

# *Using Games to Teach the Game of Hockey*

By Juhani Wahlsten and Tom Molloy

When the Four Player Roles are understood by coaches and by players, the game becomes easy to teach and to learn. Once the needs of players or teams are determined, games and modified scrimmages that emphasize the players' roles become quite easy to invent and to implement. Good habits are reinforced naturally in game-like settings; the game becomes easy to play correctly. Skill is a natural by-product. Be Creative.

## The Four Player Roles

Both in offensive and defensive games, the moves of the players are determined by what role they are playing. The roles are determined by their closeness to the puck and whether they are on defense, offense or in transition. During any of these situations each player will be fulfilling one of the four playing roles.

*Role One:* The puck carrier or, for loose puck situations, the offensive player closest to the puck

*Role Two:* The other offensive players who support the puck carrier by getting open for a pass, screening or giving width and depth to the attack

*Role Three:* The checker (defensive player) closest to the puck or puck carrier

*Role Four:* The other defensive players who cover man-to-man or, an area of the ice All maintain the defensive side and deflect the attack to the outside. Depending on the distance to the puck and, whether he is the third, fourth, or fifth player closest to the puck, the player in the fourth playing role must support by covering an opponent, switching, or double-teaming.

*When each player assumes the proper playing role, the team can think in the same way.* There is never a question of the goalie's role, and the same clarity of role and responsibility should apply for every player on the ice. Player roles constantly change in the game, and the players must be able to react instantly in the appropriate manner in all game situations. The puck carrier must always move into open ice, but it is difficult to be effective if teammates don't also move into open ice. One defensive player always works to force the puck carrier wide out of the danger areas, and the other defenders support and eventually gain possession of the puck.

## Skating Games

The players must know how to skate before they can effectively play games. Skating drills and skating games are an effective way to learn how to skate. Refer to the Hockey Coaching ABC's

books for hundreds of drill and technique idea.

Below are many games that the players can use to practice skating.

**First the players need to learn how to skate.** We code this as “0” skills. It is a series of games to practice skating.

### **0.1. GAME OF CATCH WITH A PARTNER:**

Play a game of catch with a partner. Use a ball and stand about 3-5 metres apart. This will stress balance of the skates.

### **0.2. GAME OF CATCH WITH A PARTNER WHILE MOVING AROUND IN A SMALL AREA OF THE ICE:**

Play a game of catch with a partner while moving around a small area of the ice—throwing and catching the ball. Groups larger than two can be used. This game helps in balance, using the edges, turning and stopping.

### **0.3. GAME OF KEEPAWAY USING A BALL:**

The players must throw and catch a ball against another team. Play 1 v 1, 2 v 2, 3 v 3, etc. Make sure all players have gloves to protect the hands from the skate blades. This game works all of the skating skills and develops split vision.

### **0.4. GAME OF FREEZE TAG:**

Players play in one zone. One person is it. When a player is tagged they must stay in the spot they were touched. To be free another free player must slide on his\her stomach between the frozen players legs.

This game uses all skating skills especially agility on skates.

### **0.5. GAME USING ONLY THE FEET AS IN SOCCER FOOTBALL:**

Each player has a pylon and places the pylons all over the ice. The player dribbles the puck with his\her feet and scores at as many pylons as possible in one minute. The coach times the activity and has 5-7 games of one minute. After each game he\she asks who scored the most goals. Game skills are introduced in this game. Coordination on the ice is the focus.

### **0.6. ONE ON ONE GAME OF SOCCER FOOTBALL:**

The player scores by kicking the puck against the pylon. Each player has a pylon and places it across ice from his\her partner. Split vision, agility, and turns are emphasized in this activity.

#### 0.7. BRITISH BULLDOG:

This game has the players line up at the end of the rink in the A2 formation. One player is at the blue line and calls out British Bulldog. The players try to skate to the other end without being touched by the player at the blue line. If you are touched you join the player who is calling British Bulldog. To be good at this game the player must turn quickly, change speeds, and be agile.

#### **0.8. TWO ONE TWO GAME OF SOCCER FOOTBALL:**

The players are in teams of 2 and score by kicking the puck or a ball and hitting the pylon. One pass must be made. Offensive and defensive principles are learned, as well as change of pace skating.

