**Principles of Defensive Zone Coverage**

**Sound Defense is predicated upon protecting the middle of the ice**

**Awareness**
- When on Offense or Defense?
  - Complete control of puck possession – On Offense
  - Question of control or opposing team has control of puck possession – On Defense
- Scan the Ice - Know where people are situated on the ice (your team and the opposing team)
  - Every time the puck changes the point of attack – Scan the ice
- Know the Landscape - Identify greatest threats and defend against them first
  - Even man situations
  - Outnumbered situations
- **TALK** – “Communication eliminates Hesitation and Duplication”
  - Hesitation – indecision with regard to coverage and responsibilities
  - Duplication – more than 1 player doing the same job

**Tracking Back into the Defensive Zone**
- All 3 Forwards track back through the middle of the ice (“Funneling” Back through the Middle)
- 1st F back assumes low coverage responsibility
- 2nd F back stops in the high slot to protect the scoring area
- 3rd F back stops on the strong side (puck side), assuming the high coverage on the strong side
- If the Center is not the 1st F back – He/She assumes the proper coverage until the Center deems it appropriate to call a switch and assume the low coverage – It is ALWAYS the Center who calls the switch to avoid any miscommunication

**In-Zone Defensive Zone Coverage**
- **Coverage & Support** – Everyone on the ice has a “Primary” coverage responsibility and a “Secondary” support responsibility
  - **Primary Coverage**
    - 2 D men and the low Forward (preferably C) are responsible for opposing team Forwards
    - 2 High Forwards responsible for the opposing team Defensemen
  - **Support Responsibility** – Players away from the puck have a responsibility to collapse towards the slot area to support the coverage on the puck carrier, helping to protect the scoring area
    - **Body Position** – Position your body so you can see your “Primary” coverage and the puck at all times
    - **Defensive Side Positioning** – Inside positioning between your “Primary” Coverage, the puck, and your own net
- **Spacing** – relationship to your “Primary” Coverage such that you can arrive to your “Primary” Coverage at the same time the puck would if a pass was made to him/her
- **1 Hand on the stick** – Active Stick on the ice discouraging passing lanes

- **Low Zone Coverage**
  - Closest low player to puck attacks puck (a D man or the low F)
- **Rules of thumb for attacking the puck carrier**
  - “Defensive Side Positioning” – Inside positioning between your own net and the puck
  - 1 Hand on stick until player arrives to the puck carrier and is ready to battle
  - Take an angle on the puck in order to influence the direction of the puck carrier – Go as FAST as you can while maintaining CONTROL of your body
  - Close on the puck carrier and Create puck separation from player – Stick contact on the Puck and Body contact on the Body – “Stick on Puck, Body on Body”
- **Rules of thumb for low support Players**
  - Body Position – Position your body so you can see your primary coverage and the puck at all times
  - “Defensive Side Positioning” between your “Primary” Coverage and the Puck
    - Allows for support Player to collapse & help if coverage on puck gets beat
    - Allows for support Player to collect loose puck if coverage on puck is successful and separation from puck is created
  - Proper “Spacing”
  - 1 Hand on stick – Active stick on the ice discouraging passing lanes

- **Rules of thumb for D Man in Front**
  - Start off of the back post – identify “Primary” Coverage
  - Maintain “Defensive Side Positioning”
  - Body Position
  - 1 Hand on stick – Active stick on the ice discouraging passing lanes
  - Proper “Spacing”
    - ½ Way Rule - if “Primary” Coverage is in high slot, Play ½ way between your “Primary” Coverage and the net (if player is on one-time side, you might have to cheat out a little higher)

- **Rules of thumb for strong side high coverage**
  - Body Position – Be in a position to see your “Primary” Coverage and the puck at all times
  - Defensive Side Positioning – off the boards with Bum Cheeks facing the middle of the ice
  - Proper “Spacing”
  - 1 hand on stick – Active stick on the ice discouraging passing lanes
- Rules of Thumb for weak side high coverage
  - Body Position – Be in a position to see your “Primary” Coverage and the puck at all times
  - Defensive Side Positioning
  - Proper “Spacing” – Does not have to be as tight because “Primary” Coverage is furthest away from the puck
    - Can help with high slot coverage if opposing teams F3 plays high in the slot
  - 1 hand on stick – Active stick on the ice discouraging passing lanes

Drills to teach principles of Defensive Zone Coverage
- Track Back – Reading the Rush
  - Breakout 5 vs. 2 > Point Shot > Track back into D Zone Positioning
  - Cycle 3 vs. 2 > track back 5 vs. 5
  - ½ ice 3 vs. 2 > Track Back
  - ½ Ice 3 vs. 2 > 2nd Puck cycle > track back 5 vs. 5
- In-Zone D Zone Coverage
  - Low Zone Awareness Game
  - 3 puck Low Zone Game
  - 5 vs. 5 In Zone Game with Defensive team using ½ Blade Sticks
  - Small Games
    - Teaching Points
      - Defensive side Positioning
      - Body Position
      - Spacing
      - 1 Hand on Sticks – discouraging passing lanes
      - Awareness