

# Playbook

## Own The Zones Doubles



Every tennis player has three pillars – Tactical, Mental and Technical.

OTZ Doubles extensively address Tactical and Mental. The Own the Zones Doubles Drill Series will focus on court movement, shot selection, and tactical concepts in the doubles game.

The key to the OTZ program focuses on the two-up formation. This is the most aggressive, and if adopted well, the most effective for breaking down your opponents. The approach of OTZ is to identify the most common mistakes we make in doubles, then apply key tactical concepts to overcome them.

### Guiding Principles of Doubles Play

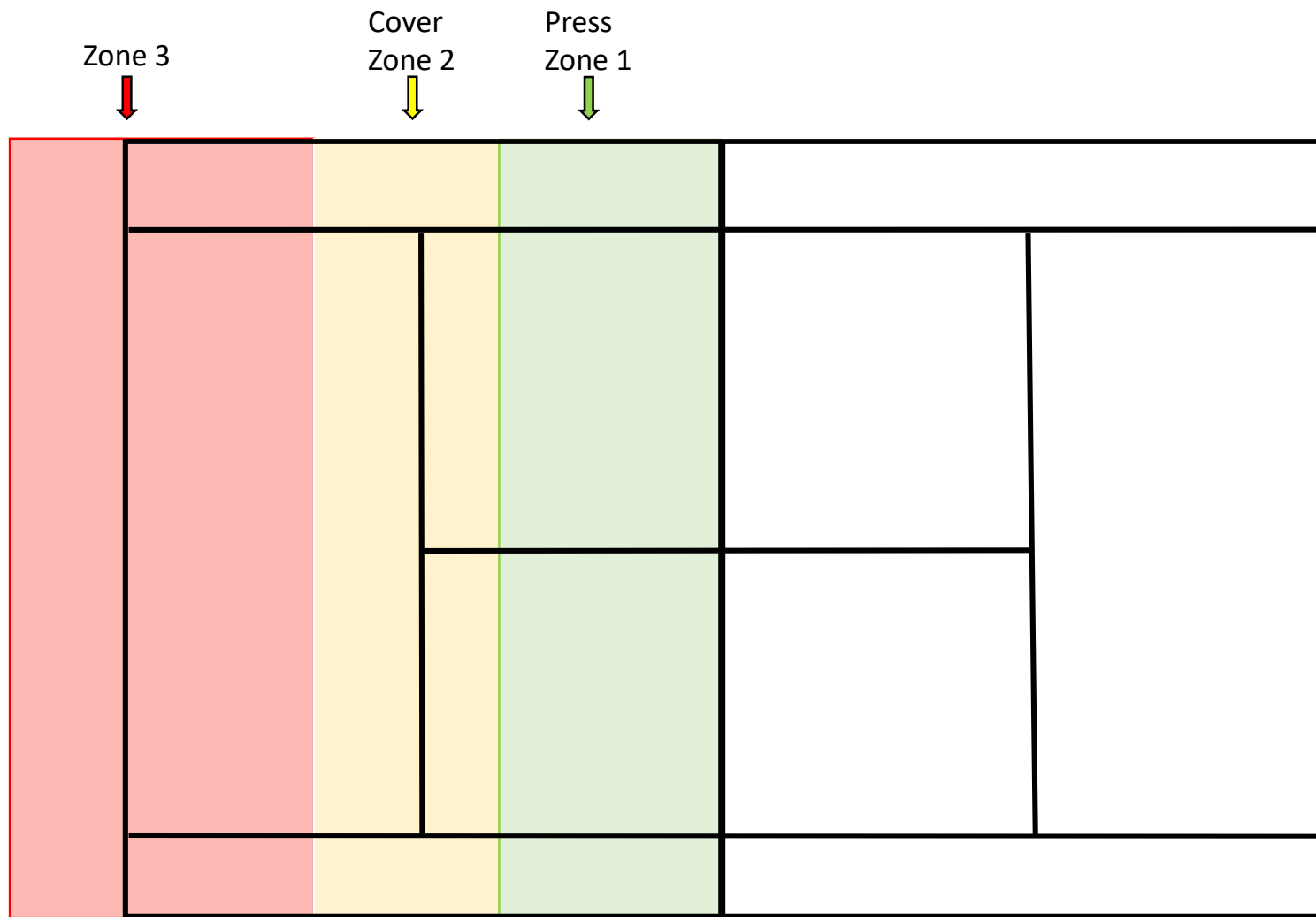
1. **ATP = “Apply Tremendous Pressure”**
2. Take a “First Explosive Step” to the ball
3. Attack the ball from a balanced position (Split)
4. Become a Zone 2 MASTER
5. Always cover your middle (***Pinch The Hitter***)
6. Keep the Game in front of you
7. Be GREAT communicators
8. Have NO FEAR – of making mistakes

