



BASIC PRESS AND PRESS BREAK



**BASIC DRILLS AND PLAYS FOR
MASTERING FULL COURT PRESSURE**

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Introduction

Since we don't see it at the NBA level very often, it can be easy to forget about what a big part of the game both the press and press break are at every other level of basketball.

They've been around since about the 1950s, when a coach by the name of Gene Johnson brought the first iterations into popularity. Teams have been seeing success with them ever since, with such big names as Rick Pitino, Billy Donovan, and Shaka Smart having used the press to build basketball powerhouses at the college level.

They can be used either as a defensive philosophy, from beginning to end of every game, or simply in specific situations, when you need to speed up the game or you're down by a couple possessions late. Either way, they always carry the same pros and cons – they offer the opportunity for create extra possessions with high percentage shots, but also are prone to tiring players out, and if a team with a good press break of their own can break it, they can create some high percentage baskets of their own.

The most effective press breaks use short, quick passes, as the defense is often looking to bait you into throwing up loopy floaters that allow them the time to recover and maybe even intercept.

Regardless of whether you want to play an entire game in the press, have it ready in your back pocket, or just get some practice working on the press break, this next playbook will have everything you need – and more!

Deny and Deflect Drill

Purpose

The main purpose is giving the defense a chance to work on high intensity pressure defense, also giving the offense a chance to work on making good decisions when faced with a high pressure defense.

Setup

The drill will begin with three players on offense and three players on defense, with a pair at the top of the arc, and the other two pairs each filling a wing. The player on offense at the top of the arc will start with a basketball.

Execution

The goal of the drill is for the team on offense to complete 15 passes in a row, while the defense plays deny defense, attempting to deflect or steal the ball. If they're able to steal the ball – or even deflect it – they switch to offense and offense switches to defense. The first team to complete 15 passes in a row wins.

At first, force the offense to get open simply by using cuts. After the team has run through the drill a couple times and gets more comfortable, you can begin to allow the offense to set off ball screens as well.

Coaching Tips

If you can, divide the teams into fours – this drill can be absolutely exhausting, and it's a good idea to have a fourth player available to sub in when necessary.

Also, feel free to adjust the number of passes in a row required to complete the drill, up or down, depending on the frequency of success the offensive team is having completing the goal.

Lastly, don't forget to make sure the player matchups are players of similar size, athleticism, and ability when possible.

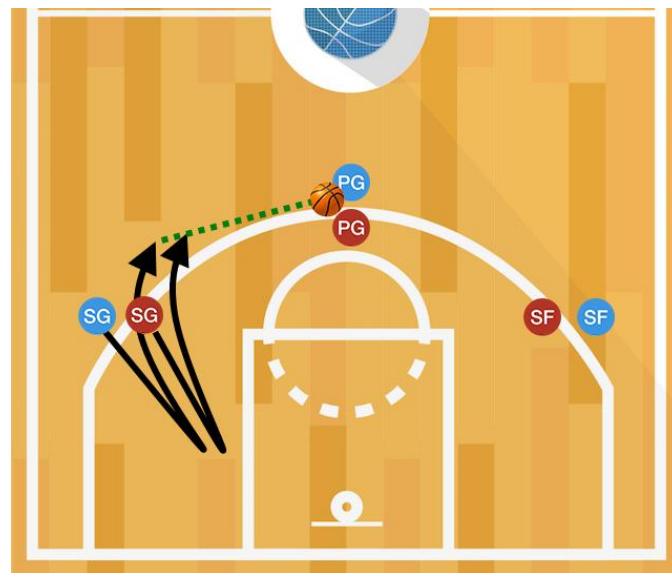


Figure 1: Deny and Deflect Drill

Chasedown Drill

Purpose

To give both offense and defensive players practice in a fast break type chasedown situation.

Setup

The team will form two lines, the first on the right side free throw lane line, and the other on the left side. The first player on the right side will start with a ball on the right block, while the left side starts a couple feet back, on the baseline.

