

Gloucester Rangers Minor Hockey: Penalty-Killing
Richard Bercuson – Director of Hockey Development

ATTRIBUTES OF EFFECTIVE PENALTY-KILLERS

***Playing on the PK unit should be considered a vital contribution to the team, not merely an appeasement for NOT being on the power-play. Penalty-killers have to be carefully selected and rewarded for their style and approach. Penalty-killing by definition is a defensive part of the game and will "fail" a certain percentage of times. The coach, therefore, must be careful in how criticism is presented. Failure on the PK unit may be due to poor preparation by the coach on the required technical and individual tactical skills.

An effective PK forward:

- agile skater - quickness is more important than speed
- can anticipate and make fast decisions
- is able to use various checking techniques, ie. stickchecks, bodychecks, and angle checks
- strong hands (for clearing puck)
- willing to block shots
- smart enough to know own physiological limits
- understands team play and can foresee a consequence of an action long after it has occurred

An effective PK defenceman:

- speed is important
- long reach is effective
- excellent stickchecker - strong arms and upper body
- sees the ice well - reads teammates' and opposition's positions accurately
- calm under physical pressure
- communicates - calls out situations - a "general"

BENCH MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

During the penalty:

(* More goals are scored in the last 30 seconds of a power-play than at any other time)

- Ideally, 3 shifts of 40 secs. (major penalty - 10 shifts of 30 seconds)

- Double-shift important forwards (shifts 1 and 3)

- Match forwards with each other, defencemen with each other, and the group as a whole must be able to work together.

- Faceoffs in defensive zone, have two forwards who can take faceoffs

(Consider training a defenceman to take faceoffs in your zone)

- After a flurry of activity around your net, change one forward and perhaps one D as well. Changing the whole unit (unless they're all tired) can be psychologically defeating.

- Have a signal for the end of the penalty (from the goalie, one defenceman, or the bench)

- Change slowly during whistles

- Inform players who are going on the key things to watch for. Take NOTHING for granted.

After the penalty:

- Where is the penalty box relative to your bench?

- If the box is NOT next to the bench, send penalized player onto ice whenever: - opposition has puck

- puck is in your half of rink

- you don't trust the player's ability to know where

to go if he joins the play

- Be sure player is informed on first available faceoff

- If penalized player is a defenceman and he is sent onto the ice, he must act as a winger (tell him and other forwards which wing role he is filling)

Example of a potential problem: Penalized player leaves box while power-play is under control in your zone. Even though he is a defenceman, he goes straight for nearest point coverage yelling on the way in for forward to sag in from point.

- Try to put a strong offensive unit on after the PK. Successfully killing a penalty is gratifying and rubs off. Avoid use your PK players. They will be exhausted.

Questions to consider:

a) Use 3 or 4 defencemen? (may depend on amount of pressure)

b) Which 4-5 forwards?

c) Who can take faceoffs?

d) Should we try to be a scoring threat on PK against this team?

e) What unit will follow the penalty?

f) Should the unit immediately after the PK dump it in and apply pressure?

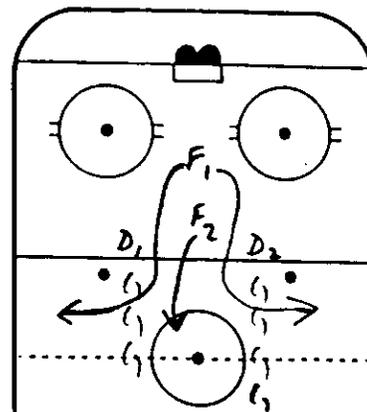
GUIDELINES FOR PENALTY-KILLING

- BODY POSITION IS CRUCIAL IN DEFENSIVE ZONE - SEE THE PUCKCARRIER, ONE ATTACKER AND BE AWARE OF YOUR TEAMMATES' POSITIONS
- IN DEFENSIVE ZONE, REDUCE PUCKCARRIER'S TIME
- GOALIE MUST HAVE CLEAR VIEW OF LONG SHOTS
(ABOUT 80% OF PP GOALS ARE SCORED ON REBOUNDS)
- FORCE LOW PERCENTAGE SHOTS
- SHRINK PASSING LANES WITH STICK
- KEEP STICK ACTIVE & ON THE ICE - BE ABLE TO SWITCH HANDS!
- BE AWARE OF WEAKSIDE - COMMUNICATE TO PLAYER NEAREST PUCK
- ANTICIPATE PASS TO CORNER OR POINT AND FORCE THEM
- PRESSURE WHEN PUCK MOVES, OR WHEN PUCKCARRIER'S SHOULDERS ARE TURNED, OR WHEN PUCK IS LOOSE
- NEVER RAG THE PUCK IN OWN ZONE
- ICE PUCK USING BOARDS AND GLASS
- GO ON OFFENSIVE WHEN OPPORTUNITY ARISES
- GET OUT OF SCREENS AND BEING TIED UP
- PREVENT PP UNIT FROM GAINING YOUR BLUELINE WITHOUT BEING PRESSURED
- FLIP PUCK UP MIDDLE WHEN RECOVERING IN MID-DEFENSIVE ZONE
- REMAIN FOCUSED AND RELAXED
- DO NOT IMPROVISE - STICK WITH SYSTEM

