the ball, ready to intercept a possible pass to the angle, while X3 goes under the basket to steal any lob pass.

DOUBLE-TEAM IN THE ANGLE (AFTER THE PASS FROM THE WING)

Once the ball is passed from the wing to the angle, from 2 to 4, the defenders move as shown in diagram 9. X4 follows the pass to the angle and double-teams 4 with X5. X2 slides in an in-between position between the wing and the angle to avoid





a back pass to the wing. X1 covers the high-post area, and defends on diagonal passes, while X3 goes out of the lane and sets up on the last block of the free-throw line.

Exit pass out of the double-team in the angle toward the middle lane of the court. In diagram 10 we see an option to cover the exit pass out of the double-team in the angle toward the middle lane of the court, from 5 to 1. We saw this in diagram 7. X2 goes to the wing to try to stop a quick change of the ball side. X1 becomes the top defender of the zone and sets up on the ball handler's outside shoulder. X3 slides in an in-between position between the offensive player and the wing, ready to intercept a possible pass from the middle lane toward the wing. X4 slides in the lane and sets up on the block of the free-throw line on the weak side. X5 slides in the lane as the last defender of the zone to cover the basket.

**DOUBLE-TEAM ON THE HIGH POST
(AFTER A PASS FROM THE MIDDLE LANE OF THE COURT)**

I will now describe a double-team on the high post after a pass from the middle lane of the court, from 1 to 5 (diagr. 11). X1 turns and double-teams on the high post with X5. X2 slides slightly under the ball line; X3 sets up at half the distance between 3 and 4 in an angle, while X4 covers the basket.

**DOUBLE-TEAM IN THE WING
(AFTER THE PASS FROM THE HIGH POST)**

This double-team is illustrated in diagram 12. X3 slides towards 3, who gets the ball from 5, and double-teams with X1, who followed the pass. X4 comes out of the lane and goes to the angle. X5 slides down in the lane to cover the basket and grab any lob passes. X2 cuts in the lane, setting up on the elbow of the free-throw line on the ball side.

**DOUBLE-TEAM IN THE WING
(AFTER THE PASS FROM THE WING)**

In diagram 13 I will describe the defenders'

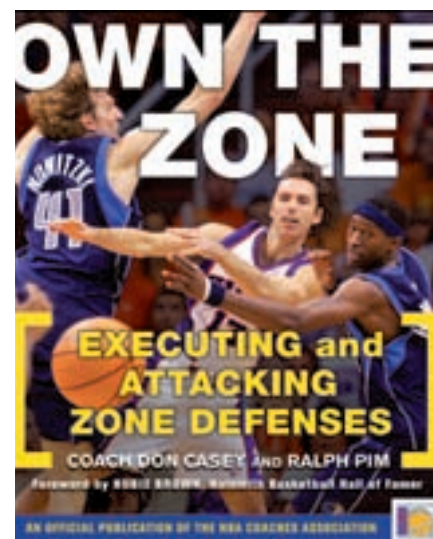
moves when the ball comes out of the double-team with a pass from the wing to the angle, from 3 to 4. X4 comes out, does not let 3 drive to the angle and double-teams with X3, who has followed the pass. X5 sets up on the last block of the free-throw line. X1 denies the return pass from 4 to 3 or, as shown in the diagram, slides to an in-between position between the angle and the wing, while X2 defends on the high post and is ready for any lob passes.

**DOUBLE-TEAM IN THE ANGLE
(AFTER THE PASS FROM THE HIGH POST)**

Some coaches think that going from a high-post double-team to an angle double-team is too difficult, while others believe that this may be very advantageous. In diagram 14, we can see how to defend when the ball is passed from the high post to the angle, from 5 to 4. X2 double-teams 4 with X4, who has come out the lane. X1 covers the elbow of the free-throw lane on the ball side. X5 slides on the block, while X3 slides under the basket. Another way to double-team in the angle is shown in diagram 15. X1, X2, and X4's responsibilities are still the same, while X3 and X5 follow these rules: X3 sets on the block and X5 slides down in the middle of the area in front of the basket.

**EXIT PASS FROM THE DOUBLE-TEAM
IN THE ANGLE TOWARD THE MIDDLE
LANE OF THE COURT**

In diagram 16 are the defenders' movements against the exit pass from the double-team in the angle toward the middle lane of the court (from 4 to 1). X1 slides up and guards 1, with the ball, while X2 slides on the left elbow of the free-throw lane. X4 slides beyond the line of the three-second area, as X5 does on the opposite side, while X3 cuts in the lane and sets up on the other angle of the free-throw line. X3 and X5 can also change their positions. X5 slides toward the angle of the free-throw lane and X3 cuts and sets beyond the line of the three-second area.



Taken from the book "OWN THE ZONE", Don Casey and Ralph Pim, McGraw-Hill, 2007.