#### 0.9. PYLON HOCKEY:

Use a large pylon instead of a stick. A goal is scored by pushing the puck over the other team's goal line.

This game practices keeping the knees bent and head up while skating.

#### **0.10. HALF SHAFT HOCKEY:**

Play a cross-ice game of 3-3, holding the stick halfway down the shaft. This causes the players to bend their knees. This can also be played as a full ice game.

#### 0.11. SPLIT VISION GAME USING MANY GOALS:

Each player has a pylon placed all over the rink. The players have a stick and a puck. They start at their pylon and the idea is to score as many goals as you can in one minute. This can be done a few times. The players are told to concentrate on protecting the puck with their body and to use split vision so they avoid colliding with the other players. The player with the most goals wins.

#### **0.12. GAME OF HANDBALL ON ICE:**

Two teams play full ice. Regular goals are used. All players must handle the ball before a goal counts. Use the ringette crease, only the goalie can be in the crease. If the ball or frisbee hits the ice the other team gets possession. All skating skills are practiced in this game.

### 0.13. RACES PULLING A PARTNER WHO IS KNEELING DOWN:

The players hold one stick in each hand and skate one length of the ice while pulling their kneeling partner. At the other end the partner pulls the first skater back. Stress bending knees and toeing out. This activity causes the skater to toe out, using more of the skate blade and a longer stride.

### **0.14. GAME WITH ONE PYLON FOR EVERY TWO PLAYERS:**

The idea is to protect the puck with your body and try to score by hitting the pylon with the puck. The other player gets the puck if a goal is scored. Keep score and change opponents every two minutes.

Balance and agility on skates are needed in this game.

### 0.15 FLAT FOOTED SKATING:

Play cross ice or half ice allowing only flat footed skating where the blades never leave the ice. This is a good strengthening exercise as well as good practice in toeing in and out as well as unlocking the hips while skating.

### **0.16. RELAY RACES IN THE NEUTRAL ZONE:**

The players are in teams of 4 with two waiting behind opposite blue lines. Teams at one end have a puck.

On the whistle the first player skates to the opposite blue line stops and picks up a puck. He\she then skates to his\her starting place and puts the puck on the ice. The teammate at the other end leaves when the puck is on the ice and gets the puck and takes it back to his\her blue line, race until all players have had a turn. Have about four players on each team. Coach judges winner. The skills of stopping and starting as well as full speed skating are stressed in this activity.

### 0.17. OLYMPIC RELAY:

Divide the players into four teams. Move the nets up to the hash marks. First player skates around the ice and passes his\her stick to the next player between the blue lines. Each player gets one turn around. Speed and cross over turns are emphasized in this race.

### **0.18. RELAY RACE PUSHING FOUR PLAYERS:**

The players line up behind the goal line at one end. Three players squat down and one player

pushes the length of the ice. When he\she has skated one length go to the front of the line and squat down. Now the new player at the end pushes. Race is over when all have had a turn pushing one length.

#### 0.19. RINGUETTE WITH STICKS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN:

The players play ringuette using one ring in a full ice game. Shifts of five players are used. Goals are scored by shooting the ring into the net. All must handle the ring before a goal counts.

Examples of Games and Modified Scrimmages which teach players the proper skills and habits needed to be effective players.

By Juhani Wahlsten and Tom Molloy

Role One:

With the puck, individual offensive skill games

#### **1.1. BRITISH PUCK DOG:**

The players line up behind the goal line; when the player in the middle yells British Puckdog they carry the puck, trying to get to the end, without being checked. If a player loses the puck they are in the middle checking. Last player with a puck wins.

#### **1.2. KEEP AWAY:**

Everyone is trying to keep the puck in a small area. Reduce the amounts of pucks after every 15 seconds until only one puck is left.

#### **1.3. PLAYING WITH MORE PUCKS USING FULL ICE**

This enables the coach to increase the amount of activity on the ice. More game like situations are created for the players to solve. Again there can be no hitting or slapshots. One puck for each four

players is a good ratio for beginners. All players should keep track of their goals. For beginners you can use many pucks and ask them to score as many goals as possible. After a while you ask how many each player scored, if the goalie is making a save the puck carrier must wait to shoot.