Execution

On the coach's signal, the offensive player will take off, speed dribbling down the court to put the ball in the hoop as quickly as he can. The defensive player will chase down the offensive player, trying his best to block the shot or strip the ball. If the offensive player misses the layup or has his shot blocked, he must do 10 pushups. Once everyone has gone through the drill, offense and defense will switch, and we'll do the drill going back down the other way.

Coaching Tips

It's important that the players are paired off so that they are as close as possible in ability, size and athleticism. You also want to make sure that you don't always have the offensive side on the right – players need to work on speed dribbling and finishing with their left hands as well.

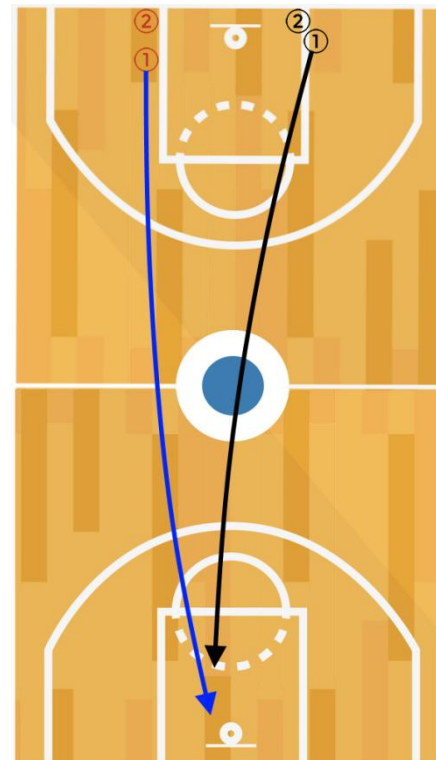


Figure 1: Chasedown Drill

Full court Bengal

Purpose

To teach players the importance of using the pass in transition, as well as how to come back to a player who is in need of help.

Setup

The team will be split into three groups of four, starting with two of the groups on the floor to begin. The coach will start at the free throw line with a basketball, with the teams replicating how they would line up to rebound for a free throw. The bigs will start down on the block, with the guards spread out around the arc.

Execution

The drill will start when the coach shoots the free throw. Both teams will battle for the rebound, and whoever wins that battle will begin on offense. Their goal is to get down to the other hoop to score, while the defense will do everything they can to prevent that. The only catch – the offense can't dribble. The first team to score two baskets wins the round, with the defense switching to offense and trying to score a bucket of their own if they can secure a steal or a rebound. Winner's ball rules – if you score the first bucket, you keep the ball and go back down the other way looking to win the round. First team to win five rounds is the winner, with the losing team running sprints.

Coaching Tips

This drill does a great job of reinforcing the idea that if your teammate is dead and unable to make a pass, calling for the ball isn't enough. It's your job to get open, otherwise it will be a turnover for your team.

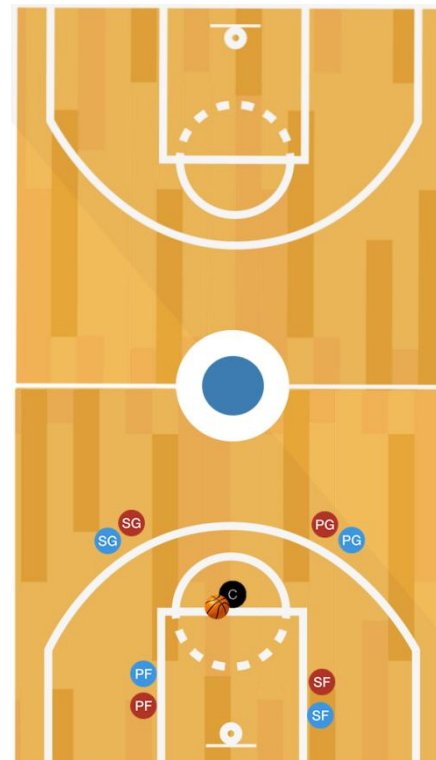


Figure 1: Full court Bengal

Zone Press – 1-2-1-1 Press

Setup

To setup for the 1-2-1-1, you're going to have to assign your players to one of five different roles. The interceptor is the most critical of this press, as he needs to be adept at anticipating passes and have the athleticism to match. He will be positioned as the 1-2-1-1 of the press. Next, you'll want to figure out where each of your bigs will go. The disruptor – the front of the press – needs to be the more athletic and versatile of the two. The other big will fill the position of safety, at the back of the press. The last two players will fill out the wings.