### Common Issues to Fix

- Eye discipline
- Split step
- Bad angles
- Shot selection
- Lob coverage

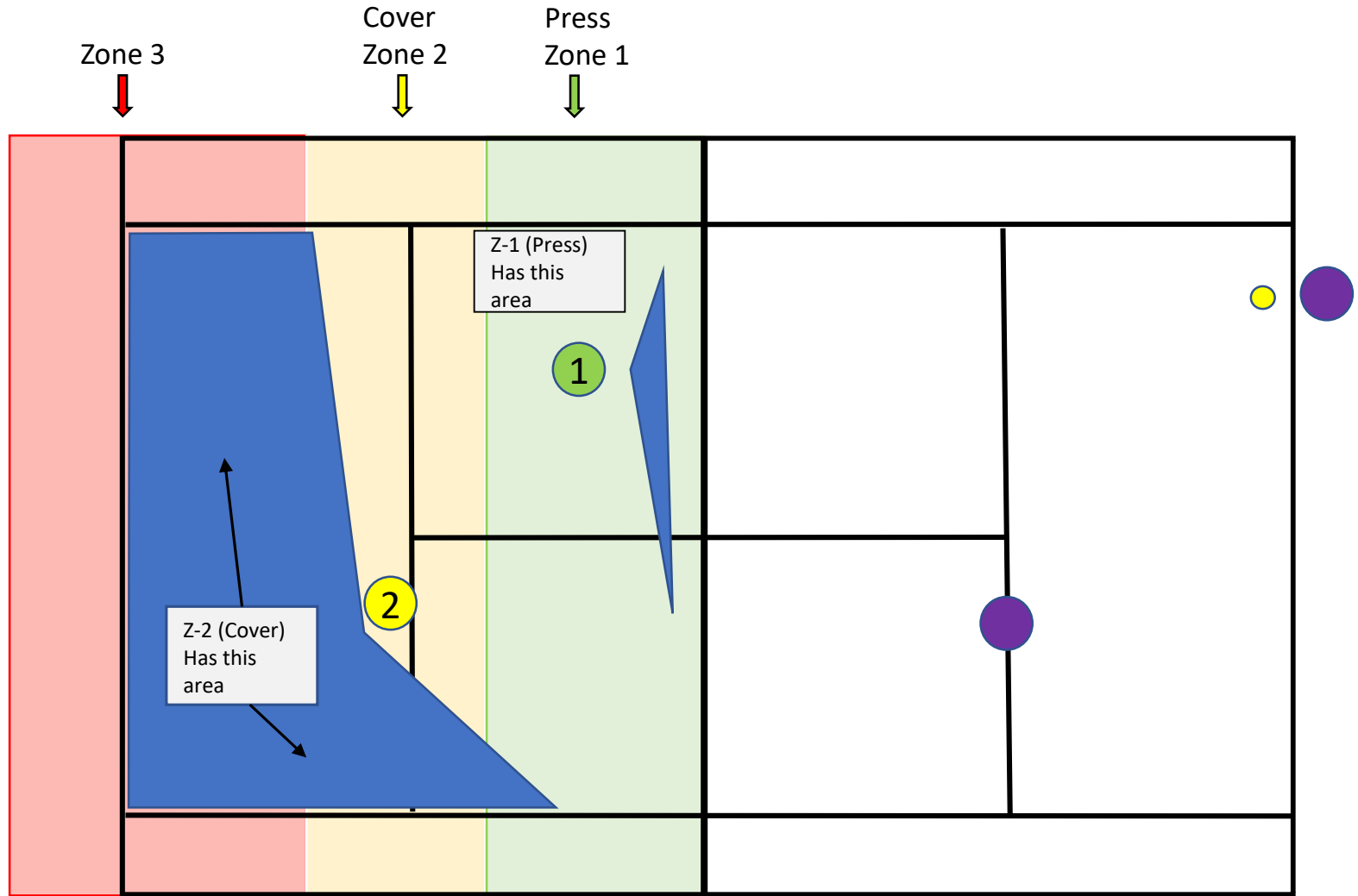
# The "Zones"