### ***1.4. PLAYING WITH 7 PUCKS***

Two teams gather at center and the coach drops 7 pucks. The first team to score 4 goals wins, and another game begins. Make sure that there are only 7 pucks and the pucks are left in the net after a goal.

### ***1.5. PLAYING WITH 3 PUCKS***

Playing with 3 pucks causes some things to naturally happen. The players must look around with their heads on a swivel so they know what is happening behind them. Some methods are; everyone on the ice, 5-5 with line changes. Another idea is a timed game where the goalie puts the puck back into play after a goal. Keep score and the team that scores twice wins. For the next game, start with two pucks, then one.

In order to avoid confusion have only three pucks on the ice at one time, the extra pucks can be on top of the nets.

### ***1.6. PLAYING WITH TWO PUCKS***

Playing with 2 pucks has the same basic purpose in the system as all multi-puck games. The goalie puts the puck back into play after a goal. A good technique is to give a point to the team that scores two goals.

Playing with two pucks at more advanced levels is a good read and react exercise if you play situations such as 3-3.

### ***1.7. CROSS ICE GAME STRESSING EYE ON THE PUCK \ GOOD POSTURE***

By emphasizing facing the puck, you can teach your players to always see the puck when playing. Players learn to move in relationship to what is happening, allowing them to read the play and react in a constructive manner. This helps eliminate unnecessary turns, and useless skating. At the same time the coach can emphasize the proper skating posture, so that players are always in the ready position.

### ***1.8. GAME OF ONE ON ONE WITH FAKES AND FEINTS ATTACKING***

## ***THE DEFENDER FROM***

### **THE SIDE:**

Stress protecting the puck, making fakes and feints, and attacking from the side on offense. On defense, stress staying on the defensive side between the attacker and the net.

### ***1.9. GAME OF ONE ON ONE; USING HEAD AND SHOULDER FAKES:***

Goals are set up across the ice using nets, pylon, or the stripes on the boards. The players play each other and use head and shoulder fakes when stick handling. The game can last two minutes and then one side moves down to the next goal and the end person moves to the first goal. Now start another game against a new opponent. This technique can be used in all D2 games.

### ***1.10. GAME WITH HANDS CLOSE TOGETHER NEAR THE TOP OF THE STICK:***

Now play a half ice game of 1-1, the rule is the hands must be close together at the top of the stick. This enables the puck carrier to make big moves.

### ***1.11. GAME WITH LEGS WIDE APART WHILE FAKING:***

The player tries to combine the lessons learned in the other games. When he\she approaches the opponent he\she should spread his\her legs wide apart and combine this with the head and shoulder fakes, protecting the puck with his\her body and hands close together. Pressure on the inside edge of the skate enables the player to turn very quickly.

### **1.2. GAME STRESSING MOVING QUICKLY BY TAKING AT LEAST THREE STRIDES TO OPEN ICE WHEN YOU GET THE PUCK:**

The coach has the rule that the player must take at least three quick strides as soon as he\she gains possession of the puck. This may be the most important lesson the offensive player learns, as it creates time and space for the puck carrier as well as changing all of the passing angles.

### **1.3. CROSS ICE GAMES WITH TWO NETS:**

A normal game, but cross-ice. Have groups of any numerical situation play for 10-20 seconds, then change on the fly when the whistle goes. The next players are lined up at the side of the game. e.g. along blue line if game is in one end. An alternative is to have a coach in the middle of the blue line and one behind where the regular goal would be. This enables the players to pass to the coach or player and break for an opening. The coach must pass to the offensive team or shoot

and the defenders cover their checks and do not chase after the coach.

#### 1.4. GAME HOLDING THE STICK WITH ONLY THE TOP HAND AND PROTECTING THE PUCK:

The players are only allowed to hold the stick with one hand. This causes them to protect the puck with the body, as they cannot move the puck very fast.

#### 1.5. FACE THE PUCK GAME:

Divide the players into teams of two or three. The rule is that the players must always face the puck during the game.

