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Zone Defense Variation

OVER THE YEARS, THERE HAS BEEN A HUGE PROLIFERATION OF ZONE DEFENSES IN THE SPORT. TEAMS THAT ARE MOST SUCCESSFUL AT PLAYING ZONE D TEND TO HAVE MULTIPLE ZONES THAT ARE VARIATIONS OFF OF A BASIC ZONE STRUCTURE. THE VARIATIONS USE MINOR POSITION CHANGES TO ALTER THE SPACE ON THE FIELD THAT THE OFFENSE CAN ATTACK. THESE CHANGES CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLOCKS AS THE OFFENSE IS UNABLE TO ADJUST TO THE NEW POSITIONING.

Some zones are particularly effective against an opponent due to the weather conditions or the opponent's skill set.

Highlighted below are two variations off of the standard Force Middle or 3-3-1 zone defense that can provide your defense with a different look. The zones are described by their differences from the standard zone set and include a look at positional responsibilities as well as the zone's strengths and weaknesses.

4-Person Cup Zone Defense

The 4-2-1, or four person cup zone defense, is a popular defense at many levels in women's Ultimate and effective against teams that lack strong overhead throws or in difficult throwing conditions. The 4-2-1 defense is similar to a standard zone except the short-deep joins the cup. This allows the cup to cover more area, and prevent and contain throws through or around the cup. The bigger cup comes at the expense of a weakness behind the cup that can be exploited by good hammers and scoobers. Handler movement that crashes the cup from the backfield is also difficult to stop and can open up holes through the cup.

In the 4-2-1 there are four players in the cup, two points (on the out-sides) and two middles (See Figure A). These four players are responsible for containing the disc and preventing throws through the cup. The zone always forces the disc to the middle of the field with one of the points marking. The two wings are responsible for preventing continuation throws around the cup and for throws over the cup when the disc is on the opposite side of the field from them. The deep is responsible for throws further downfield.

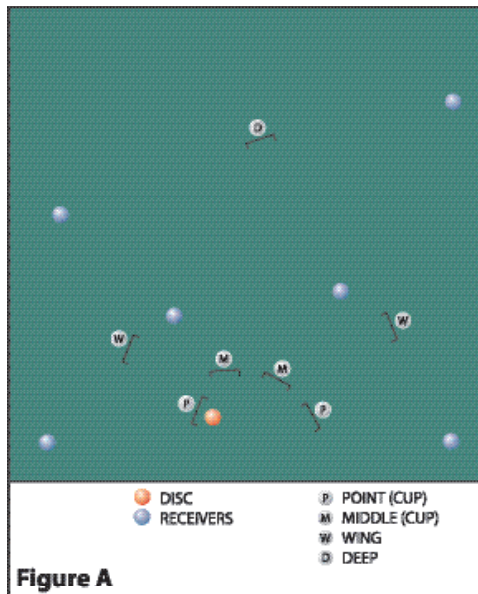


Figure A

The large cup forces handlers to reset throws backwards in order for them to get around the cup on the continuation. The 4-2-1 is slightly stronger on the sidelines where the cup can slide around to force even deeper resets to move the disc around the cup. If handlers are not positioned well, the offense will often have a tough time moving the disc around the field and get pushed further and further back.

Trap Zone

The trap zone defense allows open throws to one sideline and then traps the disc there; utilizing the sideline to make throws difficult. There are multiple variations on the trap zone – the most frequent variable is the designation of responsibilities when the disc is trapped on the line. Below is one effective way of running a trap zone defense. The example that follows will be for a zone that traps on the forehand sideline (for right-handers).

The positions in a trap zone are push-point, middle-middle, trap-point, weak-side wing, trap-side wing, short-deep, and deep-deep. The push-point is responsible for marking the thrower whenever the disc is not on or near the trap sideline, forcing the thrower toward the trap sideline. The push-point should be in position to stop reset throws directly backfield and be ready to cut off continuation throws off of resets back to the break side of the field.

The middle-middle is directly downfield of the thrower and is responsible for throws downfield. The trap-point is positioned horizontally to the middle-middle and is also responsible for throws downfield. These three players, the push-point, middle-middle, and the trap-point, should be positioned to take away downfield throws and throws to the break side of the field while creating an inviting lane to throw to the trap sideline.

