

# The Point Zone Defense

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Introduction Point Zone Defense

Before I talk about how much I like the "Point Zone Defense", I think it is important to note how I came to appreciate the intricacies of this defensive system.

I <u>WAS</u> a lifelong fan of the "1—1—3" match-up zone defense. Looking into making a change in my zone defense was not an easy decision. What made it easier was finding Paul Hewitt's "Point Zone Defense". I have listened to him in a clinic situation and I have watched his teams play often, and I came away very impressed with his match-up zone defense.

Below I list some of the advantages of this match-up zone defense that Coach Hewitt has provided, but from my experience using the "1-1-3", I would like to add another HUGE advantage that is missing...

Your ability to effectively cover the corner pass while keeping your big man at home!

I can't tell you how many times I wanted to scrap the "1-1-3" zone match-up because of our inability to cover the corners effectively. I wasn't comfortable trapping the corner each time nor was I confident that our big man was going to get out there, especially against teams that move the ball and use corner shooters. You have a couple of different options to cover the corner with the "1-1-3", but in the end, the big man has got to leave the block and cover some ground. The "Point Zone Defense" removes this problem.

The defense is built around the "Point" / "Hole" philosophy, which means that there is always a defender on the ball (point) and one defending the basket (hole). And get this....your big man stays between the ball and basket at all times!

The Point Zone Defense is perfect for any team because:

- 1) It is easy to install
- 2) It allows for ball pressure at all times
- 3) It provides box out responsibilities for each player
- 4) It prevents easy baskets from baseline OB
- 5) It breaks up a team's offensive rhythm

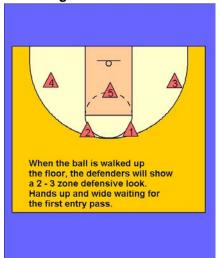
On the following pages we will take you through pass by pass how to utilize this great defense. We will also look at how to cover ball screens, basket cuts, high post entries and dribble penetration. I think you are going to love it!



Basic Alignment and Rules Point Zone Defense



#### Basic alignment and rules



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

#### PLAYER DESCRIPTIONS:

#1 is your quickest perimeter defender

#2 is your best rebounding guard

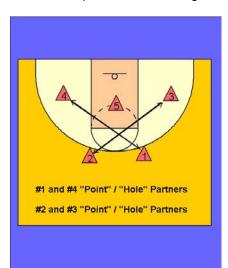
#3 is your small forward

#4 is your best rebounder

#5 is your center and ALWAYS stays between the BALL and the BASKET

The reasoning for the above alignment is simple, really. Most shots come from the right side of the floor, so you want your quickest perimeter defender, #1, on the right side. Since most shots are taken from the right side, most rebounds will bounce off to the left side of the basket. Therefore, your best rebounders, #4 and #2, should start on the left side.

Hands are up and wide creating a "big zone" with players ready to MOVE when the ball is in FLIGHT



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

#### POINT / HOLE PARTNERS

As we describe this detail in the coming diagrams, you will notice there is always someone on the ball, or "Point". When we have a "Point", there will always be someone in the "Hole".

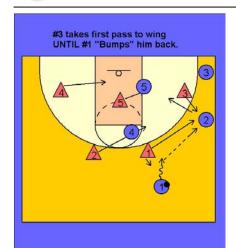
You can see the Point / Hole relation in this diagram. When #1 has the ball, or "Point", #4 will have the "Hole", or basket area.

When #2 has the ball, or "Point", #3 will have the "Hole", or basket area.

Consequently, whenever #4 has the "Point", #1 will have the "Hole". And when #3 has the "Point", #2 will have the "Hole".

Now we will take you through the rotations as the ball is passed around the perimeter.



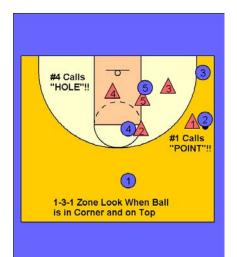


As #1 dribbles up, the defenders are lined up in a 2 - 3 alignment or look. #1 will take the ball.

On the FIRST PASS to the right wing, #3 will come out and take the ball UNTIL #1 can sprint down and "bump" him back down. We will only cover it this way on the FIRST PASS.