FORECHECKING SYSTEMS - 4 VS. 5

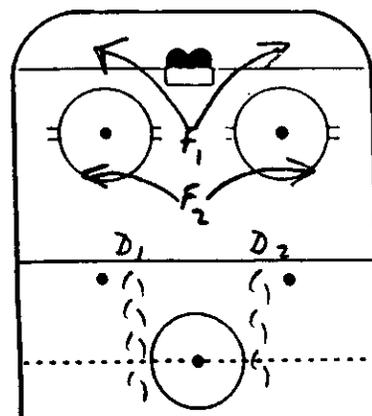
STACKED "I"

- F1 forces puckcarrier to boards while F2 takes middle lane
- both F's up middle till centre with closest F pressuring on boards
- puckside D stays high to support pressuring F
- weakside D low, in middle, covering for dump in



STACKED "I" WITH 1-MAN PRESSURE

- F1 pressures low, inside out (he may use a sweep-by check)
- F2 picks up puckside wing
- D's between dots, staying lower to guard against play up middle



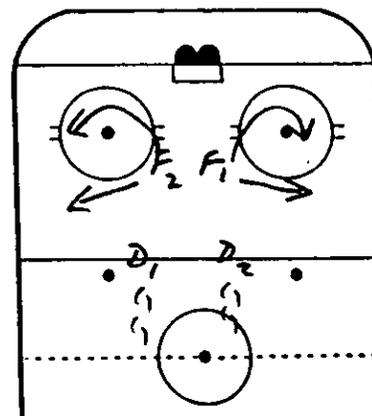
TANDEM

- each F turns to wing and picks up wing, forcing puck up middle
- puckside (closest) D delays before dropping back - other D straight back through middle, between dots

Variation:

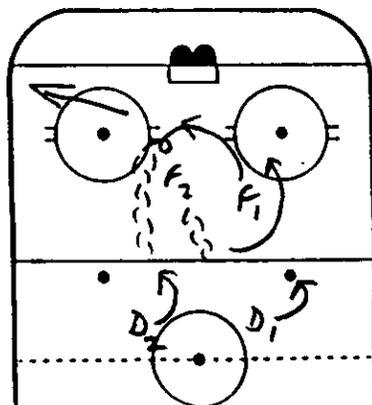
F1 and F2 begin near blueline to create a 4-across system

- again, F's pick up wings, but by now, attack approaches "wall" with few options



CIRCULAR

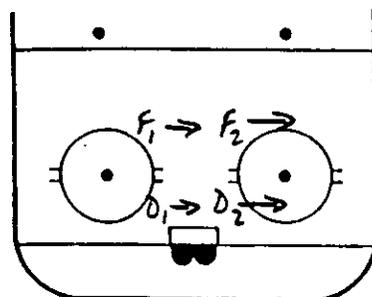
- F's circle mid-zone always facing net and puckcarrier, going in same direction
- movement is meant to force puck to one side
- pressure by F1 with F2 getting recipient of first pass - F1 reacts by refilling mid-lane
- D's skate similarly with puckside D ready to lock middle lane



DEFENSIVE ZONE SETUPS - 4 VS.5

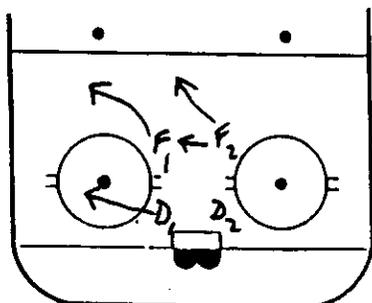
PASSIVE BOX

- All players hold positions allowing attack from outside
 - Box must be small to guard scoring area
- With slide:
- entire box slides laterally below circles up to edge of hash marks



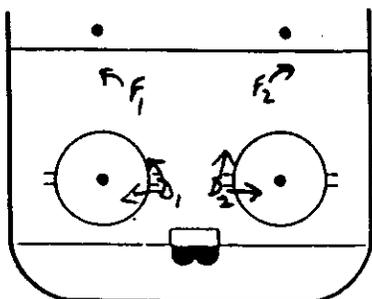
PRESSURE BOX

- F1 and F2 apply pressure inside out at blueline - F2 may drop into high slot
- D1 prepares to step up to hash marks for pass from their D
- D2 will take deep puck if D1 misses check or is beaten by dump