Execution

Ideally, we want to force the ball to be inbounded to the ball side corner, at which point the disruptor and closest wing player can bring the trap. The far wing player will come over to the middle, freeing the interceptor to read the ballhandler's eyes and try to make a play. If the pass is made up the sideline, the interceptor will defend, allowing the wing player time to sprint upcourt and form a second trap just over the halfcourt line.

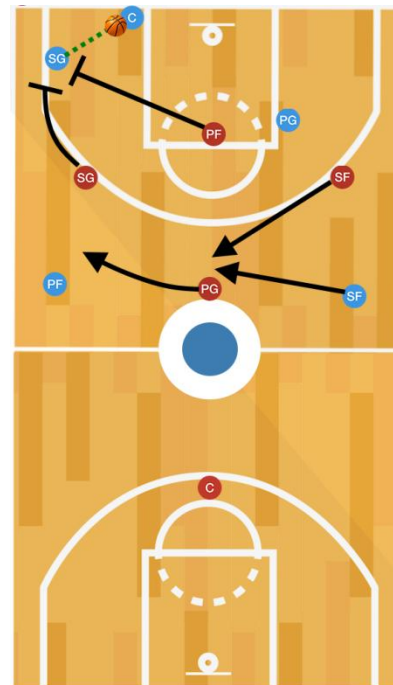


Figure 1: 1-2-11 Press Pt. 1

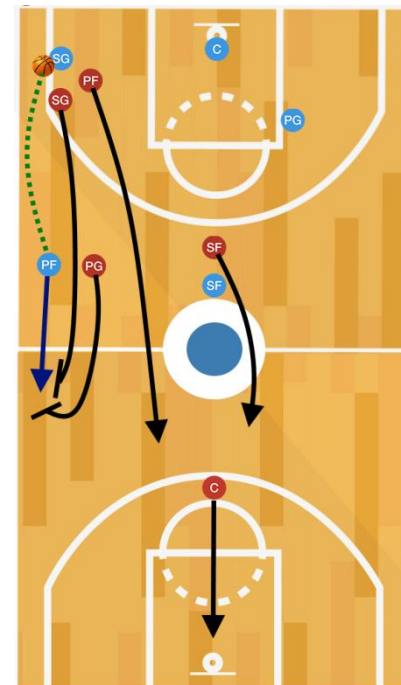


Figure 2: 1-2-11 Press Pt. 2

Coaching Tips

The success of this press lies in your ability to force the ball to the sideline. Traps won't work in the middle because the offense can make a pass in any direction, and a pass into the middle of the press will leave the defender in a 3-1 on situation. You should also do your best to keep the ball in front of the first line for as long as possible. Even if you're unable to secure a trap, that 10 seconds to get the ball over halfcourt is ticking, and time is on your side.

Zone Press – 2-2-1 Press

Setup

There are three levels to the 2-2-1 – the front, middle, and back. The front will usually be your two most agile defenders, generally your point guard and shooting guard. They will start on the elbows. The back line is reserved for your slowest defender, who will play safety at the back. The middle line will likely be for your power forward and small forward line up, with the length to disrupt passes while still possessing the footspeed to recover back if need be.

Execution

The defense will force the pass out to either sideline, and try to set a trap with the front line of the press. The far side player in the second line – the power forward in Figure 1 – will come to the middle of the paint to discourage any passes or penetration to that area. The strong side second line player will look to intercept any passes up the sideline or slow down the ball handler if he is able to break the trap, giving the ball side front line player a chance to come reset. If the first trap is broken, the weak side front line player will drop to the middle of the press, freeing up the weak side second line player to play the role of interceptor, trying to steal any lofty passes made into the front court.