#2 is sprinting to the ball side FT line elbow. #5 is slides over and stays between the ball and the basket.

#4 slides under the basket area.



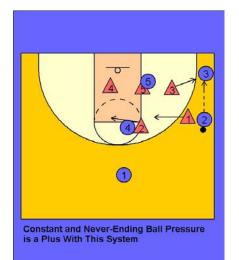
#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Now the defense takes a 1 - 3 - 1 alignment.

#1 is pressuring the ball; #2 has the high post area; #3 has the spot halfway between the wing and the lane area; #4 has the "Hole" or basket area; #5 is on the block, between the ball and the basket.

When #1 takes the ball on the wing he calls "POINT!". His partner, as described in the beginning, is #4. As #1 is calling "Point!", #4 is under the basket calling "Hole!". You should always hear these calls on each pass.

When the ball is on the side, it is the defender's responsibility to KEEP THE BALL OUT OF THE MIDDLE OF THE FLOOR. He should be able to guard him for THREE DRIBBLES without allowing him to get to the paint. This will allow yor teammates to get in a help position.



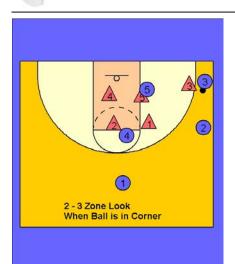
#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

On the pass to the corner, #3 is sprinting out with hands high on the close-out.

#1 slides back to cover the high post area while #2 slides back to the mid high post area.

If #5 is a good offensive post player, you can have his defender front him in the low post. This is your decision.



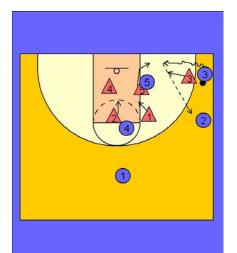


Now the defense takes a 2 - 3 zone alignment or look.

#3 is pressuring the ball hard, not allowing any middle drives.

#1, #2, #5 and #4 are protecting the lane area with their hands up and out.

#4 and #2 have to have their head on a swivel seeing both man and their next POINT responsibility, should #3 decide to skip the ball out of the corner.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

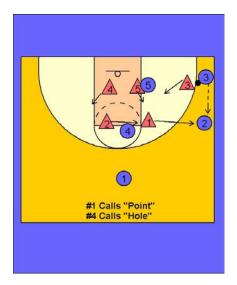
On any baseline drive situations, #5 will help while #1 and #2 plug the lane area.

They will allow the pass behind and back out to #2. This is a difficult pass with #5 and #3 trapping the baseline driver.

When this pass is throw, of course #1 is sprinting to the close-out and #2 is getting back to the high post elbow area.

#3 would jump to the ball in get in his normal help position just outside the lane near the low block.

#5 would move out to his normal "between the ball and basket" area.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

When #3 throws the ball out of the corner, #1 sprints out with hands high on the close-out to guard the ball.

#5 moves up slightly to stay between the ball and basket.

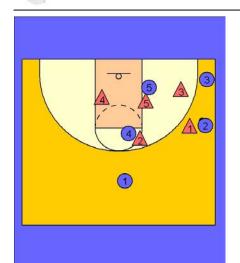
#3 drops back near the lane area.

#2 moves over again to cover the high post.

The high post defender does not have to sit on top of the high post, rather be close enough to discourage or deflect any passes to the high post. He has to be in a position where he can get out in guard the quick pass on top.

Charting deflections remains a great idea.





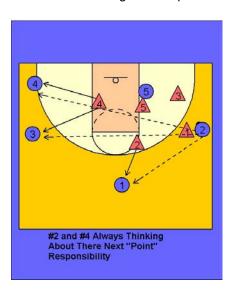
Now we are back in our 1-3-1 alignment with strong ball pressure from #1. Again, defender #1 has to keep the ball from getting in the lane.

We ALWAYS want intense ball pressure. If you can force the opposing team to throw lob passes around the zone, your effeciency rate has just made a huge jump!

If teams are allowed to fire bullets around the zone as well as inside / out, it will be a long night for your defense. **Eliminate direct or straight line passes** with great ball pressure!

