

# Principles for Penetrating Zone Defenses

## What to Discover or Recall:

*Discover that no two zones are the same, even if their basic alignments start out the same.*

*Explore the basic components that comprise a successful zone attack.*

*Learn that during a game that the coach must be attentive and instantly recognize various zones alignments along with their specific strengths and weaknesses.*

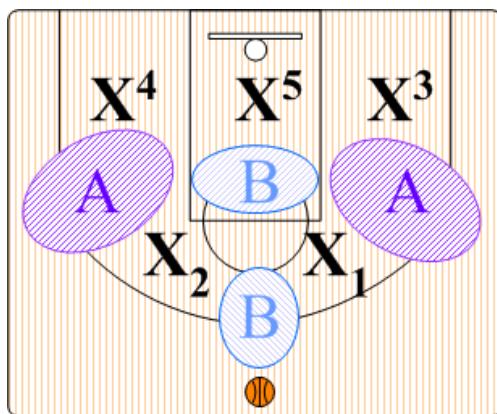
*Understand the common mistakes made against zone defenses,*

*Understand the "Don'ts" in attacking zone defenses.*

## Do Not Leave Attacking Zones Up to Chance

Although their zone alignments may start out the same, no two zones are the same. Each zone defense has its own unique characteristics. They will vary according to a team's player personnel and shifting abilities. Therefore, coaches cannot just be a spectator and watch the ball during the game. They must be alert and attentive. They must be able to instantly recognize the various zone alignments and be able to analyze their specific strengths and weakness.

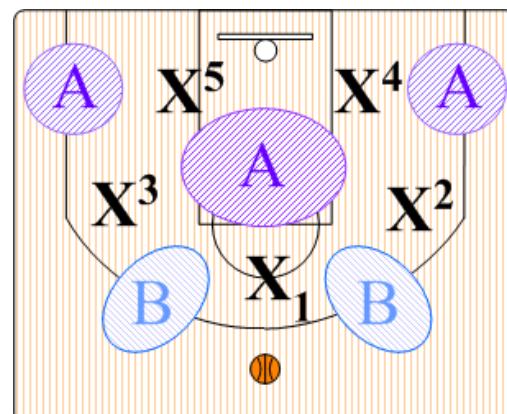
## Various Zones Strengths & Weaknesses



**2 - 3 Zone**

Major strength along baseline and low post.

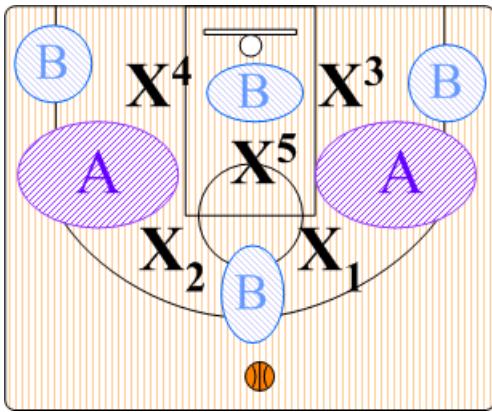
Major weak spots wings and middle.



**1 - 2 - 2 Zone**

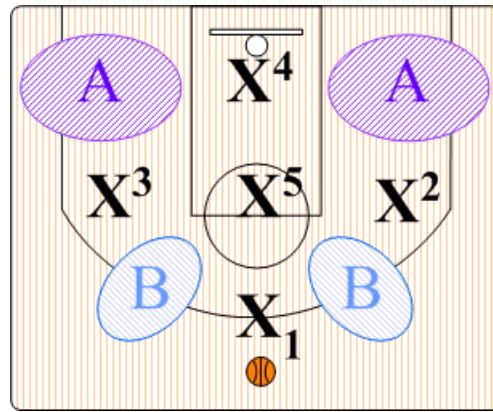
Major strength outside shooting.

Major weak spots middle and corners.



**2 - 1 - 2 Zone**

Major strength middle and low post.  
Major weak spots wings and center of floor.



**1 - 3 - 1 Zone**

Major strength across free throw line and down middle.  
Major weak spots corners.

## Principles for Penetrating Zone Defenses

### Ball Movement

Sharp accurate passing is a key ingredient in attacking any zone defense. Make the zone defense work by moving the ball from sideline to sideline. Good ball movement increases the chances of defensive break downs and results in good shots. Incorporate skip passes, post feeds, and pump fake passes. Pass to the open player. Do not force the ball or make difficult passes. Pass to a specific target away from the defense. Do not pass to any player that does not call for or want the ball. Eliminate dribbling especially the trap or one bounce dribble which allows the zone to recover and match up.

