



INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE TACTICS PART 2

INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE TACTICS – PART 2

All players who find themselves in a particular game situation must read the play and react appropriately within a team system framework. Each player should master various individual tactics that can be used to react to the situation.

Individual defensive tactics are used to prevent scoring chances for the opposition.

In this chapter, the coach will be presented ideas to further enhance their knowledge of individual tactics which were presented in Level I, to allow players to improve their execution of skills and, hence, the system of play.

Offensive Zone

Pressure Checking

Forwards should almost always make the puck carrier rush to make a decision by taking away as much time and space as possible. The first forechecker must keep moving, trying to approach on an angle, and attempt to physically slow down the break out. It is essential that a teammate reads the pressure and moves to obtain possession of the puck.

Contain Checking

There are times during a game when it is better to use a stalling, delaying type of forechecking. These situations include penalty killing or when the puck carrier has lots of time and space to work with. Forcing the puck carrier to hesitate and slowing down the attack is the main objective.

Quick lateral movement with backward skating, trying to cover the width of the rink, and not being beaten by an easy pass, are features of contain checking that can be taught.

Neutral Zone

Forward

Inside Out Forechecking – When facing a counter attack or regrouping attack, the nearest forward to the puck carrier should approach on an angle to force the puck carrier towards the boards, taking away the options to pass and carry in more than one direction.

Tracking – Is a type of backchecking where the player is guarding an area in the neutral zone not one specific player.

The backchecker skates back through the neutral zone, in the mid-lane to take away ice. This effectively cuts the ice surface in half and reduces the puck carrier's options.

They can apply backside pressure to the puck carrier to force them to the outside and into the defenseman. Depending on the closeness to the puck carrier the backchecker either continues to apply pressure as the play enters the defensive zone or hands over the responsibility of the puck carrier to the defenseman.

The other backcheckers also track through the neutral zone taking up a position slightly deeper than the opponent and prepare to move in behind the defense players ready to pick up a loose puck. As the play gets into the defensive zone the backcheckers move to and take their defensive zone positions

Head Movement – When the puck is ahead of the backchecking forward, the forward has two responsibilities to take care of. First, during an even strength attack, the forward must look around constantly and go to check any opposition player moving up into the play; the late attacker. Second, if the attack is an outnumbered one, the backchecker must move to the slot area hoping to catch up to an open attacker in the dangerous scoring area.

Defense

Playing a Close Gap – The defense must play as close to the attacker as possible, making adjustments for the speed and skill of the puck carrier. The closer the gap, the less time and space for the attacker to operate and, therefore, the greater the chance of breaking up or stalling the attack. Meeting the attacker around the blue line area is the objective (Figure 4).

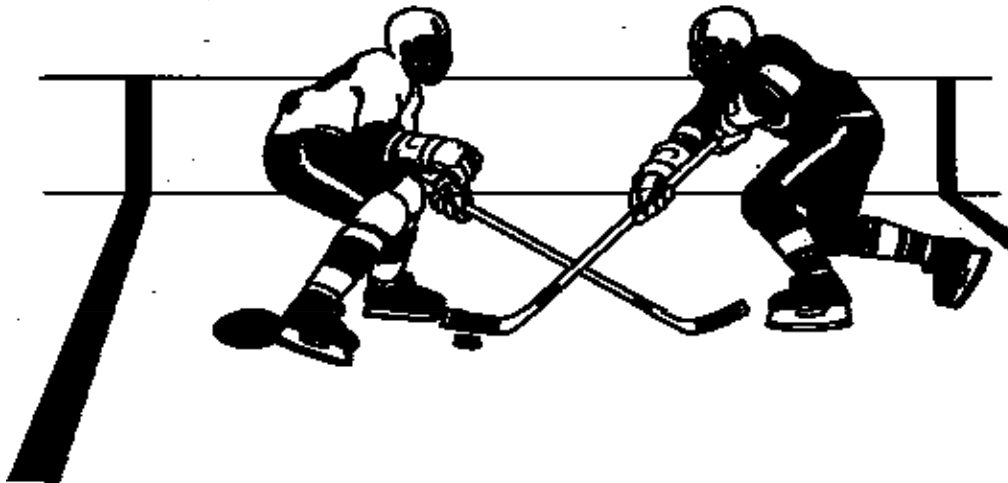


Figure 1: Playing a Tight Gap

Reading and Talking – An important task for the defense is to read the rush and talk loudly to teammates. There are different responses to each situation but, before the right response can be executed, the correct interpretation and communication of the situation must be made.