This Defense Will Be Effective If:

- Your arms are up and out
- You have great communication
- You move on each pass
- You have great ball pressure



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

The defenders one and two passes away from the ball should always looking at the ball and their next "Point" responsibility. In other words, which next pass will they be responsible for closing out and pressuring.

Have your defenders in a stance with arms up and out, with their head on a swivel, "pointing" to their next ball pressure (or "Point") responsibility.

The diagram shows #2 pointing to #1 on top while #4 is pointing and has the skip responsibility of the opposite wing or corner.



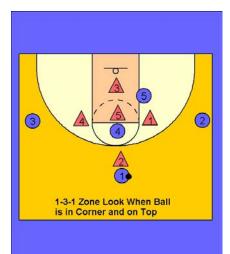


On the next pass to the top, #2 sprints out with hands high on the close-out calling "POINT!".

#3 is sprinting to the basket area calling "HOLE!"

#4 slides up on the pass to the left wing area while #1 jumps to the pass and takes the right wing area.

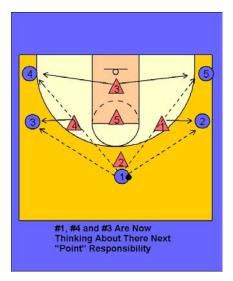
#5 is moving to the middle of the floor, staying between the ball and basket, ready to guard any passes to the high post.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

We now show a 1-3-1 zone alignment, with #1 and #4 ready to become the next "POINT", on the pass to the wing.

When the ball is on top, the wing defenders (#1 and #4) should have their inside foot on or near the lane line. This will enable them to help on penetration to the elbows, yet still give them enough time to get out and pressure the next pass to the wing.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

As mentioned earlier, the defenders are always in a good defensive stance "pointing" to their next "POINT" responsibility.

The diagram shows #4 and #1 looking to take the next pass to the wing.

#3 is in the "HOLE" and looking to sprint out to any skip passes from the top to either corner.



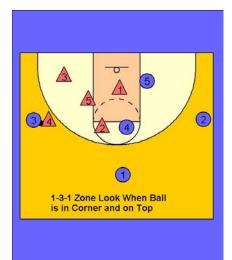


Let's continue.

#1 passes to #3 on the left wing. #4 closes out with hands high calling "POINT!". #1 is sprinting to the basket area calling "HOLE!".

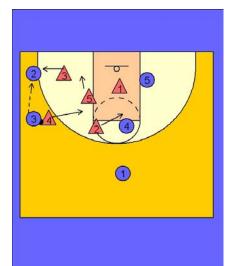
#5 moves over to stay between the ball and the basket.

#3 slides over to cover the left lower side of the floor near the lane, helping in the post, but close enough to get to the corner when passed.



# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

You can now see the defense has maintained it's 1 - 3 - 1 alignment. As mentioned earlier, this is always true whenever the ball is on top or on the wing.



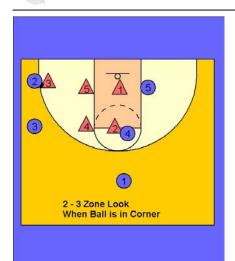
# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

On the pass to the corner, #3 closes out with hands high and pressures #2 with the ball.

#4 drops back on the pass to the high post area while #2 moves back to the middle of the high post area. #1 has the backside rebounding responsibility.

#5 slides down to the block, staying between the ball and the basket. Again, if the low post player is an offensive threat, you may have #5 front the post when the ball is in the corner.

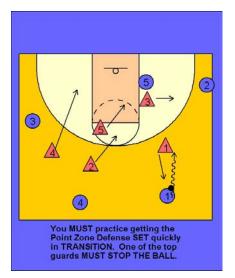




With the ball in the corner, we will now show a 2 - 3 player alignment.

#4 is in the high post but is "ready" to sprint out on the pass.

All players in this zone are prepared to move quickly and to the appropriate position on each pass. It is IMPERATIVE for this defense to be successful, that you get your players to MOVE on the PASS....and not watch the flight and then move. That second or fraction of a second can often mean the difference on contesting a shot or shutting down the driving lanes.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

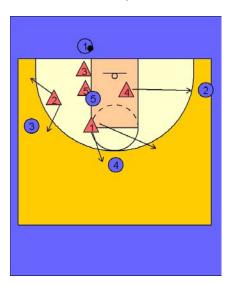
When your opponent is walking the ball up, it is easy to show the 2 - 3 zone alignment as you prepare to handle the first pass as described in the beginning of this section.