Coaching Tips

The goal with the 2-2-1 press at its core is to force the ball to the sidelines and keep it there. Ideally, this will give players a chance to trap in one of our three hot zones : the baseline-sideline corner and the halfcourt sideline corner, whether before or after they cross halfcourt.

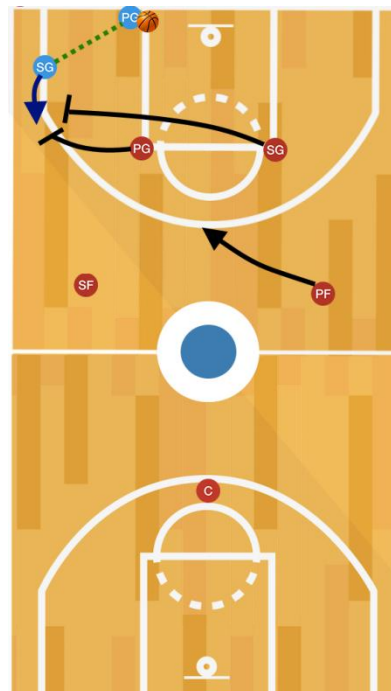


Figure 1: 2-2-1 Press Pt.1

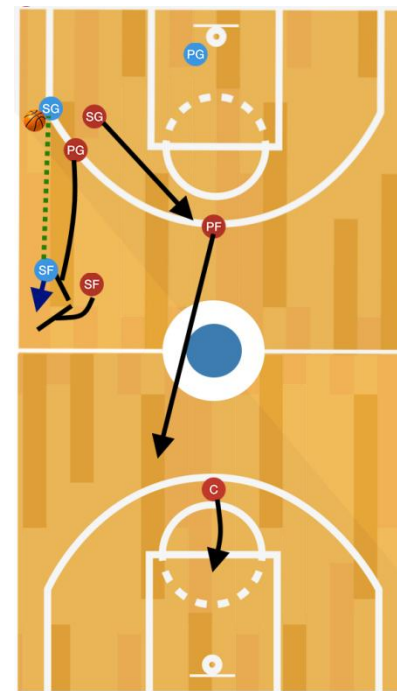


Figure 2: 2-2-1 Press Pt. 2

Man Press

Setup

For this iteration of the man press, the defense will come out matched up man to man, with the exception of the man defending the inbounder – the center in Figure 1 – who will stay back as a safety. The rest of the defenders will line up in front of their matchups, looking to deny the inbound pass.

Execution

The man press can be exhausting, for both the offense and defense. The execution is simple – matchup in the full court, deny the inbounds, and play tight pressure defense for the entire length of the court.

The goal isn't necessarily to trap, however if the offense finds itself in a dead ball situation in any of the ideal trapping areas, you should do your best to get a trap and deny any passes out of it.

Coaching Tips

It's up to you whether you want to go full denial or not off the inbounds – you can also allow the inbounds and go full court pressure from there. You can also bring the safety up and have him harass the inbounder – this will make it much more difficult for them to inbound the ball, but will leave your more vulnerable to passes deep over the top.

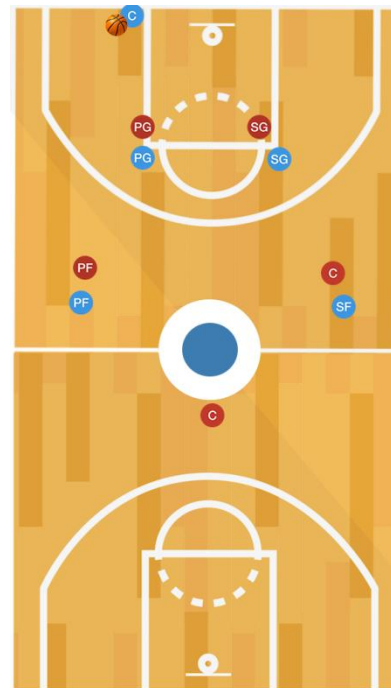


Figure 1: Inbounds Denial



Figure 2: Ideal Trap Areas

Press Break – Guard Stack

Setup

This press break will have the center inbound, while the shooting guard and point guard form a stack at the free throw line. The small forward and power forward will be deep, one on each side, just over halfcourt by the hash marks.

