



## Vision Basketball Tournament MERCY RULE Explained

Hello Coach,

We do not have an official MERCY RULE for our Vision Basketball Tournaments. There is a reason for this:

When the game of basketball is played, the rules allow for teams at all levels to play full court defense as they wish. Many organizations & tournaments have instituted a MERCY RULE and for very good reasons.

Some coaches who get up by 20-30-40 or even 50 points are still playing a full court pressing defense which can be demoralizing for the losing team. Frustrations result and quite frankly, neither side is gaining any developmental benefit from this approach. We are coaching to develop our players and should be doing so in a safe environment.

Hence, many organizations employ the MERCY RULE strategy to promote sportsmanship and respect for the game as well as respect for opponents.

Because there is no official rule which prohibits pressing or even zone defense for youth basketball, Vision Basketball does not have a rule to prohibit the use of these strategies. Canada Basketball's LTAD suggests that a pressing defense and zone defense not be used in youth sport because it is detrimental to development.

Having said this, all coaches are fully expected to exercise thoughtful decision-making by pulling off a pressing defense once they have a comfortable lead. Coaches can decide what a comfortable lead is.

Coaches are very familiar with MERCY RULES in other leagues, therefore, are able to make the right decision in a Vision Basketball tournament with respect to removing a press at the appropriate time.

As for zone defense, teams can play zone defense if they wish – full court or half court. Please note that from a well-researched developmental perspective, zone defense is not recommended for youth - a MERCY RULE is also highly recommended for youth. Teaching a zone defense and using it sparingly can be an effective strategy.

When many of us travel to the USA to play in youth tournaments, we face zone defenses and full court presses often for the entire game. The USA teams are not intentionally promoting unsportsmanlike behaviours, they are simply adhering to the rules of the game of basketball which do not prohibit zones or include a MERCY RULE.

Therefore, in the spirit of sportsmanship, respect for the game and respect for your opponent, please exercise acceptable standards when utilizing pressing & zone defenses. The ball is in your court...

Thank you,

**Mark Hogan, ChPC**  
Vision Basketball