Every team is told and taught to run against zone defenses. Get down the floor before they can set up so that you can get easy baskets. Knowing this, you need to work at getting back and picking up the ball.

You must drill this defensive transition. Your ability to get back, stop the ball and get your players in their appropriate positions quickly, will be a determining factor in the ultimate success of this defense.

You need to stop the ball (Your "POINT" man) and get a man under the basket (Your "HOLE" man). Communication is critical here! In this fast-paced

transition scenario, you will NOT use the "bump down" on the first pass - the wing player will have it.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

#### COVERING THE OB UNDERNEATH

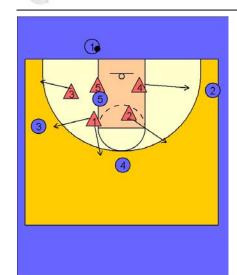
You have two choices here, and your decision will be based on whether you prefer to have a man on the ball or not.

If you like having someone on the ball, then you can line-up in the 1-3-1 alignment shown as if the ball was on top.

As soon as the ball is inbounded, the player on the ball calls "Point" while the proper player slides underneath the basket and calls "Hole" and the defense continues.

You will lose your "Point" / "Hole" partners by aligning in a 1-3-1 from OB.





If you prefer to have more coverage on the court and under the basket (as I do), then you can show a 2-3 zone alignment as if the ball was in the corner.

#3 is ready to take the corner entry and call "point" with #4 as your "hole" man.

#1, #2 and #4 are ready to take any passes out on the perimeter and will call "point".

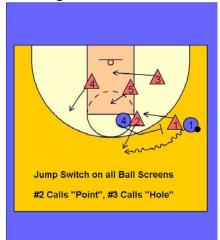
You will maintain your "Point" / "Hole" partners should you choose to show a 2-3 zone alignment.



Covering Screens
Point Zone Defense



#### **Covering screens**



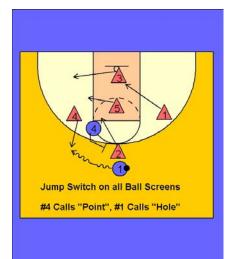
#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Screens (Ball Screens)

I have found the "jump switch" is the best way to defend on-ball screens in this defense.

Here we see the ball screen taking place on the wing. #1 has the ball, as the screen is set, #2 jumps out and takes the ball while #1 sprints back to #2's position in the high post.

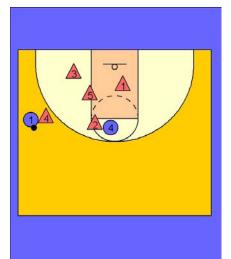
As #2 takes the ball, he again calls "Point!", while his partner #3 is calling "Hole!".



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Screens (Ball Screens)

Now let's look at the ball screen on top. #4 sets a screen on the on-ball defender #2. #4 reads the screen and jumps out to take the ball handler. #2 sprints back to guard the high post area.



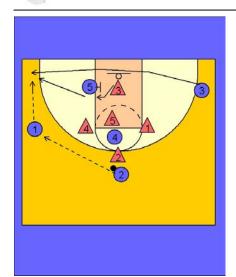
#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Screens (Ball Screens)

You can now see we are in our usual 1-3-1 alignment with the ball on the wing.

#4 has called "Point!" as he jumped out and defended the ball screen, while his partner #1, called "Hole!" while sprinting back to the basket.





Covering Screens (Screens Off the Ball)

Any screens that are set away from the ball and in the interior of the zone, our defenders are instructed to ALWAYS get on TOP of the SCREEN.

Here we see #5 trying to screen the "HOLE" defender as the ball is passed to the wing and then the corner.

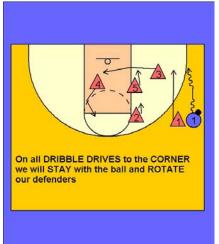
On the pass, #3 will SIT on top of the screen by #5. He WILL NOT try and chase the offensive player under the screen. He will wait on top of the screen until the pass is passed and then he will close-out to the shooter.