## Own The Zones Doubles



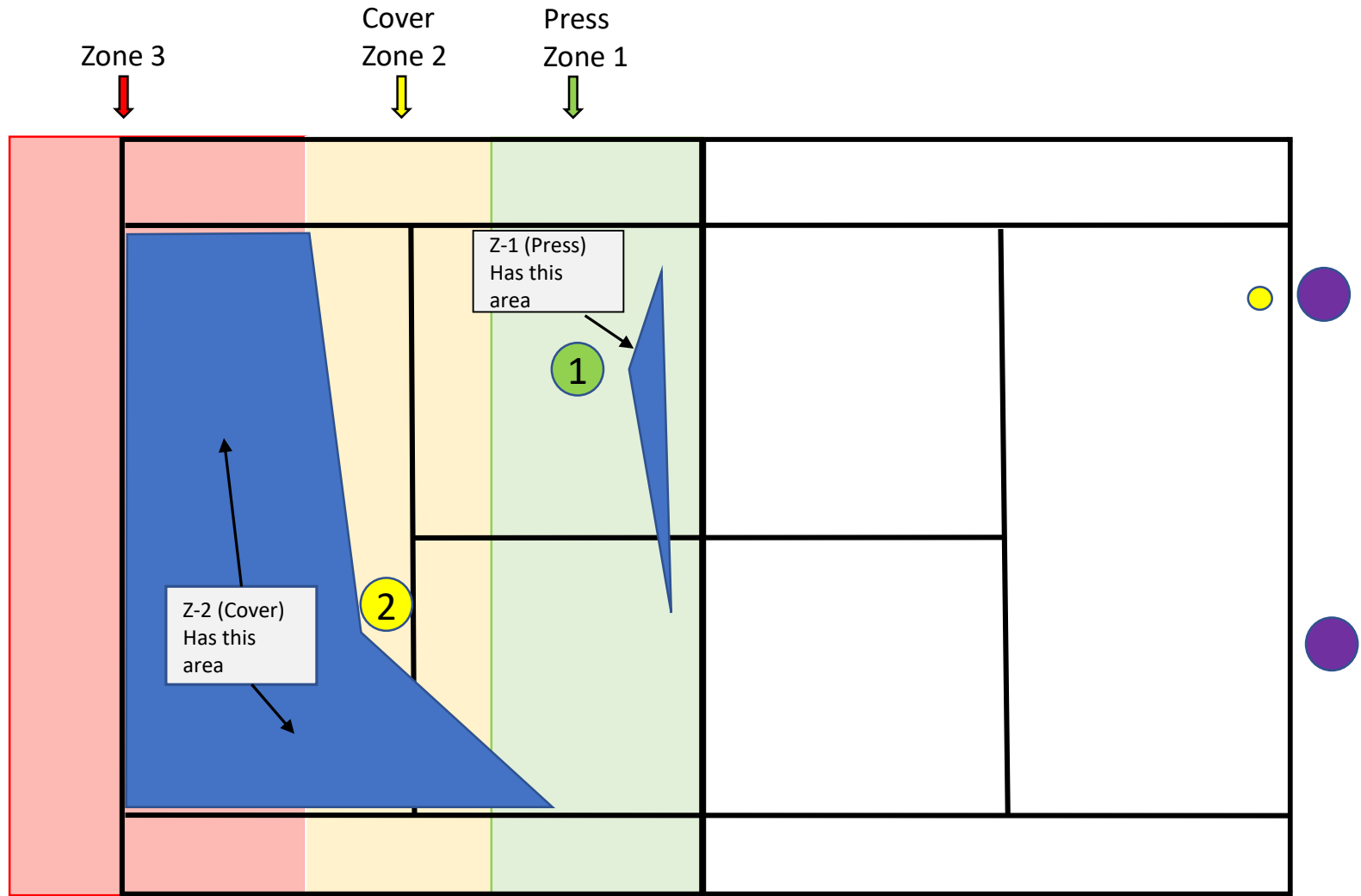
# Press & Cover vs 1 up / 1 back – Court Coverage

## Own The Zones Doubles



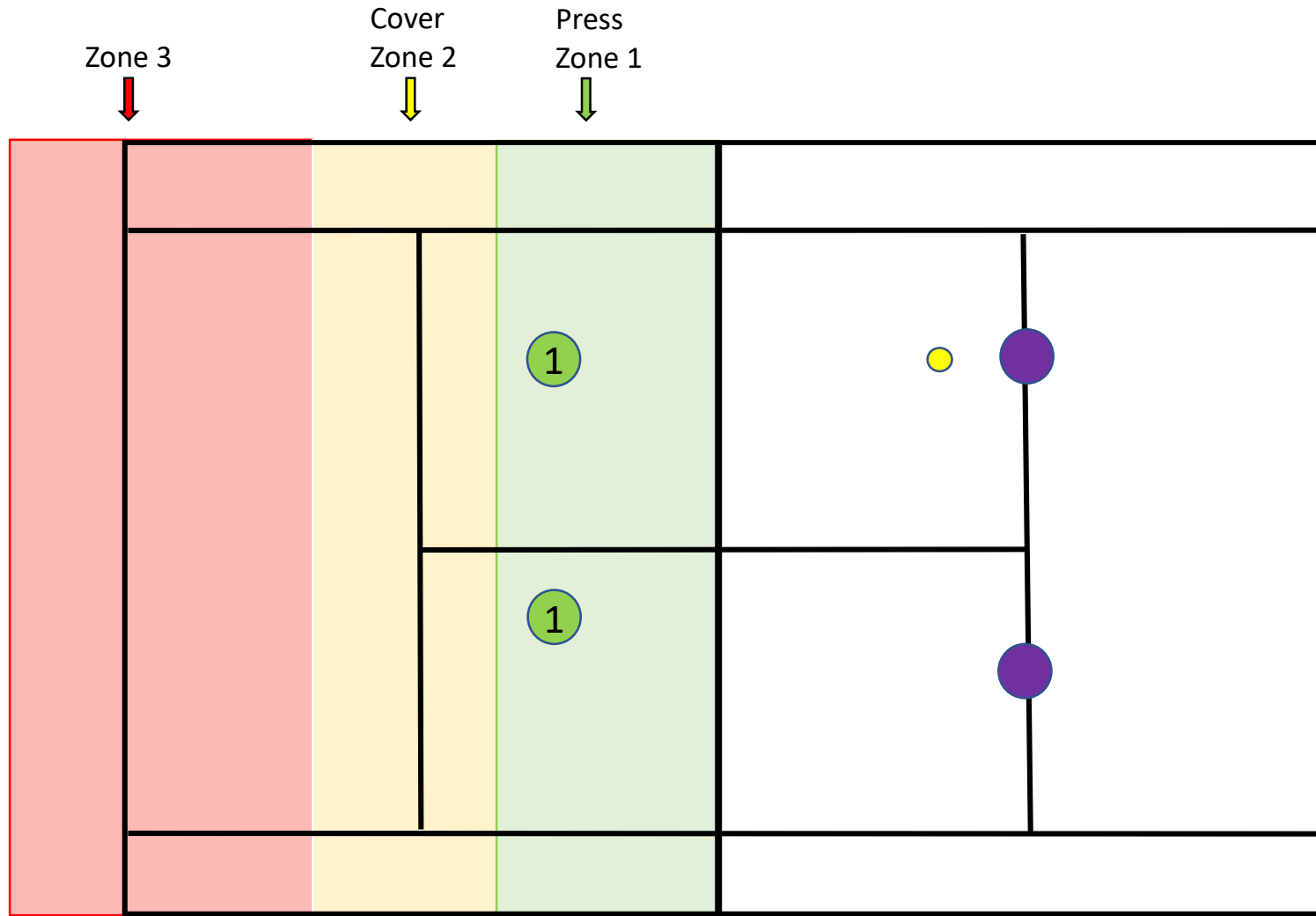
# Press & Cover vs 2 back – Court Coverage