The weak-side wing is positioned in the gap between the on-side point and the middle-middle and is responsible for preventing throws through that gap and containing the offense if the disc breaks around the cup. The trap-side wing is positioned behind and off of the trap-point and is responsible for containing the offensive receivers on the trap side of the field. This wing must be in position to prevent the offense from gaining too many yards on throws to the trap sideline, but should make the side look inviting by allowing the offense to gain some yards as they move the disc toward the trap sideline. The short-deep is positioned behind the middle-middle and the trap-point and is responsible for preventing throws over those two defenders. The deep-deep is positioned behind the short-deep and is responsible for deep throws. Figure B illustrates the trap zone defensive positions

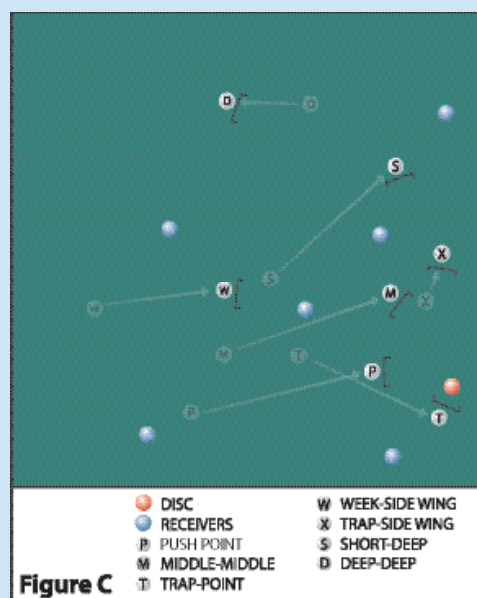
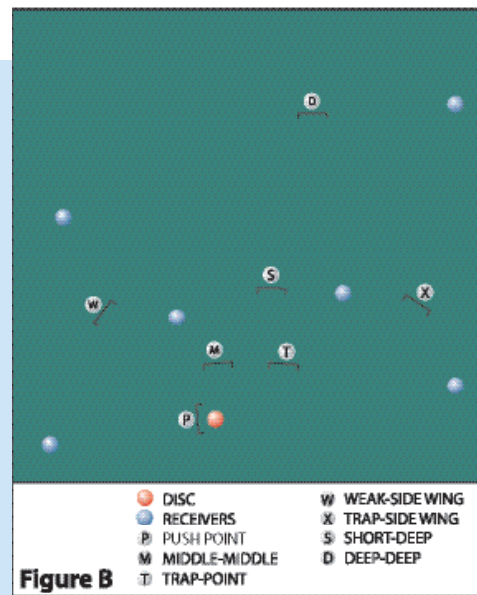
while the disc is in the middle of the field. The whole defense is positioned in such a way that the offense can gain easy yardage by moving the disc to the trap sideline. However, once the disc moves to that sideline in Figure C, the defense adjusts and utilizing the sideline, clamps down to make throwing options difficult.

Within five yards of the sideline the defense adjusts on the "Trap!" call of the middle-middle. As indicated in Figure C, the trap-point now marks and is positioned to prevent throws straight back field. The push-point is positioned in the lane even with the thrower in order to prevent inside-out breakmark throws across the field.

The middle-middle is positioned downfield of the push-point and takes away downfield throws across the field. The trap-side wing is positioned on the sideline taking away throws directly down the sideline. These four defenders (the trap-point, push-point, middle-middle, and trap-side wing) are essentially playing a four person cup that is positioned horizontally to prevent throws off of the sideline. The weak-side wing covers the area behind the cup even with the disc and slightly downfield and is positioned to prevent overhead throws. The short-deep moves to cover deep throws down the trap sideline. The deep-deep is positioned to prevent throws over the cup further downfield.

The trap zone defense is a particularly effective defense in cross-wind conditions with the trap forcing the downwind side of the field. Because the defense overloads the trap side of the field when the disc is on or near the sideline, one solid breakmark throw can result in the defense being out of position and an easy score for the offense, so the trap zone is less effective if there is one great thrower or the wind is not difficult to throw through.

Utilizing variations off of a basic zone allows a defense to throw multiple different looks at an offense while reducing the amount of time spent at practice teaching different defensive sets. You can throw complexity at your opponent while keeping it simple for your players!



P R E S I D E N T ' S C O L U M N

Club Restructuring Continued

(Continued from pg 3) Other topics that will be addressed by the restructuring process are:

- regional boundaries
- the growing masters/grand masters divisions and how they fit in to the series
- ways to showcase the highest levels of competition in venues that will attract fans and media attention
- opportunities to invite international teams to come compete against the top US teams

A plan is currently being developed to create a "US Open" event comprised of both high-level competition (to address the last two bullet points), as well as workshops, training opportunities, family-friendly gatherings and other events to bring in participants from across the Ultimate spectrum. Any club restructure will have

to address how such an event would fit into the club series as a whole.

At the conclusion of the task force meeting, a smaller steering committee made up of staff, board and other volunteers was charged with putting together a plan that will address some of the goals and priorities outlined above. Our goal is to have a draft of such a plan ready for the Board to discuss at the January Board meeting and then for public feedback shortly thereafter. As with the college restructuring process, some changes may begin to take effect in the 2011 club series, while more far-reaching changes will likely begin in 2012.

We're very excited at the array of playing opportunities that a restructured Club Series will bring to all our club members, and are working hard to ensure that the plan is put together in a careful and thoughtful way, while making sure to give people plenty of notice to any changes that may affect them.