Covering Dribble Penetration Point Zone Defense



# Covering dribble drives



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Dribble Drives

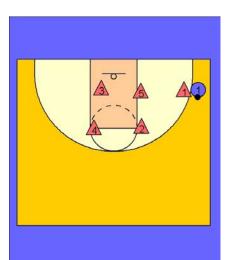
On ANY dribble penetration towards the basket, we MUST keep a man on the ball.

On the dribble drive from the wing to the corner, #1 will STAY with the ball. As it is driven to the corner, #3 will vacate the area and slide to the basket area. #4 moves up to the mid-lane high post area.

#5 slides down and guards the low post, consistent with his rule of staying between the ball and the basket. #2 has the high post area. As the ball is driven down, #1, #3, #4 and #2 are "orbiting" around the middle man #5.

**THE RULE:** If the ball is being dribbled TOWARDS YOU - you will rotate

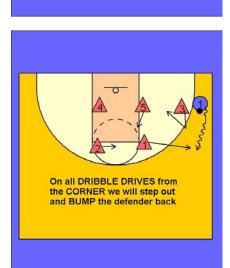
AWAY from the ball. If the ball is being dribbled AWAY FROM YOU - you will rotate TOWARDS the basketball.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Dribble Drives

#1 now has the ball and we are in our usual 2-3 alignment while the ball is in the corner.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Dribble Drives

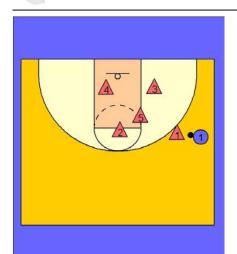
On the dribble drive out, we will handle this a bit differently.

#3 will follow the ball a few dribbles and then get "bumped back" by #1 stepping out and taking the ball handler.

#2 moves to take the high post area when #1 vacated. #5 moves up and follows the ball.

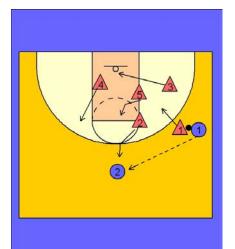
I believe it is more important to keep your bigger players on the baseline, so we will "bump down" on all penetration out from the corner to the wing.





**Covering Dribble Drives** 

We are now in our normal 1-3-1 alignment with #1 pressuring the ball at the "Point" and his partner #4 in the "Hole" area.



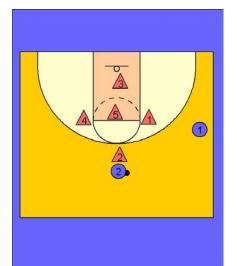
# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

**Covering Dribble Drives** 

If the ball were passed to the top after driving it up, we would continue with our normal rules.

#2 sprints out and calls "Point" and takes the ball. #4 is moving up to the left wing while #1 is moving back to the right wing.

#5 takes the FT line area while #3 is sprinting back to the rim to guard the "Hole".



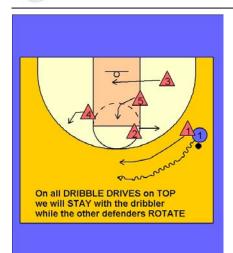
# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Dribble Drives

We now are in our 1-3-1 alignment with #4 pressuring the ball.

#1, #4, and #3 are in a stance and pointing to their next possible "Point" responsibility.

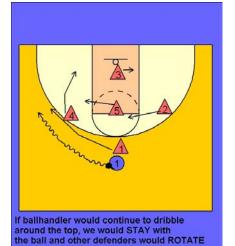




Covering Dribble Drives

Now lets look at what we would do if the ball handler would continue his dribble up from the wing to the top and down to the opposite wing area. This won't happen often, but if it does, here is how we handle it.

Keeping with our goal of always having pressure on the ball, #1 will STAY with the ball, while the rest of the defenders ROTATE to their appropriate positions depending on where the ball is.



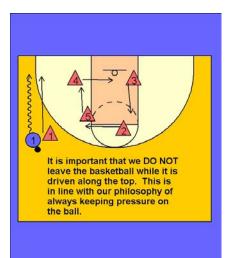
#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Dribble Drives

#1 continues his drive along the top. #1 stays with the ball while #4 slides down and takes the ball side corner low spot. #5 continues to follow the ball and stays between it and the basket.