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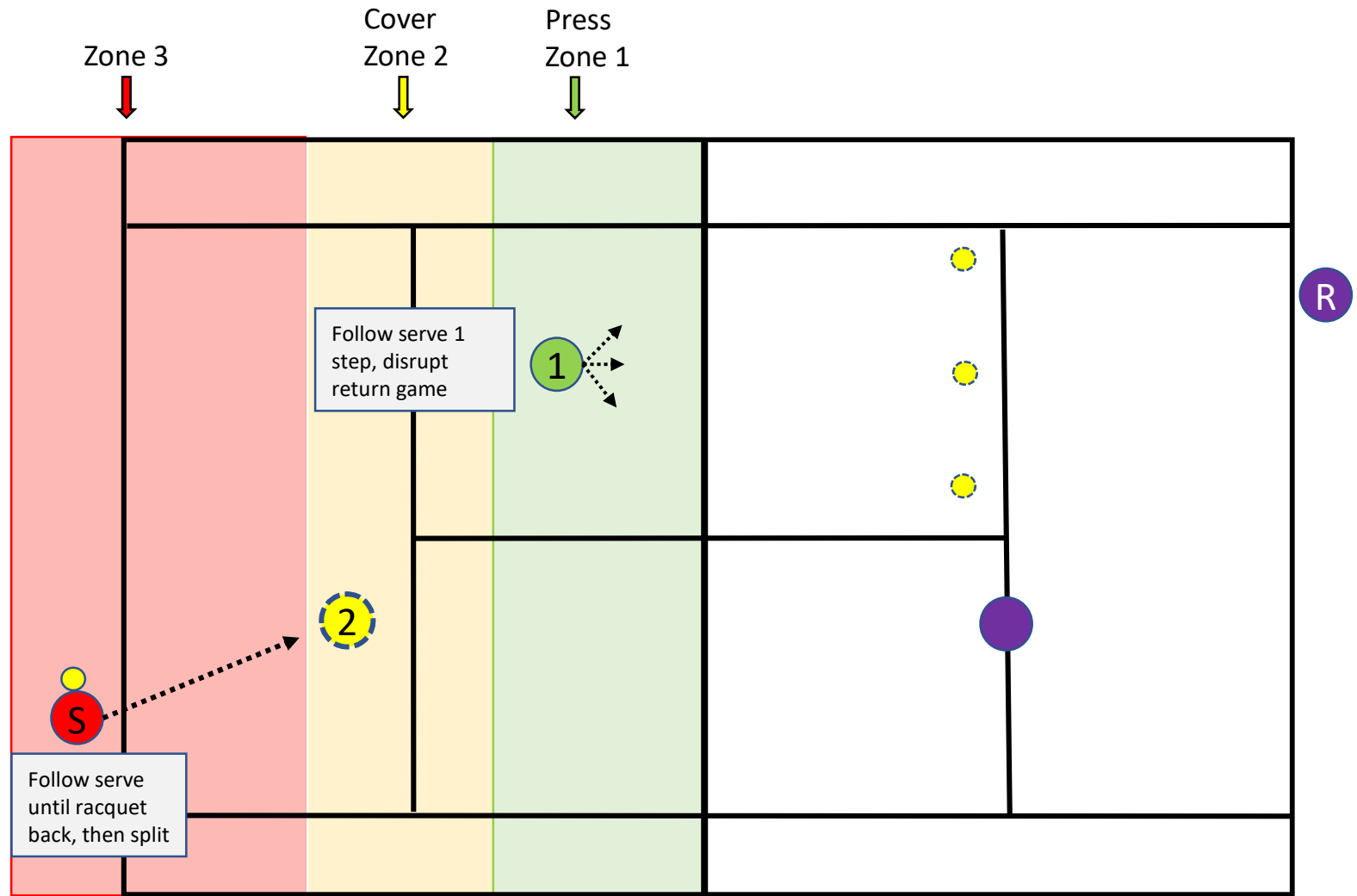
# vs 2 up = No Press & Cover