Execution

The play will begin with the shooting guard setting a pick for the point guard, freeing him up to sprint over to the ball side. The shooting guard will sprint over to the weak side, and the power forward will print over from the weak side to the middle of the court, just above the arc. The small forward will read his defender, either coming up to provide another option in the backcourt, or sprinting deep for the Hail Mary pass over the top.

Options

The first look on this and most press breaks is to get the ball to the point guard. If we can't get it to him, look to hit the shooting guard on the weak side or the power forward in the middle of the court. However, if the small forward beats his man deep, you can ignore the point guard and take the deep shot, especially if you've got a center with the strength and accuracy to make that pass consistently.

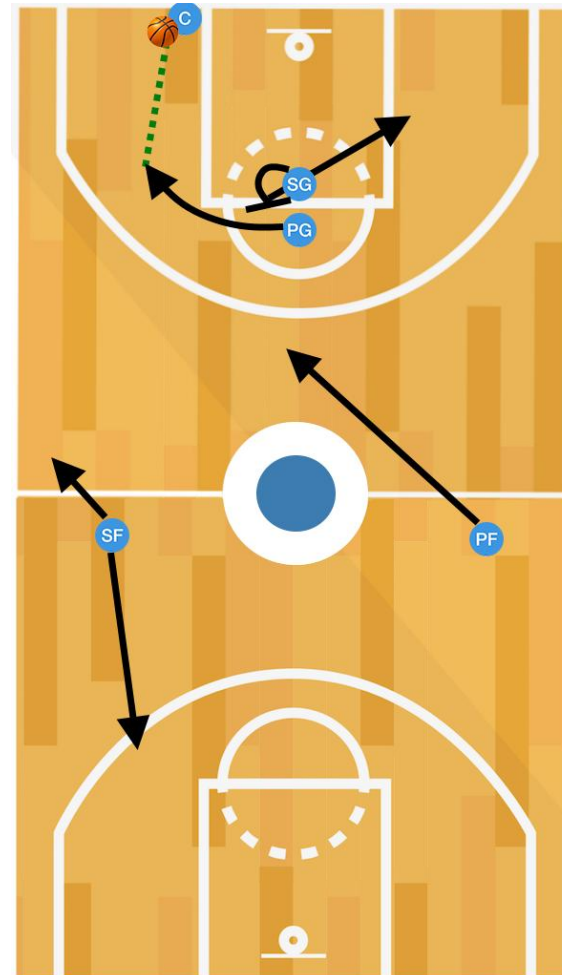


Figure 1: Guard Stack

Press Break – 1-4 Guard Cross Screen

Setup

This next press break will have the team come out in a 1-4 alignment, with the small forward inbounding and the rest of the team lined up on the free throw line extended. The point guard will be on the ball side elbow, with the shooting guard on the other. The power forward will line up on the same side as the point guard while the center lines up on the weak side.

Execution

On the inbounder's signal, the point guard will come down into the paint and then up to set a cross screen for the shooting guard. He will then space out to the weak side as the shooting guard sprints over to the strong side. Both the power forward and center will sprint down the court, clearing out their men with them.

Options

The player receiving the cross screen – the shooting guard in Figure 1 – is the first option. The point guard is the second option, and if either the power forward or center are able to lose their man deep, you can consider throwing the pass over the top.