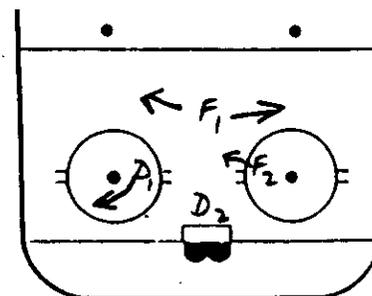
HIGH/LOW PRESSURE

- F1 and F2 stay high and in line with dots
- D's stay low and between circles, watching low slot
- very risky unless PP unit doesn't read hole in box



DIAMOND

- low pressure with 3-men in vicinity of puck
- F1 takes high slot and nearest point when puck moves up boards
- F2, and D's may rotate triangle with 1 low and 2 high while F1 stays up
- easier for breakout since there is an extra player along boards
- if puck behind goalline/in corner, pressure from D at net while other D covers net and F2 supports low - F1 to puckside slot



NEUTRAL ZONE PLAY - 4 VS.5

Some Fundamental Principles:

- Standard backchecking rules applied
- Do not allow attack to come through entire zone without pressure
- If attackers cross lanes/zone, do not play man-on-man unless CERTAIN it will be an even strength attack (which is unlikely)
- Overplay by forwards will force puck to a location to trap attack
- Always be ready to support defence
- Transition: Do not carry unless there's open ice - Use a soft dump

FROM STACKED POSITION

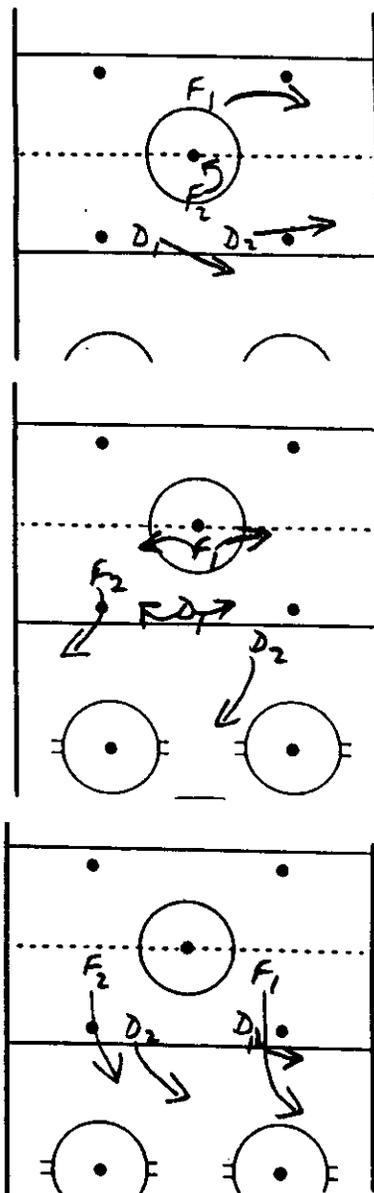
- F1 forces inside out and stays with check
- D2 stands up in zone to pressure and support
- F2 locks middle and prepares to come back with far side wing if necessary
- D1 low support and recovery for dump in

1-3, 1-MAN PRESSURE

- F1 pressures inside out but stays in mid-lane
- F2 picks up a wing immediately
- D1 high to support F1
- D2 low for dump in and to take weakside wing

2-2, BLUELINE STAND

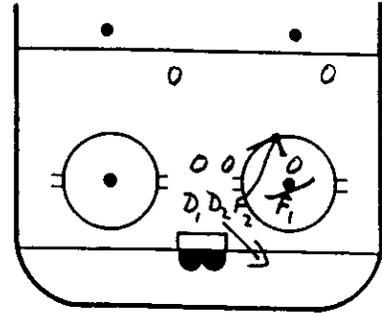
- puckside D (D1) holds blueline while F1 supports behind
- D2 guards mid-lane
- F2 picks up weakside wing and watches for 2nd wave through middle of blueline



DEFENSIVE ZONE FACEOFFS

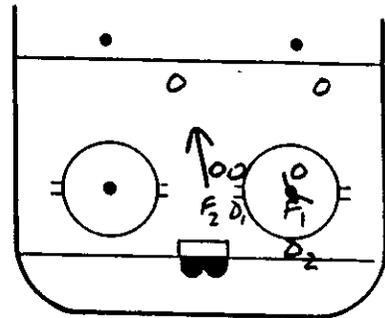
4-ACROSS, F INSIDE

- F1 holds up their C until location of puck is determined
- F2 takes route through circle
- F1 will take right corner of box with F2 prepared to slide to left corner
- both D's in slot with inside D ready to pressure in corner
- D's must let goalie see puck



