Defensive Zone Coverage

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Midget AAA

Introduction

H. Meeker on Hap Day and Scotty Bowman:
"His main area of discipline was, on the ice, especially behind our blue line. He was in total control of the team when we didn’t have the puck. Once we got over the blue line he was no longer in control. You were... he didn’t put pressure on you to score goals. He put pressure on you to keep the puck out of the net."

Toe Blake:
"Hockey is very simple. Just two V's. One away from your net, the other toward their net."

Scotty Bowman:
"What makes the big teams really good is that they get a group of very talented players to forget about the individual accomplishments a great part of the time and play as a team."

Pat Quinn on Pavel Bure:
"We have worked on his play without the puck, tried to get him to adapt to our system."

Bryan Trottier:
"I think the best quality a coach can have is to allow his players to have some creativity and individualism. If you get them too regimented I think you’re really confining each player’s total ability. I think the only time you really need to have discipline is in your own zone ... the mark of a strong coach is a disciplined defence."
I - MAKE PLAYERS BELIEVE IN DEFENSE

- show team statistics from previous season  
  - NHL  
  - OHL  
  - league  
- illustrate how goals/against = key factor  
- prepare hand-out concerning defensive concepts:  
  - modern aggressive defensive play  
  - effective offense proceeds from the secured defense  
  - balance between offense/defense  
  - the team cannot attack without getting possession of the puck  
  - defense = benefit of the team  
  - defense = continued pressure on attacking team  
  - winning man-to-man battles is the most valuable contribution of a player  
- success is not always assured with offensive talent  
- defensive play = character  
- defense is a decision ...  
  - you cannot decide to score but you can decide to play hard defensively  
- defense does not mean to take away from offense, it adds another dimension  
- take pride in defense  
- set measurable goals  
  - number of scoring chances given in DEF. ZONE  
  - number of shots given from high slot  
  - time spent in def. zone  
- recognize accomplishments in def. zone  
  - center who plays low  
  - winger who guards the slot  
  - defensmen who picks up open man  
- defensive player of the week, month
II - PLAYERS TO UNDERSTAND THE WHOLE PICTURE:
BASIC POSITIONING

early in season, establish defensive zone responsibilities and assignments.
walk-thru drill to explain desired positions in 5 on 5 situations.
vary puck position with all 5 players involved.
determine amount of switching rotation:
  according to position or 1st man, 2nd, 3rd man.
how high defenceman to apply pressure:
  can defencemen charge beyond top of circles.
determine type of coverage:
  when zone coverage becomes man to man or when man to man becomes zone.

puck in corner

puck-side defenceman: pressure, defensive side, pin and stick.
weak-side defenceman: near post, influence, block walk-out, low slot and net.
centreman: support puck-side defenceman, block walk-out, play low, follow puck.
puck-side winger: top of circle, skates facing boards, inside-out position, responsible for point man, block penetration.
weak-side winger: low slot, slot pressure, stop wide penetration.

puck at hash

puck side defenceman: can pressure up to hash marks, avoid chasing.
weak-side defenceman: move in circle.
centreman: can be 1st defender to hash.
puck-side winger: avoid being drawn in.
weak-side winger: basic position.
puck at blue line

- puck side defenceman: turn and clear front of net, push to side
- weak-side defenceman: allow goalie to see shot, responsible for rebound
- centreman: must handle low slot man, should not pressure point
- puck-side winger: charge point in aggressive fashion, block shot, finish check
- weak-side winger: must not allow pass thru slot, responsible for high rebound, do not cross to shooter

puck behind net

- defencemen: do not chase around net, block wrap-around, aware of block-out, do not get beat by give/go
- centreman: pressure only if certain to gain body position, do not overplay behind net, use direct line in front of net
- puck-side winger: block walk-out
- weak-side winger: drop to low slot
DRILL NOTES

1. Establish basic position.
2. Walk thru drill. Coach walks thru B and sketch.
3. To D1.
4. Assemble all players.
5. Skaters in 8 are in front.
6. All defenders in 8 are.
7. All players moving in small area in marked area.
III - APPLY PRINCIPLES

1. defensive side positioning
2. pressure vs contain
3. inside-out positioning
4. do not be hypnotized by puck
5. angling
6. finishing checks once committed
7. do not get beat by give/go
8. block/pick for partner
9. gap control
10. communication
11. no curls ... STOPS
12. head on a swivel
Drill Notes

Heads up & A Swipe

Players are
leaving front

7-4-66

Bear with O.
Pass with O.

A goes to 2, O to 1.
O gives possession.

DO NOT let bank by giving.

A passes to A.
A blocks for partner.

O keeps puck deep.

