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### **Title: Theory of 3:2:1 zone defence**

Zone defence 3:2:1 is considering as a deep zone formation, because some of the players already in their basic (initial) position stand apart from the six metres line, moved forward in a playing field. Players stand in their basic position in three lines (some authors describe it as two lines) and formed a kind of triangle. Beside six metres line stand right back (RB) and left back (LB) defenders and centre half (CH). A little bit deeper in a playing field (at 7 - 8 metres from the line) stand right (RH) and left (LH) halves. At the centre of the playing field stand the player who has the deepest position – front centre (FC) at about 9 metres (Figures 1, 2 3 and 4).

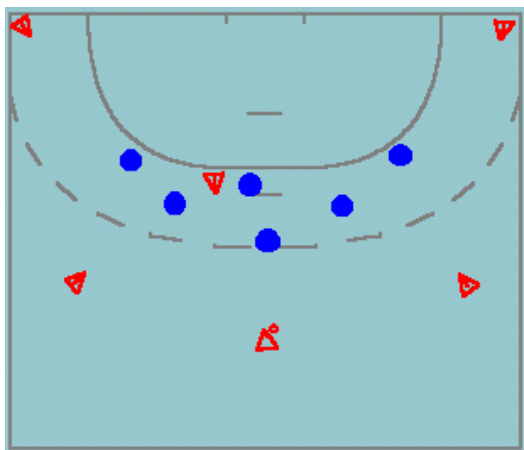


Figure 1: Player's basic position in 3:2:1 zone defence

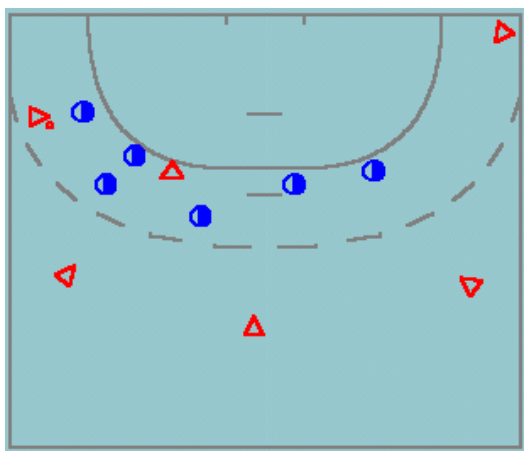


Figure 2: Player's basic position in 3:2:1 zone defence when the ball is on the wing

In my opinion this defence formation demands, apart of an excellent individual performance, very good collaboration among all players (team and group tactic). All the players have to respect certain rules at their actions. Only in this case we can aspect success with this defence. The main task of the RB and LB is to provide a good width of the zone and to prevent shoots from the wing position. With this purpose they use especially side acting along the six metres line. Rarely and only as an exception (when they have to correct the mistake of other players) they act also in depth. So they don't have a task to hinder a pass between back player in attack and wing player. But they have a very important role at guarding the pivot player, especially

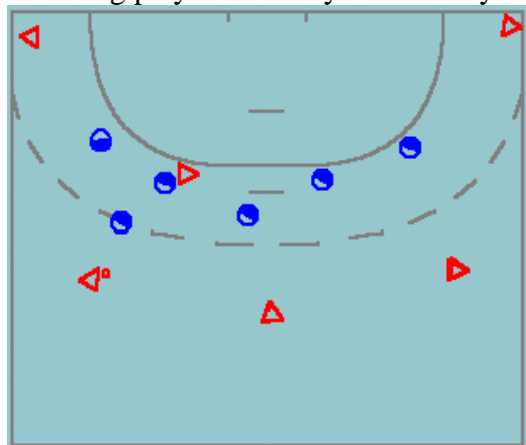


Figure 3: Player's basic position in 3:2:1 zone defence when the ball is in the possession of the back player

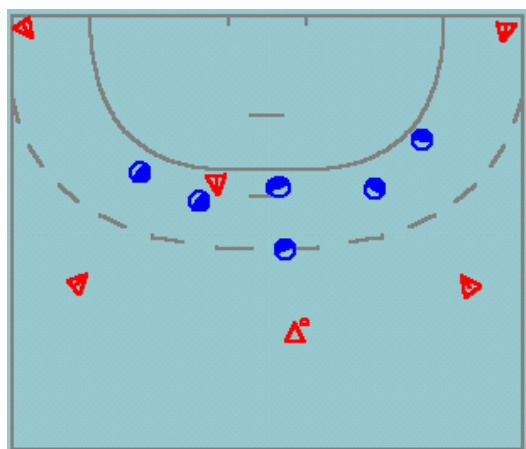


Figure 4: Player's basic position in 3:2:1 zone defence when the ball is in the possession of the central back player

