

MCA 2026 Clinic Notes

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Zone Offense Concepts & Sets

We try to keep everything consistent and simple while teaching our zone offense concepts and sets. Our philosophy and terminology remain the same, regardless of what pattern we are running, what alignment we are in, or what type of zone we are facing.

I. Philosophy

- a. **Puncture the heart of the zone** – we are trying to get the ball into the center of the zone (the middle of the lane) through penetration or passing
- b. **Find the gray areas** – move the ball and our offensive players into the gaps in the zone where the defenders will likely be confused as to “whose man is that”. Ideally the defenders will either not cover the gray area or over-cover the gray area leading to a wide-open scoring opportunity somewhere else.
- c. Get the **high-percentage shots** – we are looking for power post shots with strong finishes, inside out three-pointers, and then wide-open reversal three-pointers.

II. Terminology – things you will hear our coaches yelling

- a. **Puncture it** – get the ball into the middle of the zone
- b. **Strong** – go to the basket with the intent on finishing off 2 feet and SCORING regardless of contact
- c. **Armpits** – we want our short corner and high-post to face up to the defender and swipe the ball high with our armpits dragging right across the face of the defender
- d. **Sneak** – our cue for our baseline runner to stay behind the bottom of the zone, hopefully in a position where the defenders cannot see them without turning their heads
- e. **Look them off** – cues for our players to look and ball fake one direction to shift the zone to create a passing lane somewhere else
- f. **Look for your partner** – our post players should look to score immediately but then look at the other post who is always flashing towards the basket.
- g. **Attack opposite** – our high post should attack the side of the court opposite of where they came from

- h. **Shooters get ready** – reminder to our perimeters that they should always be preparing for the kickout or reversal 3 and to have their feet and hands ready for that.
 - i. **Be a threat** – reminder to our perimeters, especially our point-guards that they are not simply passing the ball, but looking to attack and shoot on every reception. No blind reversals and no surveying the defense with the ball on top of their head.
 - j. **Flood the corners** – reminder to wing perimeters to fill the corners anytime the high-post receives the ball.
 - k. **Give them a perfect one** – cue to passers to deliver a pass directly into the shooter's shooting hand. The shooter should not have to reach, drop, or extend to receive this pass. Only catch and release.
 - l. **Get your feet under you** – cue to 3 point shooters to have a solid base when they gather into their shot to shoot from the floor up.
- III. Alignments, patterns, etc. (see the diagrams in the PDF documents)
- a. **Hi-Lo** – we primarily used vs a 2-3 zone but it will work against a 1-2-2 as well
 - i. **Basic set**
 - ii. **X**
 - iii. **Fire**
 - iv. **Offset**
 - b. **Rotation** – we use this against any zone including 1-3-1, 1-2-2, box & 1, and triangle & 2 defenses.

3-Point Shooting Drills

The following shooting drills are diagrammed and described in the PDF titled “Three-point shooting drills – Shumaker.” The first two are contests and the others are simple shooting drills that mimic some of our zone and man offense actions. There's nothing spectacular about these but they do simulate game actions which, we believe, leads to more consistent and confident shooting when it matters.

1. Jungle Shooting – contest
2. 30 Deeps – contest
3. Flash & Kick
4. Short corner, flash, attack, and kick
5. Drive & pitch
6. DHO to corner for 3
7. DHO to corner then return 3

The College-bound Athlete

1. **Have realistic conversations with the athlete and parents.** Most players at our level are not D-I or even JUCO level. Kids and parents don't realize that. Help them realize that. Encourage them to attend local college games. Watch in person...not on their phone or tv. The size and speed of the college player must be impressed upon them.
2. **But don't crush dreams.** If you have good rapport with your players, you can encourage them without misleading them. Build the trust in the first year or two in your program so that when they are at the end of their sophomore year you can start helping them explore college options realistically.
3. **Use your connections.** Many of us, especially when we are new to the coaching ranks, do not personally know a lot of college coaches. But you probably have other coaches in your conference who do. When you've got a player who wants to try to play at the next level, see if one of the veteran coaches in your area has a connection to the prospective program. Veteran (old) coaches know everyone. Use them.
4. **Reach out to prospective colleges.** If an athlete has interest in a particular college, reach out to the coaching staff. Don't oversell or undersell your player. Be honest and realistic. In this day and age of the NFHS Network, getting film to the college isn't an issue. But film doesn't tell them what kind of a kid you're hoping to send them. Speak about academics, work ethic, coachability, attendance, etc.
5. **Set your players up for success at college.** Whether your players are hoping to play at the next level or not, we need to prepare them for college, work, and life. Stress academics, attendance, work ethic, perseverance, tolerance, coachability, control of emotions, and the ability to get along with others. Those attributes might not get your athletes a scholarship but they may help them keep one. And they will help them get through challenges in college, work, relationships, and life.
6. **When you've got a "dude", keep the focus on the team.** When you're fortunate enough to have a highly recruited athlete, remember that you're still coaching a team. When the coaching staff from the Cats or Griz show up to your game, your players will know who they're here to see. Even if your star athlete is humble and deflects attention, jealousy can creep in. Do whatever you can to keep your other team members happy and valued while helping your star through the recruiting process.
7. **Strengthen the weaknesses.** As a high school coach, you will likely know your player's strengths and weaknesses (both on and off the court) better than most. Whether it be poor lateral movement or poor school attendance, do what you can within your power to help your athletes out. Regardless if that player will ever touch a basketball after their high school career is over, they all need life skills, and we are in a unique position to help strengthen them.