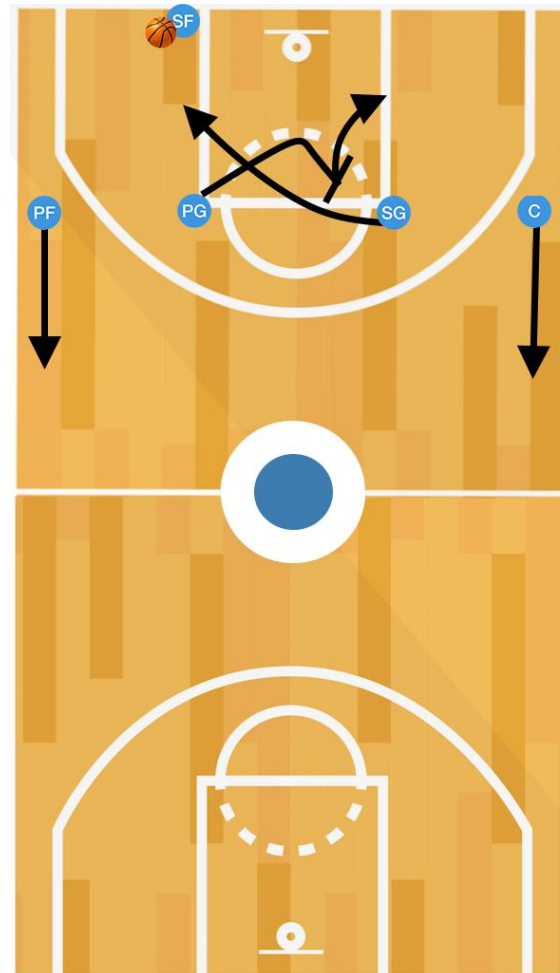


Figure 1: 1-4 Guard Cross Screen

Press Break – 1-4 PG Stagger

Setup

The offense will come out in a 1-4 alignment here, with the center inbounding. The rest of the team will line up on the free throw line extended, with the small forward on the ball side wing, the shooting guard on the ball side elbow, the power forward on the weak side elbow, and the point guard on the weak side wing.

Execution

The play will begin with the power forward heading down towards the near baseline to get in position for the first of two staggered screens for the point guard, with the shooting guard providing the second. The point guard will sprint across the baseline, off the screens, receiving the pass and keeping momentum to keep going right down the floor. The small forward will step towards the ball initially, then take off towards the far hoop.

Options

We're looking to get the point guard open, but once again, if the small forward can get his man out of position and beat him down the court, you have to look at throwing the pass up and over the top.

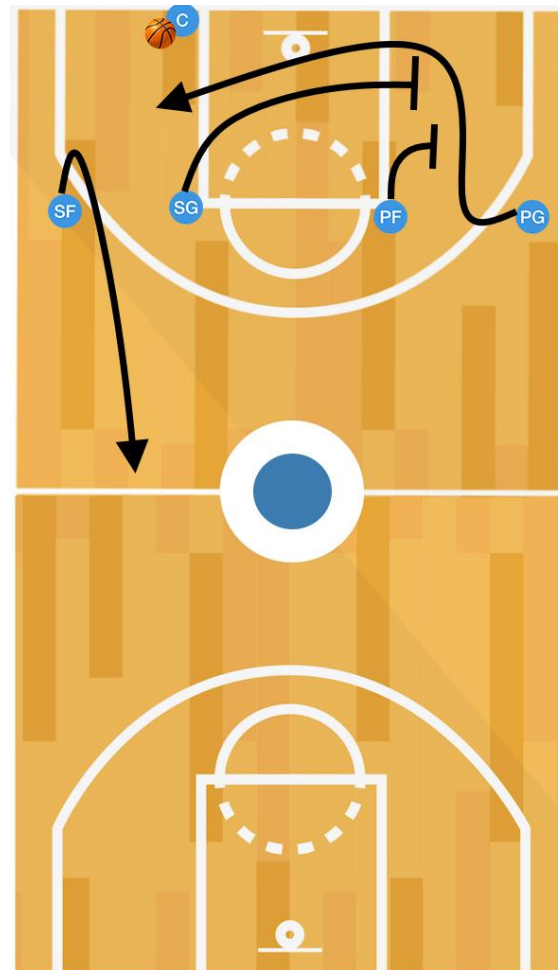


Figure 1: 1-4 PG Stagger

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