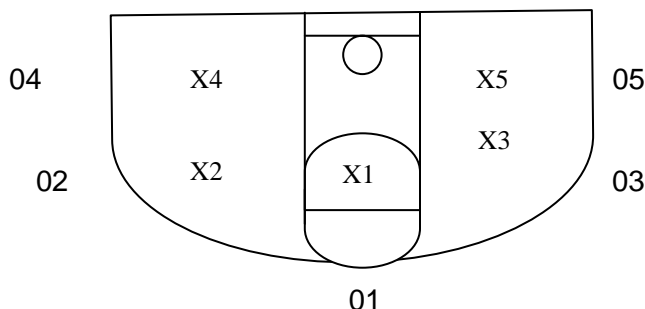


**EXPOSING A HALF COURT ZONE DEFENSE IN 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE, 5<sup>TH</sup> GRADE and  
PIONEER DIVISION MEETS**

To assist coaches who feel they are the victim of a zone, we've outlined below a way to expose a team that is playing a zone in The Great Northwest Basketball League.

Most coaches who feel they are the victim of a zone will put the ball in the hands of a player (01) between the top of the key and half court. The configuration might look something like this:

**Figure 1**



The problem is that this defensive alignment is not against League rules. The defenders need only come out half way from the basket to the three-point arc – not half way to the person they are guarding. Since all the defenders in Figure 1 (X1, X2, X3, X4 and X5) are stationed legally, should 01 attempt to drive the lane, literally all of the other four defenders (X2, X3, X4 and X5) can double-team the ball inside the three-point arc as 01 tries to proceed to the basket.

The best way to expose a zone is for the offensive team to force 3 or 4 of the defenders on the opposite side of the basket from the ball. While that's impossible to do if the ball is at the top of the key, it is relatively easy to do if the offensive player with the ball (01) is in one corner (the strong side) and most of the rest of the offensive team is aligned on the weak side (the opposite side of the basket from the ball).

Figure 2 shows a legal defensive alignment – all defenders are no closer to the basket than half way between the basket and the 3-point arc:

**Figure 2**

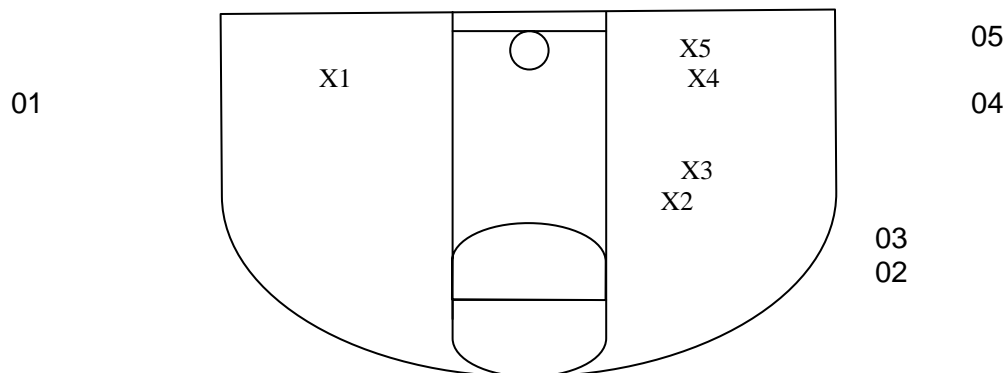
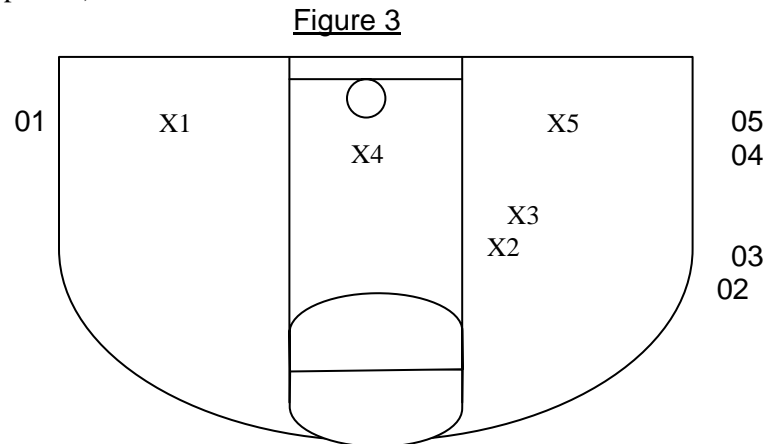


Figure 3 shows an illegal defensive alignment, because X4 is playing a spot on the floor (not his/her offensive opponent):



To further expose a team suspected of playing a zone, go back to figure 2. If 01 on the offensive team drives toward the basket past the three-point arc, but not into the paint, it will be easy to see the intent of the defenders. At that point, any of the remaining defenders (X2, X3, X4 and X5) will have three choices – two of them legal and one of them illegal. The legal choices are to stay with the person they were originally guarding **OR** go all the way to 01 to assist X1 in an active double-team. X2, X3, X4 and X5 may not, however, come to the basket and then, when they see that 01 has only driven part way to the basket, and not all the way, continue to stand in the lane near the basket. They must either return to their original defensive position or assist in double-teaming the ball. This is very similar to what the NBA required its' defensive players to do prior to the 2001-2002 season – guard the person with the ball, or the person originally guarded, but not stand half way in between!

Most defensive teams violating the prohibition against zones, play a one-man zone – putting their biggest player in a zone position, with the other four defenders playing straight man-to-man. By having 01 make several partial penetrations from the corner (go 10 feet to the basket and then return), it should be relatively easy to track what X4 and X5 (the big defenders) are doing. If one of those defenders (X4 or X5) double-teams 01 (in fact, all 5 defenders can quintuple-team the ball if they so desire), 04 or 05 or another offensive player should be open. If X4 stays with his original offensive player, 01 can attack the basket with only X1 in his/her way. And, if X4 stays under the basket, a zone is being played.