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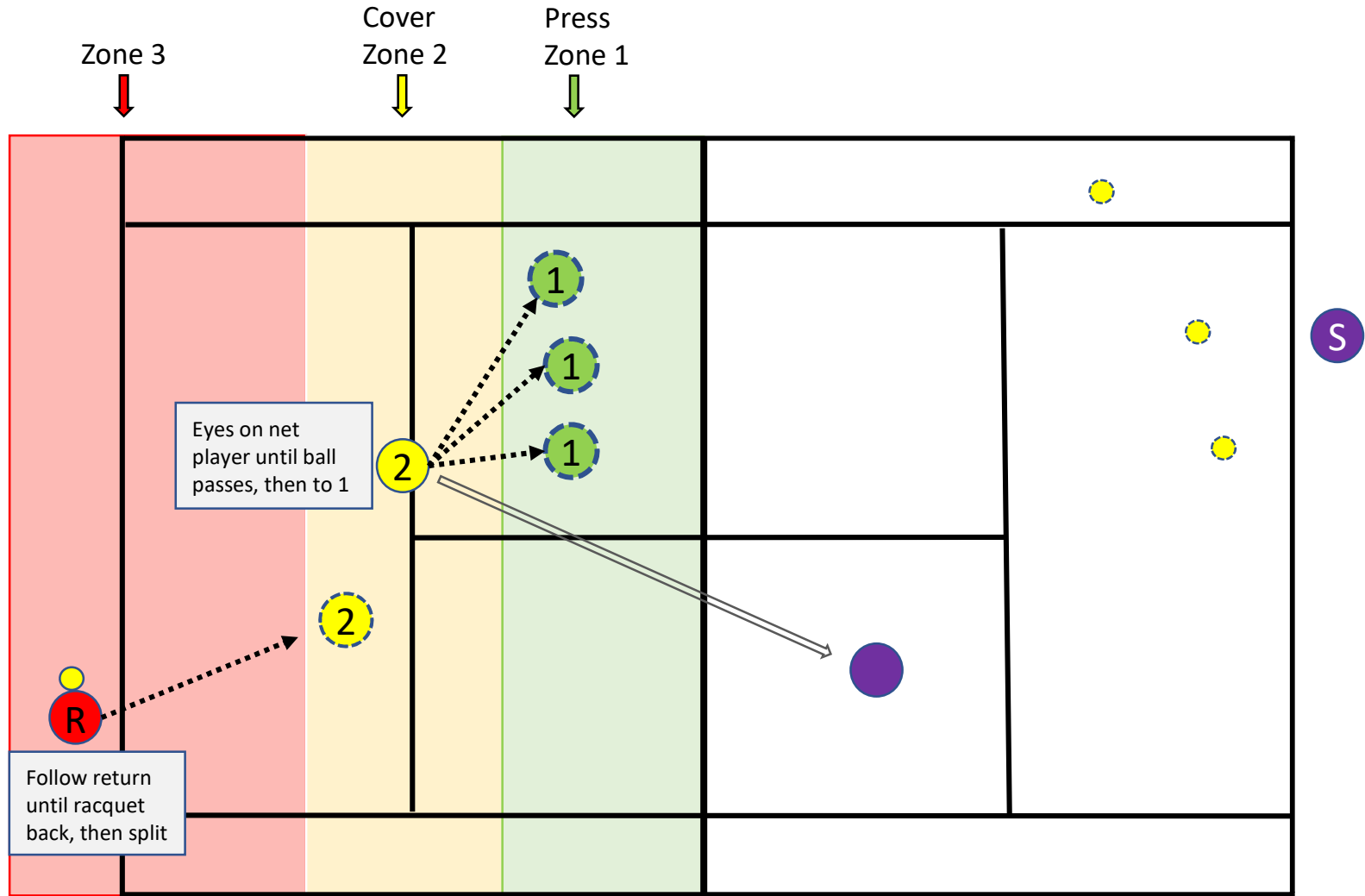
# Serving Team Movement