#2 follows the ball to guard the high post area. Again, #1, #4, #3 and #2 are "orbiting" around #5.

**THE RULE AGAIN:** If the ball is being dribbled TOWARDS YOU - you will rotate AWAY from the ball. If the ball is being dribbled AWAY FROM YOU - you will rotate TOWARDS the basketball.

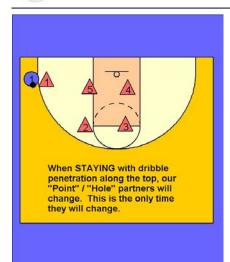


#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

Covering Dribble Drives

#1 continues his dribble drive to the corner while #1 stays with the ball. #5 moves down to the low post, #4 clears out to the basket area. #2 takes the high post and #3 moves up to the back side FT line area.





**Covering Dribble Drives** 

With #1 in the corner we have now taken the ball on the dribble from one side of the floor to the other and how we will cover it.

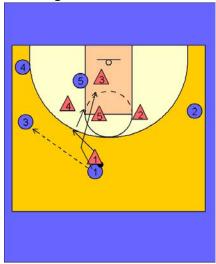
It is important to note, this rotation on dribble penetration around the perimeter will mix up your "Point" / "Hole" partners for the rest of the possession.



Covering Cutters
Point Zone Defense



#### **Covering cutters**



located.

#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

# **COVERING CUTTERS**

Covering cutters in this defense can be handled effeciently if there is good communication between the "Hole" defender and the perimeter defenders.

Here we see #1 entering the ball to the wing and making his cut through the lane.

#1's rules, rather man or zone, is to jump the ball and bump the cutter behind him. You never want anyone to cut in front of your face.

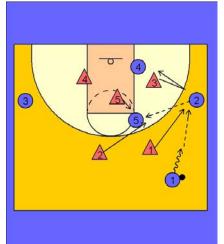
#1 will follow the offensive cutting player until the "Hole" man, #3, calls him off. In essence, letting the perimeter player know that he now has the cutter, and #1 will bounce back to his normal position depending on where the ball is



Covering The High Post Entry Point Zone Defense



# Covering high post entry



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

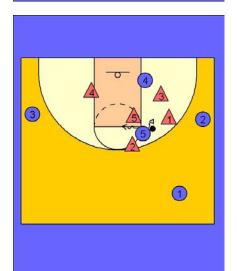
#### **COVERING HIGH POST ENTRIES**

Here we see the ball being brought up the court and passed to the wing player #2.

#3's rule is to attack the first pass and wait for #1 to "bump" him down.

#2 passes the ball inside and gets by the defender #2 in the high post.

When this happens, #5 will come up and play him hard defensively, ready to contest any shot the high post player puts up.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

#### COVERING HIGH POST ENTRIES

With defender #5 contesting any jump shots, we are hoping the high post player will elect to put the ball on the floor.

If this happens, #1 and #2 have to be ready to "dig it out" and make the steal.

The weakside defenders must be ready to "help" and "recover" quickly on any penetration and kick-out.

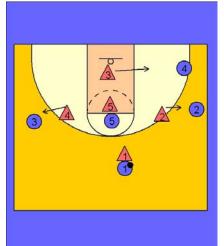
You should view the high post entry as an opportunity to get a deflection or a steal on post penetration.



Rebounding Responsibilities
Point Zone Defense



# Rebound responsibilities



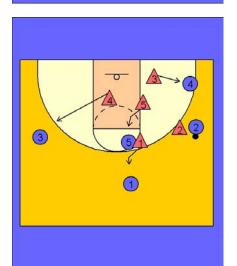
#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

#### **REBOUND RESPONSIBILITIES:**

The Point Zone Defense allows for rather easy designation of who you are responsible for boxing out.

In our basic alignment and rules section we talk about each defender keeping and eye on the BALL and their NEXT "POINT" RESPONSIBILITY. This is critical for determining who you should be blocking out on athe shot.

In this diagram we see an arrow for each player's next POINT responsibility should the ball be passed. On the shot, that is who each player would box out.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

# REBOUND RESPONSIBILITIES:

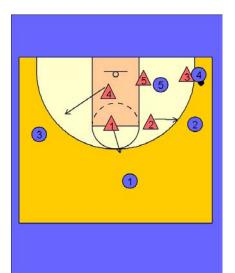
When the shot is taken from the wing, we see #4's next POINT responsibility whould have been #3 on the back side. That is his box out responsibility.

