

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