Defensive Zone

In Front of the Net

Defenders playing in front of the net should stay loose from the opponent they are guarding, to allow themselves the option of collecting a loose puck or forcing the puck carrier. Avoid being tied up but be close enough to check when a pass or a shot is made toward the net. A stick lift, stick between the skates, or a strong shoulder push away from the crease are all tactics to be used when the puck is arriving in the danger zone.

Once the check is made the defense should stay with it and resist the temptation to “fish” for loose pucks. If each opponent is well checked, rebounds should be open for the goalkeeper to freeze or clear.

Blocking Shots

Blocking shots is a very effective and specialized individual defensive tactic. Proper timing and technique must be used to protect the defender when blocking shots.

There are three methods of blocking shots; First is skating towards the shooter keeping your legs close together in the line of the shot. Second is by sliding on the ice towards the shooter and should be done with a technique to allow quick recovery in case of a fake shot. This is a method that is used for shots from the blue line. (See figures 5)

It is recommended that players should never use this technique during a penalty killing situation because it completely commits the player



Figure 5: Blocking a Shot

Figure 6 shows a second method and can be during a one on one rushing situation is a highly developed skill, but rarely used in today's game of speed and crossing attacks.



Figure 6: Blocking a Shot

Behind the Net

When the puck carrier is in control behind the net, the defense must be patient and stay close to the net. If there is a chance to make contact with puck carrier, make sure there is help available and if possible, force him out on his backhand. The best strategy, however, is to stay in front until help arrives. Be alert for passouts and for opposition forwards sneaking in behind you (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Behind the Net

Along the Boards

When a defenseman is approaching the puck carrier head on at the side boards, the defense must make sure to contain the puck carrier. Holding the stick in one hand, blade on the ice in a stick to stick with the position, staying in a good balanced position ready to move any direction and looking at the chest of the attacker are good techniques. If the attacker passes off, the defense should stay with the opponent, not follow the puck (Figure 8).

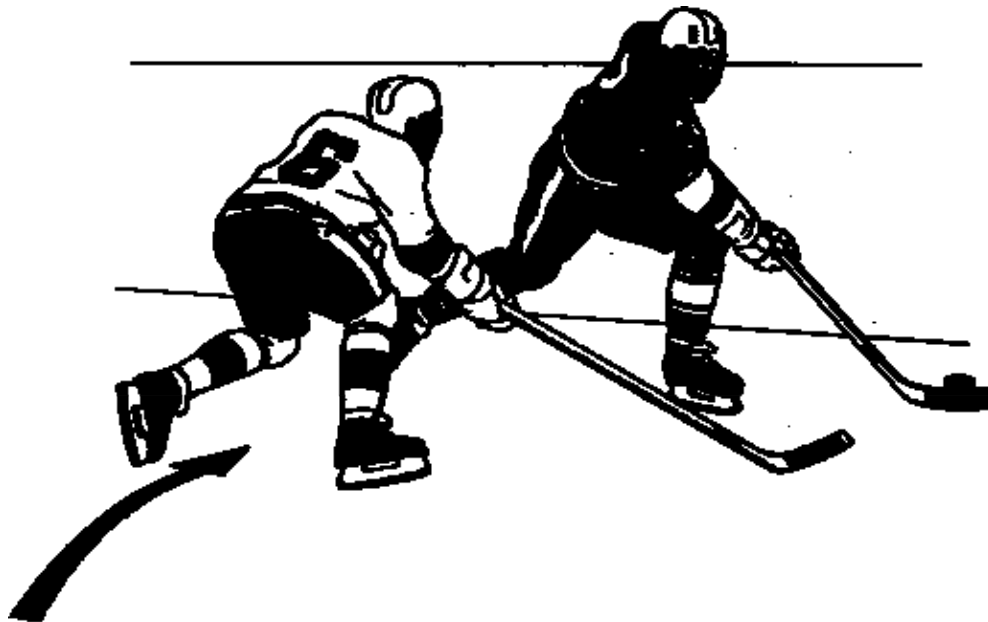


Figure 8: Containment



Forwards

When playing at the point on the puck side, the forward must be aware of the defense trying to sneak into the slot. When going out to check the defense, the forward must get in line with the net and make “himself big”, plus play through the shooter’s body.

In playing the prime scoring area defensively, the forward has three jobs;

- watching for the point defense moving in,
- supporting the defense in front of the net,
- moving out to the point to block shots.