Blocks/Picks

choosing quick crossovers to O. to O. without
A passes from
1 to 2, as 2 goes
2 in groups of 3 until

when puck: 1 without puck

Beauw,

using head on small
giving them
A stops O. from
O stops O. & out

4-15-66
IV - BREAKING IT DOWN

establish playing rules for coverage in defensive zone
work in small groups and apply playing rules

1 on 1

= defensive side, gap, pressure
  no stick check

2 on 1

= contain, force outside, goalie takes shooter, block
  pass, take away pass and rebound

2 on 2

= man to man, commit and stick
  2 on 2 = two 1 on 1's

3 on 2

= hold slot, delay, give outside
  offense will isolate play on 1 def.
  3 on 2 = 2 on 1 + 1 on 1

3 on 3

= man to man
  in and out, back to net
  avoid the chase in quiet zones

rush

defense are responsible for the puck carrier
entering zone, forwards responsible for trailers
forwards backcheck all the way to the net
Key: Defensive Triangle

A1, A2, A3
B1, B2, B3, B4
C1, C2, C3
D1, D2, D3, D4
E1, E2, E3
F1, F2, F3
G1, G2, G3
H1, H2, H3
I1, I2, I3
J1, J2, J3
K1, K2, K3
L1, L2, L3
M1, M2, M3
N1, N2, N3
O1, O2, O3, O4
P1, P2, P3, P4
Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4
R1, R2, R3, R4
S1, S2, S3, S4
T1, T2, T3, T4
U1, U2, U3
V1, V2, V3
W1, W2, W3
X1, X2, X3
Y1, Y2, Y3
Z1, Z2, Z3

A1
A2
A3
A4
B1
B2
B3
B4
C1
C2
C3
C4
D1
D2
D3
D4
E1
E2
E3
E4
F1
F2
F3
F4
G1
G2
G3
G4
H1
H2
H3
H4
I1
I2
I3
I4
J1
J2
J3
J4
K1
K2
K3
K4
L1
L2
L3
L4
M1
M2
M3
M4
N1
N2
N3
N4
O1
O2
O3
O4
P1
P2
P3
P4
Q1
Q2
Q3
Q4
R1
R2
R3
R4
S1
S2
S3
S4
T1
T2
T3
T4
U1
U2
U3
U4
V1
V2
V3
V4
W1
W2
W3
W4
X1
X2
X3
X4
Y1
Y2
Y3
Y4
Z1
Z2
Z3
Z4

Low
Low
Low
Low

Drill Notes
DRILL NOTES

In terms of drill notes, the key points are:

- Face-off win
- Making a decision as high as possible
- Cut time/space inside the line
- Limit offensive options
- Influence 2 on 2 indication

A. Pass to C6
   C5 outside drive
   C2 man to man pressure on C6
   C4 covers C5
   C3 covers middle: if C4 cuts inside, play man to man

B. If high cross C2, C3 defend lane, C5 takes net man

C. C5 outside drive with puck
   C4 to net, C3 trailer
   C2 follows C5 to net
   C4 pressures C5 into corner
   If C4 passes to C3, C3 plays with C2 on 2 on 1

D. From shoot-in: O6 to O5
   O6 to O4: play defensive三角

E. From ring
   O5 ring to C6
   C5 to net, O4 high slot
   O3 pressure O6
   C3 take net man
   C4 take O4 in slot
POSSIBLE BREAKDOWNS

- Many goals are a result of breakdowns.
- It is important to recognize the cause and to practice defensive zone coverage from breakdowns.
- Create situations where desired positions are not automatically attained.

**Centreman**
- Too high, waiting for pass.
- curls away from puck.
- allows opposing centreman to slip away at face-off.
- give-away.
- beat 1 on 1, falls.

**Wingers**
- puck-side winger collapses deep, no one covers.
- weak-side winger crosses, no one takes his place.
- play on boards.
- play with back to boards.
- weak-side winger in no man's land.
- lose puck near blue.

**Defensemen**
- plays far post and allows walk-out.
- stares at puck, at play ... does not pick up a man.
- does not tie up stick.
- becomes a goalie.
- allows his check to get back in play.
- follows the pass.
- give-away, unforced mistake.
- beat 1 on 1, falls.

**System**
- switching positions results in everyone on the puck.
- impatience.
- over-playing.
VI - MAINTENANCE

throughout season, run drills where team defensive zone coverage is applied
always be demanding in zone, whistle play down whenever coverage is not correctly executed
these drills can incorporate a variety of offensive concepts but they always end up with a 5 on 5 in defensive zone until a breakout has been achieved
do not neglect offensive skills
allow time to develop defensive skills and tactics
stress basic principles rather than systems

CONCLUSION

hockey is still a game, hockey should always be treated as a game
defense can be challenging but be careful not to develop too many young grinders
focus on learning the game not just winning
1. 6 pass to O2
   O, O5, O3 attack 3 on 2
   in zone B vs O1, O2
   add 2nd 3rd pack
   at which, 
   O4, O5, O6
   jump in play to defend
   zone B with O1 and O2
   O4, O5, O6 break out vs
   O3 and O4 and
   repeat drill in other direction
   1st 3rd pack

2. 5 on 5
   O4 swap to O4
   O4, O5, O6 play 3 on 2 vs
   O1, O2 until the
   defenders arrive
   play 5 on 5 until
   stoppage or break out
   2nd 3rd pack

3. 1) dump in A
   offense break out vs
   A1 + A2
   once they reach red,
   A1, A2, A6 break other
   into defensive zone
   can also be done from
   E/A

4. 1) dump in B
   offense break out vs A
   who defends 1 zone
   A5 defends 1 zone
   A4 defends last zone
   once offense is in
   offensive zone, A4
   A5, A6 defend
   the defensive zone