when he moves in a very width position. So they help the CH whose primary task is to guard a pivot player (in collaboration with other players). At the same time CH also help other players in emergency cases - he's some kind of corrector and leader of the defence. In principle he's acts are limited to movements beside six metres line. He lives this position only as an exception when pivots try to blockade RH, LH or FC. In this case he can move forward with the pivot and try to perform good hand over of pivot and take over of back attacker. In theory and practice we can find also other solution of the CH acting in the case of blockade. CH can remain beside the six metres line and control the situation from that position. In this case halves and front centre are obligated to avoid blockade and act properly against their back player (Figure 5 a, b).

If one can choose one or other solution when the opponents attack with one pivot, it's necessary to provide the second type of CH acting in the case when opponents attack with two pivots. Both halves (RH and LH) are basically responsible to prevent shots from the distance and penetrations of left and right backs. Beside this they have to help by guarding the pivot – they try to keep the density of defence. For this two players are characteristically so called triangle motion in distance and than back to the six metres line when the ball is on the other side of the playing court. Very similar role has also FC who guard central back player. At the same time he helps RH and LH when they want to stop left and right back attackers. If motion of the players in zone defence 3:2:1 is executed properly and fast enough the form of the defence is always similar to form of triangle. At the same time the players have to keep the right interacting distances among them.

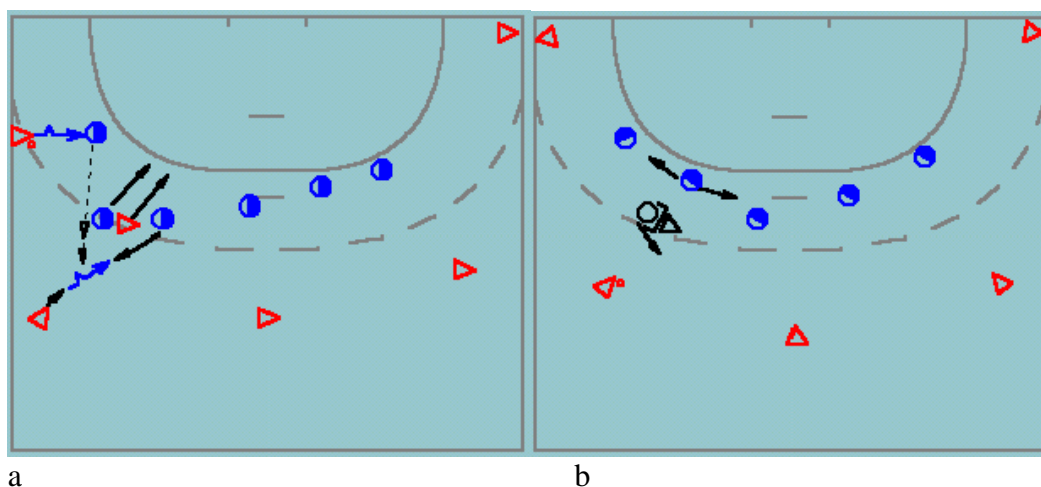


Figure 5a, b: Player's position when the ball is in the possession of the left back and pivot blockade right half. Centre half move forward with the pivot (a) or remain beside the six metre line (b).

The very special problem of this defence formation is the transformation of attack in a play with two pivots. Even when one of the attackers simply runs in that create great problems. In that case defenders have to change a little beat their motion and tasks if they want to keep the efficiency of defence (Figure 6).

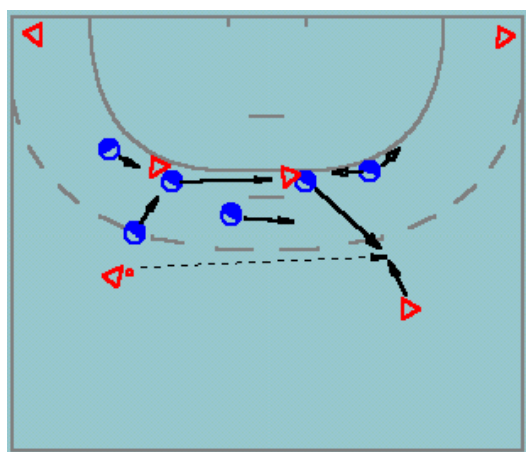


Figure 6: Position of defenders when attackers play with two pivots.