### Push the Ball

Beat the defense down the court. Keep head and eyes up and pass the ball ahead. Most zone defenses are susceptible to fast breaks. However, this is mainly due to the fact that teams do not work on defensive transition rather than playing zone defense. Also, by pushing the ball it will force the opponent to get back on defense rather than going to the offensive boards. If a good shot is not available on the early break flow directly into your zone offense.

### Attack Post Defenders

Must establish an inside threat. Get the ball inside to the post whenever possible. Play your best offensive post player in low to take advantage in that most zone defenders play behind when guarding the low post area. When the zone collapses in order to protect the middle, it opens up outside shots for your spot up shooters.

Note: Inside players that find it difficult to get open against aggressive person to person defense usually find it much easier to get open and score against zone defenses.

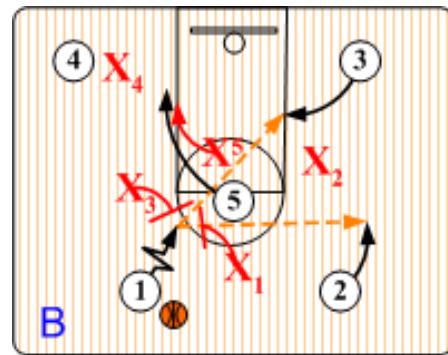
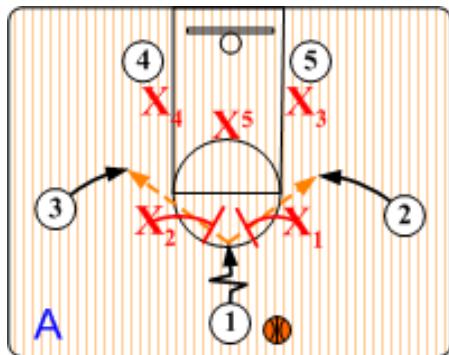
### Outside Shooting

Good outside shooting will definitely hurt any zone especially with the help of the three point shot line. Without it you could be in for a long season. However, outside shooters need to spot up in open areas, facing the basket ready to receive the ball

and shoot. They should be alert for cross court skip passes and kickout passes from the post.

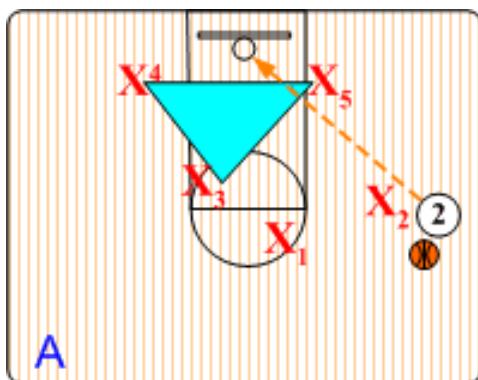
## Dribble Penetration

Zones are weak in the seams and gaps. Dribble penetration into a seam will not produce a good shot. However, in splitting the defense, it will draw two defenders to the ball creating wide open shots off kick out passes. Ballhandlers should be careful to avoid offensive fouls.



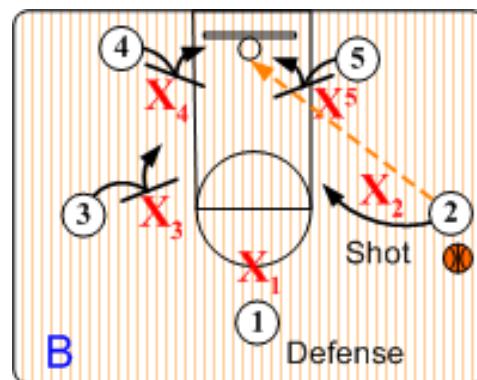
## Rebound Offensively

Players also need to be aware of the zones rebounding weaknesses. Since in a zone defenders are assigned areas to rebound rather than individual players to box out, it gives the offense a real opportunity to get inside and block the defenders out on missed shots. Also, be sure to attack the side of the zone where the strongest rebounders are located. You want the opponent's best rebounders on ball side guarding the ball rather than on the weakside where they can rebound.



**Rebounding Triangle**

Assume all shots are going to me missed and establish TWO offensive rebounds on weakside.



**Box Out Offensively**

During "Flight Time" the offensive rebounds should strive to establish inside position and box out the defensive rebounders.