#### 1.6. REGULAR GAME

This scrimmage should be as much like a regular game as possible with referees, and goals counted. When the teams are equal both defense and offense are practiced. The players must focus on the game and take it seriously or else bad habits can develop. Having the line that is scored on skate some lengths or else come off the ice are two methods that help the players to work at both ends of the ice. If the ice time is short avoid stoppages by eliminating face-offs and timing shifts so that the players change on the go while the coach shoots the puck into a neutral area, so the players can race for possession after they jump over the boards. If there are only three units playing the line that is on the ice must touch the boards behind their net during the line change.

#### 1.7. FULL ICE GAME WITH 45-60 SECOND SHIFTS:

Break team into two teams of two lines. Play full ice with the rule that a player can only handle the puck for three touches or two seconds and then must pass. When the coach blows the whistle the next group of players, who are lined up along the boards, come on. The player with the puck should pass to the new teammate coming on.

#### 1.8 GAME WITH NO PASSING ALLOWED:

The player with the puck must try to score while the other players support behind, screen and pick and go for rebounds.



## Role Two:

Offensive support off the puck, team offensive skill games

### ***2.1. PLAYING A GAME WHERE THERE MUST BE AT LEAST ONE PASS BEFORE A GOAL***

#### COUNTS:

There must be at least one pass before the goal counts. Set up goals across ice from each other. Play for one or two or minutes then change opponents.

### ***2.2. PLAYING A GAME WHERE THERE MUST BE AT LEAST TWO PASSES BEFORE A GOAL***

#### COUNTS:

There must be at least two passes before a goal counts. This teaches offensive support and passing skills.

On defense, one player should check the puck carrier and the other player should cover the pass receiver, both on the defensive side. This practices the final two playing roles.

### ***2.3. GAME WITH AT LEAST THREE PASSES:***

Playing either cross ice or in a half ice game goals count only if at least three passes are made first before a shot is taken.

### ***2.4. GAME TO TEACH THE OFFSIDE RULE TO YOUNG PLAYERS:***

A good way to teach young players how to stay onside is by playing a half ice game. The puck cannot be brought back over the blue line until all players are onside. Straddling the blue line can be taught as well as reaching over the line with the puck in order to avoid putting teammates offside.

### ***2.5. GAME STRESSING THE FOUR PLAYING ROLES:***

One player must cover the pass receiver from the puck side, always seeing the puck. Remind players that the puck carrier is also covered by one player from the defensive side. This game

reviews the four playing roles. 1. Player with puck. 2. Offensive player off the puck. 3. Defender covering puck carrier. 4. Defensive player covering pass receiver.

## **2.6. 2-2, 3-3, FULL ICE GAMES**

Playing in small groups for 30 second shifts is a good way to practice support on offense and defense.

## **2.7. GAME WITH THE PUCK CARRIER TAKING AT LEAST THREE TO FIVE QUICK STRIDES**

BEFORE PASSING;

Game with at least one pass but the puck carrier must take three quick strides before passing.

## **2.8. FULL ICE GAME WITH 45-60 SECOND SHIFTS:**

Full ice game with 60 seconds shifts. Break team into two teams of two lines. Play full ice with the rule that a player can only handle the puck for two seconds and then must pass. When the coach blows the whistle the next group of players, who are lined up along the boards, come on. The player with the puck should pass to the new teammate coming on.

## **2.9. TWO OR THREE TOUCH GAME**

Only allow two or three stick touches, or one or two seconds with the puck. This helps the players to develop split vision, and to look around before they get the puck, and also forces everyone to support the puck carrier.

## **2.10. GAME WITH WRIST PASSING ONLY:**

Wrist passes are more deceptive and easier to control than slap passes. Teach wrist passing by playing a full ice game where only backhand or forehand wrist passes are allowed. If a slap pass is made the other team gets the puck.

## **2.11. PASSING TO THE CLOSEST TEAMMATE:**

The player with the puck must pass to his closest teammate. This causes players to come back to the puck or support the puck carrier more closely it also practices making the easy play.