## Own The Zones Doubles



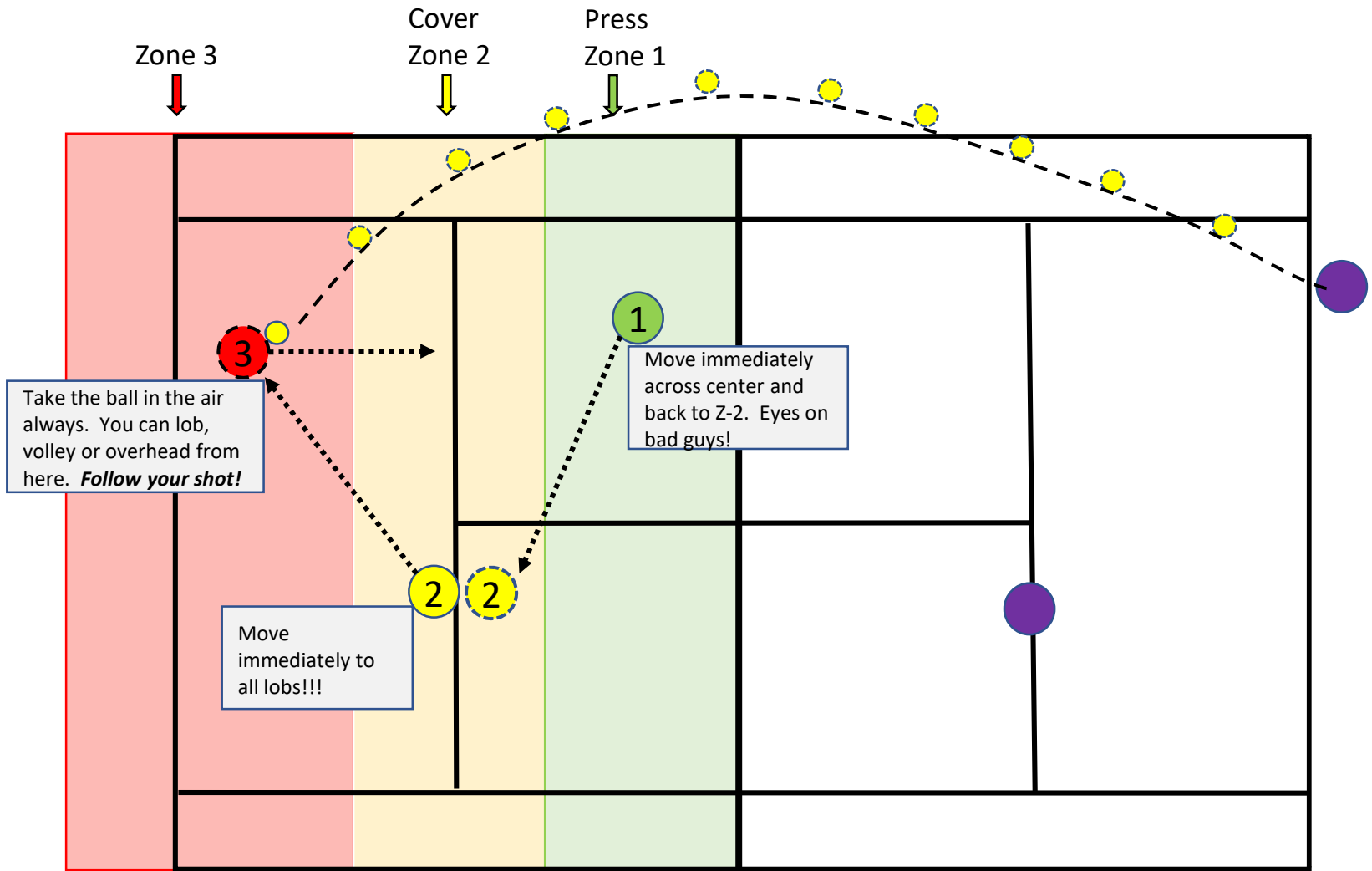
# Return Team Movement

## Own The Zones Doubles



# Lob Cover Movement

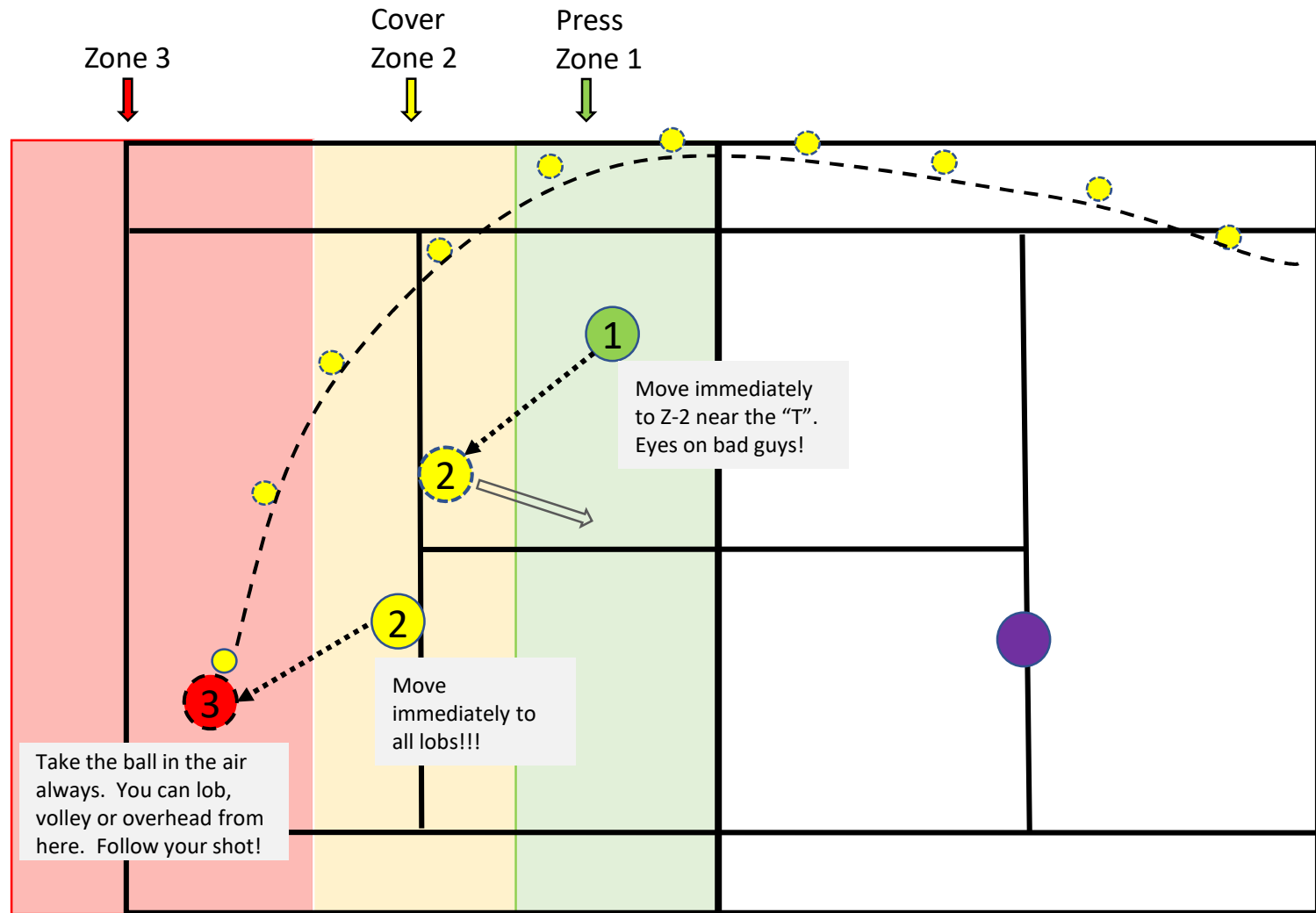
## Own The Zones Doubles





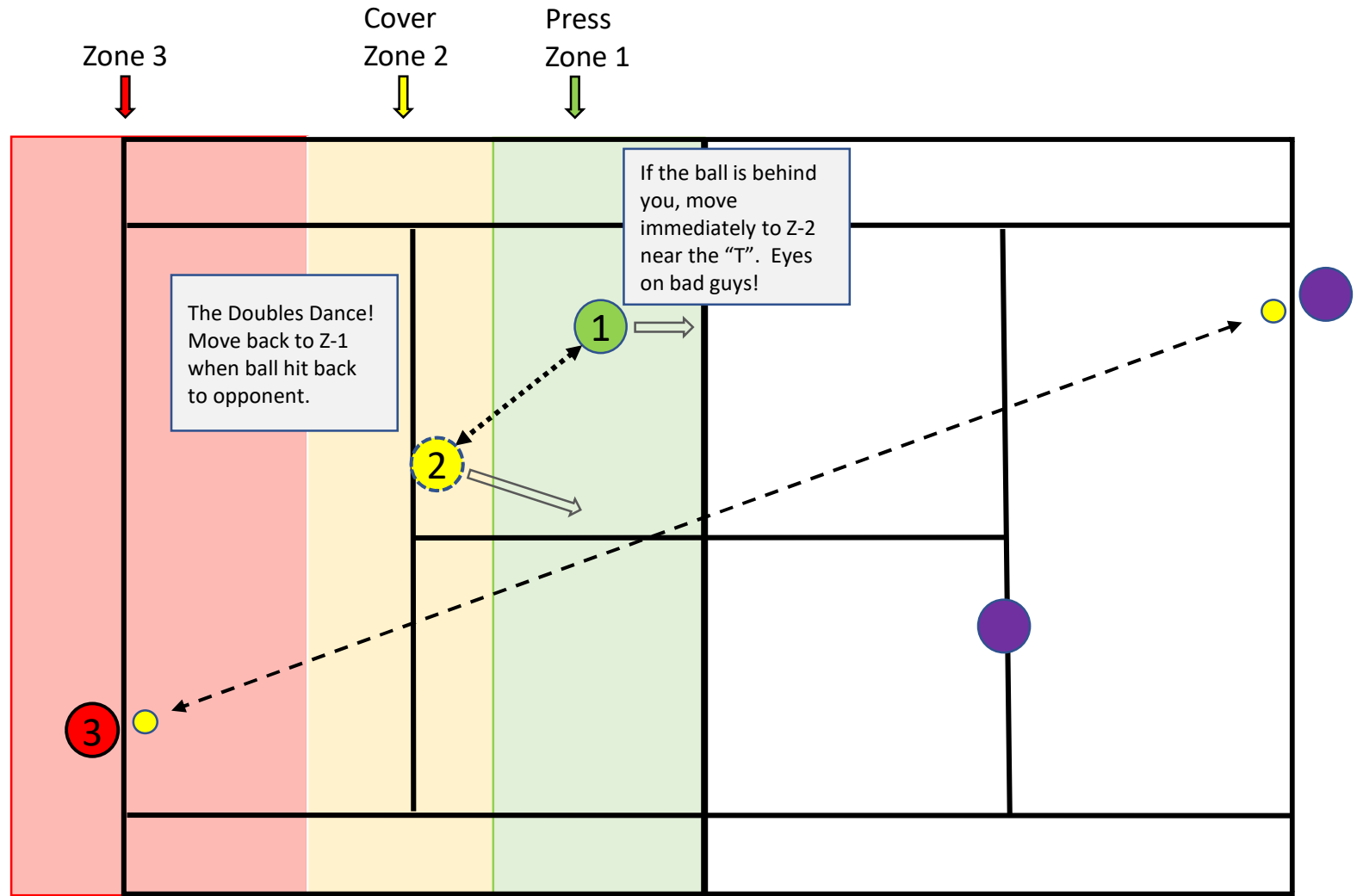
# Crosscourt Lob Cover Movement

## Own The Zones Doubles



# My Partner Doesn't Come In!!!

## Own The Zones Doubles



# OTZ FAQs



## What's wrong with playing up and back?

- NOTHING! Just know that this is the second most passive way to play doubles. OTZ is about teaching and practicing the skills to make you a better, more offensive doubles player. **Playing Zone 2 & 1 insures you will apply the most pressure possible to your opponents since they will have less time to hit and less court to hit to.** I tell my students that you WIN when you play two up doubles, you DON'T LOSE when you play up and back or two back. Bottom line, if you and your partner are far superior to your opponents, then you will win no matter what style of doubles you play.