#1's next POINT responsibility would be #1 on top, so he is to box him out on the shot.

#3 would have had the ball in the corner as his next POINT responsibility, so on the shot, #3 would box out the corner player #4.

#5 would always have the player between the ball and the basket.

Of course #2 is contesting and boxing out the shooter.



#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

#### REBOUND RESPONSIBILITIES:

With a shot from the corner, we see that #2's next POINT responsibility would have been #2 on the right wing, so he immediately boxes him out on the shot.

#1 would have had the top player as his next POINT responsibility, so he boxes out #1 on top.

#4 would have had the skip pass or reverse pass to #3 on the backside, so #4 moves out and boxes him out.

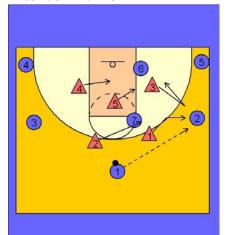
#5 keeps his man off the boards while #3 contests the corner shot and boxes out the shooter.



Breakdown Drills Point Zone Defense



#### Breakdown drills



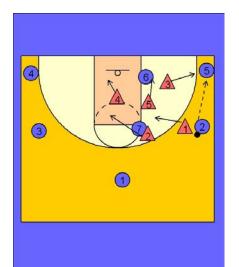
#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)

I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zone Defense.

From this drill we will work on:

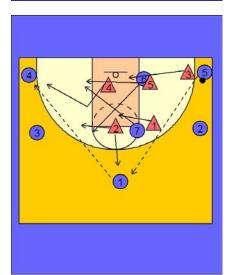
- "POINT" / "HOLE" responsibilites and calls
- Defending skip Passes
- Defending dribble penetration (to the corner and out from the corner)
- Defending cutters
- Defender on-ball screens



# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)

I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon

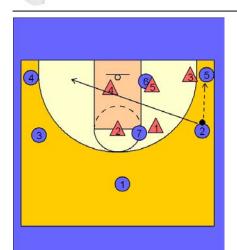


#### Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)

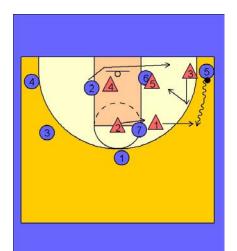
I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon





BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)

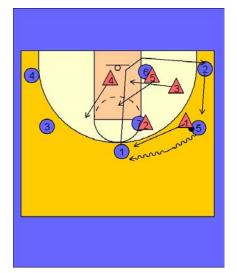
I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon



# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

**BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)** 

I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon

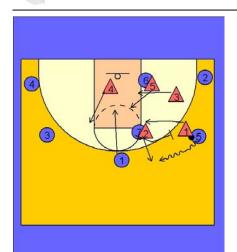


# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

**BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)** 

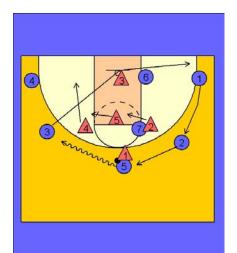
I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon  $\,$ 





BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)

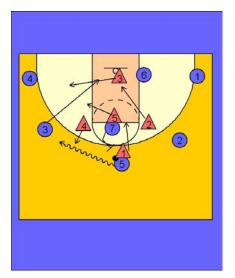
I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon



# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)

I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon

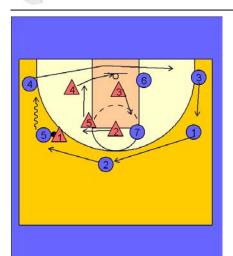


# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

**BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)** 

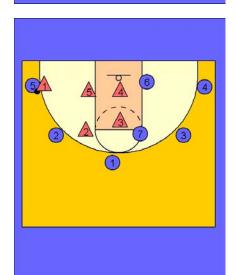
I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon  $\,$ 





BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)

I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon



# Point / Zone Match-Up Defense

BREAKDOWN DRILLS (5 VS. 7)

I use a simple 5 (Defense) vs. 7 (Offense) drill to reinforce all of the rules and alignments in this Point Zon