

Defensive Three Seconds:

A defensive player is not allowed inside the key area for more than three seconds unless he is guarding the player with the ball or is *actively* guarding an opponent without the ball. To be considered actively guarding, a defender must be within an arm's length of an opponent. If an offensive player cuts through the key, the defender must move along with (or otherwise actively guard) the offensive player to be considered legal. That is, just because an offensive player suddenly comes within an arm's length of a defender in the key, it does not necessarily mean the defender is actively guarding him. In determining when a defensive player in the key becomes illegal, the defensive three-second count *is*:

- (1) Stopped when a player is in the act of shooting,
- (2) Stopped when there is a loss of team control of the ball,
- (3) Stopped when the defender is actively guarding an opponent (discussed above),
- (4) Stopped when the defender completely clears the 16-foot lane, meaning both feet must be outside the lane lines, or
- (5) Suspended when it is apparent the defender will imminently become legal, meaning that if defender is clearly on his way to exit the lane, the count will be suspended provided he ultimately clears the lane. However, if the player stops before clearing the lane, the count will be considered to have been continuous, and he will be assessed a defensive three-second violation if his time in the lane exceeds three seconds.