## Should I come in every time?

- That should be your goal, but again, OTZ is about giving you the skills to attack the court and end points earlier in your favor. You implement as your confidence grows.

## Can I stay back a shot or two, then come in?

- YES! If you are struggling transitioning to Z-2 off of your serve or return of serve. Use the next shot as your entry shot...lobs are effective for this.

## If I'm not sure where to be...where should I be?

- If you're not sure where to be during a point, I recommend getting to "your" Zone 2.

## Should I stay back on a second serve?

- Probably not! A slower second serve will impact the server's partner since the returner can tee off on the second serve. As for you, the server, you actually have more time to cover more ground and split step (split step is critical). Keep developing your volleys.

## Is there ever a time when I would play up and back, or two back?

- YES! If you are fatigued or if your transition game just isn't there that day. It happens...

## What about covering the stupid lobs?????

- If you and your partner are aggressively playing two up doubles, your opponents will likely lob you. That's their JOB! Get you off the net. With that said, HOW we cover lobs makes a huge difference. Take all lobs and high balls **OUT OF THE AIR** whenever possible. The only exception to this is the ball is sinking in front of you faster than you can get there. Go ahead and bounce it. Otherwise, take a high volley or overhead. Don't let the bad guys get their way by pushing you to Z3 running away from the court past the baseline because you let the ball bounce. The main reason we fail at lob coverage is to not Split Step in time.

## How can I "Apply Tremendous Pressure" besides the basics?

- Three things come to mind...Poaching, Invitation Ball, Take as many balls out of the air as possible in Z2 & Z3. Think lob coverage...

## What if my partner doesn't come in? Do I still do OTZ?

- Common question...It doesn't significantly change the basics for you. You will still think 3-2-1. You will find that as a team, you could be out of position more frequently. Take care of your court movement.

# Keys To Successful OTZ Doubles

## The Transition Game

- ✓ Serve and Volley
- ✓ Return and Volley
- ✓ Split Steps and Angle of Attack
- ✓ Keep your shot LOW. **Hit to the "T" or their feet**
- ✓ Shot selection
- ✓ Covering the lob - The Uh Oh shot!!! **Take it out of the air!**
- ✓ Visual clues

## The Volley Zones

- ✓ Find "Your" Zone 2
- ✓ Press & Cover vs 1up 1 back (and 2 back)
- ✓ Solid volleys - placement and height
- ✓ Lead with your racquet
- ✓ Visual clues

## Putaway Shots

- ✓ The Closer
- ✓ Overheads, the most powerful shot in doubles
- ✓ Attack the ball at its peak.
- ✓ Know about the "Money Ball"
- ✓ Visual clues

## Crunch Time - Mental Strength

- ✓ Momentum
- ✓ Understand "Set Up" points
- ✓ Understand "Set Up" Games
- ✓ Know what aggressive means for your game

## Advanced Doubles Tactics

- ✓ Planned Poaches
- ✓ I - Formation
- ✓ Australian Formation
- ✓ Serve Options

## Zone Job Description

### Zone 1 – Green - Offensive

- Disrupt the return/groundstroke game of your opponents
- Poach or fake poach frequently
- If ball gets behind you (think lob), transition to Z-2
- The Lob is not your Job!!!!

### Zone 2 – Yellow - Neutral

- **This is where you spend most of your time!!!**
- All lob coverage except very short to the 1
- Take lobs out of the air
- After lob cover, move into Z-2 or Z-1, depending where you hit your shot
- All crosscourt shots that get past Z-1

### Zone 3 – Red - Defensive

- Playing Z-3 is completely defensive
- Get out of Z-3!!!!
- Follow serve whenever possible
- Follow returns whenever possible

## George's Annoying Sayings...

- ✓ *APPLY TREMENDOUS PRESSURE - ATP*
- ✓ Press & Cover (Press the net/Cover the lob)
- ✓ Pinch the Hitter
- ✓ Ballside (Press)/Backside (Cover)
- ✓ Hit, Git, and Split!
- ✓ If it's low you go, if it's high you die
- ✓ Eyes on the bad guys!!!
- ✓ Own The Zones
- ✓ Doubles Dance

# Visual Cues



Tennis is a very dynamic game. Every time the ball is hit, the situation changes and your court position will likely change. Rather than try to memorize where you should be, use visual cues

## The Basics

- \*\*\*\*\*Once you hit the ball, look at the receiver. You can see the ball peripherally, but you MUST focus on the bad guy/gal. See if they are off balance, moving away from the net, stepping in to take a short lob...all of these things will cue you to make the right move.
- \*\*\*Split step when your opponent's racquet goes back
- ALWAYS follow your shot – if you do, you will almost always be covering the correct angle
- There are no visual cues behind you!!! If you swivel your head to see what your partner is doing, you've taken your eyes off of your opponents. They will tell you all you need to know!!!
- Hit low to your opponent's feet and expect a high ball back
- If the ball gets behind you while in Z1, transition to Z2, keeping your eyes on the bad guys

## Server's Partner

- ✓ Look to see if returner is under pressure and off balance – focusing on the ball won't help you as much

## Returner's Partner

- ✓ Lock your eyes on the server's partner. That player will tell you all you need to know and is the player that can hurt you quickest