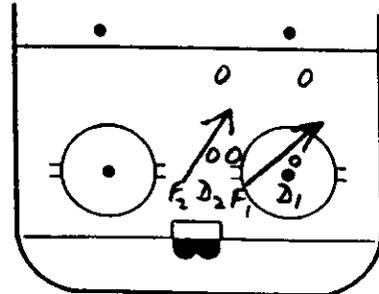
3-ACROSS, D BACK

- F2 sets up to go to left corner
- (alternative: F2 on inside of D1 with same pressure as in above)
- D1 alone covering slot
- F1 must leave faceoff to get to right point
- D2 is positioned for breakout to weak side, but helps at slot if D1 in trouble



D TAKE FACEOFF

- D1 may try to draw their C out of faceoff, or just tie him up
- F's aligned for immediate move to points
- D2 at net, with support from D1



MATCHING YOUR PENALTY-KILLING TO THEIR POWER-PLAY

a) Personnel:

- key puckcarriers
- is there a trigger man?
- offensive zone quarterback
- does goalie often begin breakout?
- which player panics under pressure?
- any lazy players in the unit?

b) Breakout:

- do they use a carry or a pass?
- how many passes to gain neutral zone?
- quick out, or slow and controlled?
- are passes made to players on backhand?
- do initial puckcarriers have a favourite side?

c) Offensive zone entry:

- through which lane?
- how many players in vicinity of puck?
- do they use dump or rim around?
- if so, who does it? and, who recovers puck?
- any criss-crossing in neutral zone? effective?

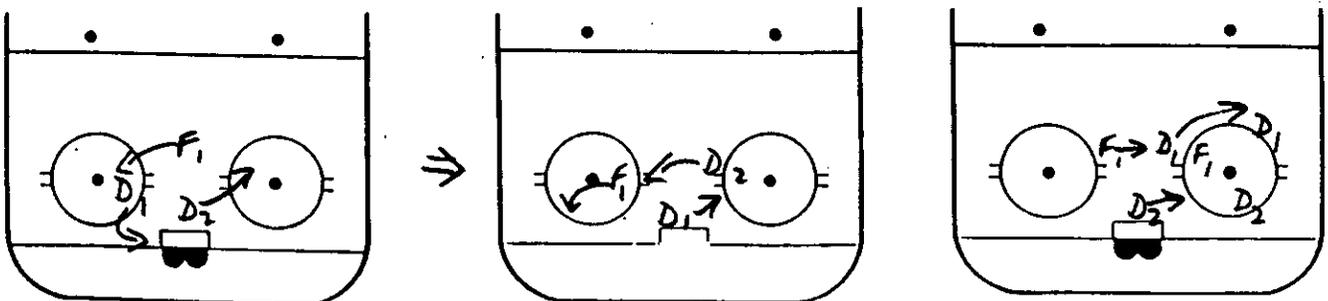
d) Setup:

- Centered from defence or forwards?
- which side?
- use area behind goalline deliberately?
- shooters out of slot?
- man in front of net?
- 3 high/2 low, 2 high/3 low, 2-1-2?
- puck hogs?
- play rebounds?
- is there much waiting for something to happen, or do they make it happen?

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

3 VS.5, 3 VS.4

- Rotating triangle with puck movement
- stay tight to prime scoring area
- no pressure unless certain of turnover
- Sliding triangle if PP has good player movement as well as puck movement
- Consider using 3 D's



TEACHING PENALTY-KILLING

Technical skills to focus on:

- stickchecking
- angling
- turns and stops
- pivots both directions
- flipping puck
- clearing puck high

Tactical skills to focus on:

- angling
- watching 2 players at one time
- puck protection
- faceoffs and going to specific locations

Progression for teaching penalty-killing principles:

- 1 - 1 vs. 1 in small area - confine attacker to a space
- 2 - 1 vs. 2 attackers in small area - gradually make area larger
 - prevent attackers from maintaining control or from getting to a spot
- 3 - 1 vs. 3 attackers - defender tries to break up control of attackers by applying pressure at right moment
- 4 - 2 vs. 3 attackers - defenders reverse sticks - play is in a half-zone - attackers try to maintain control - defenders must see puckcarrier, another attacker and other defender - emphasis on body position and head on swivel
- 5 - increase defenders but take away sticks or reverse sticks
 - remain in confined area