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The Secrets of the 2-3 Zone Defense

Clinic to End All Clinics IV

Manhattan College

4/16/11

• I believe in the zone, it's made my career.
• Spends more time teaching zone then man.
• Use to spend more time teaching man than zone.
  ◦ Shell drill
  ◦ How to defend the pick and roll
• Most teams, including Syracuse, used to use zone as a change of pace.
• If you play a couple of defenses, usually your man is better or your zone is better.
• Practice about 2 hours and 20 minutes before the season starts, scale down to 1 hour and 50 minutes, and then 1 hour and 20 minutes.
  ◦ 20 minutes of each practice is individual skill work. This is true for the entire year.
• Spend 10 to 15 minutes teaching the zone in the half-court.
• Believes in scrimmaging, starts full-court scrimmaging the 1st day of practice.
• In practice they typically...
  ◦ 10 minutes of zone breakdowns – guards on one end and forwards on the other
  ◦ 10 minutes of 5-on-5 zone
  ◦ Scrimmage at the end
• If a team is shooting 42% from 3, what would your assistants tell you to play?
  ◦ They will tell you to play man.
  ◦ They are shooting 42% against man to man.
  ◦ They must have figured out how to get good shots against man.
• Philosophy/Fundamentals of the Zone
  ◦ When a pass is made, 5 defenders should be moving.
  ◦ Guards try to keep the ball out of the high post.
○ On the perimeter play 3 players with 2 guards and help from forwards.

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<th>2-3 Initial Alignment</th>
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<td><strong>Diagrams</strong></td>
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| ![Diagram](image1.png) | • The top 2 guys must be close enough to touch hands  
• Play 3 players with 2 guards on top and help from the forwards |

○ **Primary Rule:** Take away 3 point shot – pressure shooters, get them off their spots  
○ Designate who to stop and all 5 guys are responsible for stopping him. Match up with him, no matter where he is.  
○ The forwards rule is if a man is open in front of you, pick him up.

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<th>2-3 Rotation on Pass to Wing</th>
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| ![Diagram](image2.png) | • First forward must close out on outside lane  
• Forward bumps back into passing lane once guard gets there  
• Center rotates to ball side block  
• Weak side forward goes to weak side block  
• Weak side guard drops to foul line |
# 2-3 Rotation on Pass to Corner

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Diagrams</th>
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| ![Diagram](image) | • If the ball goes to the corner, the ball side forward takes the ball.  
• X5 takes the ball side block  
• The weak side forward takes the middle  
• The weak side guard takes away the ball side elbow  
• The ball side guard takes the ball side wing |

○ If ball goes into the post, the center is responsible for playing the ball.

## 2-3 Rotation on Pass to High Post

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| ![Diagram](image) | • x3 and x4 drop to blocks  
• x5 hesitates while the forwards drop to the blocks and then picks up the ball  
• x2 and x3 go to the wings to take away the shooters |

○ Ball up top
  - Guard is up on a shooter
  - Guard gives space to penetrator or passer
• Start teaching zone
  ○ 5 guys on perimeter
  ○ Offense passes ball for 25 to 30 seconds (This is how long most teams take to attack the zone.)
  ○ Defense moves on every pass
  ○ Then add 2 guys in post and play 5 against 7
• Rebounding Responsibilities
  ○ Weak side forward is alone on the weak side
  ○ If a team plays 4 out, they are not as good at rebounding
  ○ There is no block out on the weak side - the weak side forward gets position on the weak side edge
  ○ If the other team crashes the boards hard, Syracuse looks to run

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| ![Diagram](image) | • Weak side forward gets to the edge  
                    • x5 gets position in the middle of the paint  
                    • Ball side forward gets to the block  
                    • The guard in the post gets to the middle  
                    • Ball side guard gets to the lane line |

• Likes to play man and then switch to zone for the last 5 minutes
  ○ Keeps team from penetrating, getting fouled and getting to the foul line
  ○ Forces teams to make shots
• Used to play man-to-man in non-conference schedule and then introduce zone in conference play. Now they play zone all season.
• Al McGuire - “Don't fuck up the game!”
  ○ If you are winning with the zone, don't switch to man-to-man to see what happens. If they hit two 3's against man-to-man, then they are back in the game.
• Your man-to-man defense suffers the more you practice your zone.
• Most teams don't play zone so it is harder for teams to prepare for in a short time frame
• Coach K will take suggestions from players and coaches
• Players get layups or get fouled because players are afraid to commit a foul at the end of the game
• It is tough for teams to get a good shot off against a zone with 10 seconds left
• More teams are setting screens against the zone
• Drills screens with guards on one end of the floor

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<th>2-3 Screening Drill</th>
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| ![Diagram](image)   | • 3 guys on the perimeter, 1 in the post  
|                     | • Post screens for the guards  
|                     | • Defense fights over the screen if it is a shooter, under the screen if it is a non-shooter |
- Runs Short Corner and Corner Traps 3 to 4 minutes every day to get players used to the movements

### 2-3 Short Corner Trap

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| ![Diagram](image) | - x5 steps out  
- x3 doubles with x5  
- x4 comes across to the block  
- x2 drops |

### 2-3 Corner Trap

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| ![Diagram](image) | - x4 and x2 trap corner  
- x1 takes away the wing  
- x5 takes away the block  
- x3 takes away the mid post |

- Teams only make high post shot 20% of time and we are in good rebounding position
• What do you do defensively if you are down?
  ○ Stays in zone even when they are down 8 to 10
  ○ They will go to full-court press and try to trap more
  ○ If they are down 15 or more, they will look to go man-to-man
  ○ If a team hits a couple of 3’s early against the zone, stay with it. If a team did this against you in man-to-man, you would take a time out and tell them to play better man-to-man. You would not change the defense.

• How does the zone impact your offense?
  ○ Players are in better position for transition game
  ○ Guards don't get caught underneath

• What do you do against baseline inbounds plays?

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| ![Diagram](image) | • Forwards can't let the ball go to the corner  
• Guards take away the high post |