Collaboration among defenders has to be excellent, especially by guarding pivot players. First task of the defenders is to make difficult run in of the attackers. They can perform that action with their bodies in accordance with rules. The main aim of this action is that attackers arrive at a right position with a certain delay. That helps defenders to prepare themselves for the new type of attack. Now all defenders have to act very quickly and aggressive - their aim is to interrupt the attack with a foul as soon as possible. The role of FC changes the most and became very special. Usually he remains without an opponent against whom he has to act, because in the middle of the playing court is empty place (CB is on a pivot position). But he has many different tasks which he has to fulfil. In the first moment he has to move back towards a six metres line (7-8 m) and help to prevent the pass to a pivot player who is on the diagonal position. But he also has to master the space at the centre of the playing court. So if the back player makes his penetration toward the centre he has to move very quickly against him and try to prevent a shoot from distance (9 metre) (Figure 7).

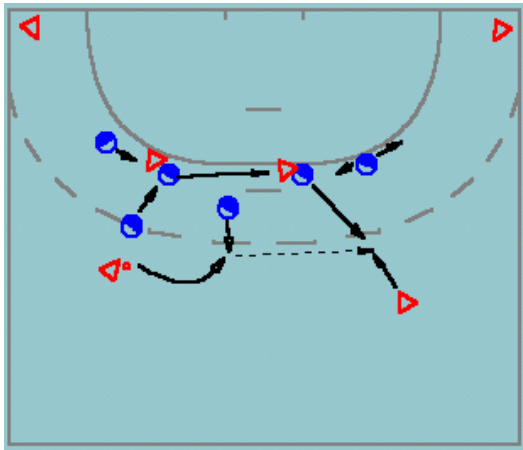


Figure 7: Position of defenders and their correct reaction in the case when attackers play with two pivots and back player penetrate toward centre.

Beside the described way of acting, players in 3:2:1 zone defence may sometimes situational play deeper and more aggressive. It's properly especially when the opponents try to attack without transformation in game with two pivots and back players are not mobile enough (Figure 8).

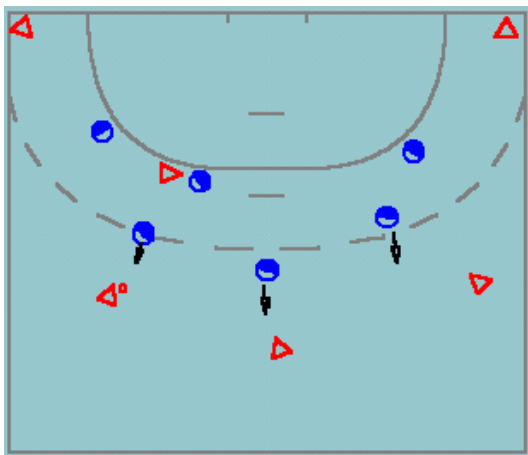


Figure 8: More aggressive and deeper position of the front line defenders when the ball is in the possession of the back attacker.

As I mentioned before a good collaboration among all players is essential for the efficiency of 3.2:1 zone defence. So the players have to respect some basic rules how to help each other when the attackers win an advantage against certain defender. Basically halves help back players if the wing penetrates to centre; FC help halves if the back attackers penetrate to centre and halves help FC if central back attacker penetrate between him and FC; back players

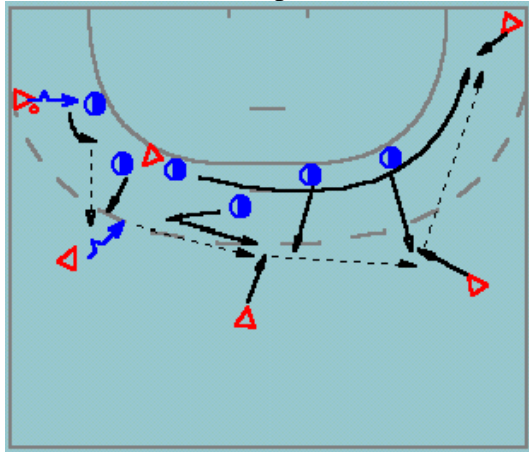


Figure 9: Collaboration among defenders when the attackers win an advantage against certain defender

may help halves when they are forced to help FC. This is also the only situation when the back players may live the six metres line.

And finally CH try to correct the situation on the line against wing player, if other players didn't succeed to interrupt the attack (Figure 9) . There are also different other possibility's how to manage this situations.