## ***2.12. GAME ALLOWING ONLY ONE PASS:***

By allowing only one pass the player must try to score by drive skating to the net and teammates must support by screening and going to the net for rebounds

## ***2.13. ATTACK USING THE OFFENSIVE TRIANGLE:***

The first player skates wide, the second player skates to the post, the third player trails. If the first player drives the middle the second players crosses behind, then the third player drives the post.

## ***2.14. OFFENSIVE TEAM PLAY:***

Play a game with offensive concepts in mind. All players must focus on their tasks in offensive hockey. An offensive player is either carrying the puck or supporting the puck carrier by breaking for a pass, screening or backing up the play. The individual strengths of players should be utilized in the offensive plan of a team. The defensive style and individual weaknesses of the opposition should also be considered when the game plan is made.

## ***2.15. GAME WITH NO PASSING ALLOWED IN OFFENSIVE ZONE:***

This game is designed to work on going to the net, picking, setting screens, and going for rebounds. It also forces the defense to stay on the defensive side.

## ***2.16. GAME WITH ONLY BACKHAND PASSING AND SHOOTING:***

Take the individual skill of backhand passing and practice it in a game context. This not only promotes backhand passes and shots but also changes the way the supporting players move. More back passing and crossing will happen and players learn to protect the puck with their body when shooting backhands. A tip on receiving a backhand pass is to keep the outside leg forward, this closes the player's stance and makes taking hard backhanded passes easier, the key is to relax the hands and keep the stick blade square to the puck.

## ***2.17. GAME WITH NO "GIVE AND GO PASSES":***

In this game the player is not allowed to return the pass so he\she must look for a third player. This promotes looking around with the head on a swivel, as well as supporting the puck carrier by all teammates.

## ***2.18. ALL PASSES MUST BE OFF THE ICE:***

This is good practice for lifting the puck over sticks with a saucer pass, work on making the puck land flat on the ice.

## ***2.19. "GIVE AND GO" GAME:***

The first pass receiver must return the puck to the passer who can then pass to another player, who must now give and go. This game teaches players to support by following their pass.

## ***2.21. GAME ALLOWING "DROP PASSES ONLY":***

The players must cross and leave the puck for their teammate or he\she may pick it off the stick. This game promotes crossing and dropping as well as accelerating with the puck to get in front of teammates.

## ***2.22. GAME WITH 7-10 CONSECUTIVE PASSES:***

Points are given to the team that can make 7-10 consecutive passes. At a more advanced level no return passes are allowed.

## ***2.23. TRANSITION FROM DEFENSE TO OFFENSE; SUPPORTING THE ATTACK***

As we have stated before, the first player back must be supported by his\her teammates when he\she is going for a loose puck. If his back is to the play it is very important that she\he is able to give a safe outlet pass to someone who can see up ice. The second player back must support the first player from the front of the net. If possible he should screen to hold up forecheckers. Because the second player can see up ice he\he must tell the first player if he\she has a player on him\her or where the quick outlet pass should go.

The calls are;

1. GO- meaning the player has time to turn with the puck and skate up ice.
2. SETUP-against passive forechecking or when the puck has been dumped in for a line change the first player can carry the puck behind the net for a setup breakout.

3. **BANK**-the second player skates to the other side of the net and takes a pass that is banked off the boards behind the net.
4. **REVERSE**-the first player skates hard towards the back of the net and when he\she feels the forechecker pressuring put the puck off the boards towards the corner where the second player picks it up and skates the other way.
5. **BOARDS**-a short pass to the third player coming back along the boards on the strong side. This is either a quick pass or reverse to number three on the boards or it is a **COUNTER** where the puck carrier drive skates to the back of the net, stops and passes back to number three, who must stay on the boards.
6. **MIDDLE**-a quick pass to the fourth player who is mirroring the movement of the puck from the mid slot area and skating towards the outside lane.
7. **RIM**-a hard pass around the boards to the fifth man who picks the pass up along the weak-side boards.

It is critical that the first outlet pass is done quickly so the transition to offense can be done before the opposition defense has reacted. If the first outlet pass is quick, or the first player turns and can see up ice, a fast break can develop if the puck is moved up ice within the first three seconds. This is the first option

if total puck control is gained. It is important that the players coming back think support until possession of the puck is certain. As soon as the puck carrier is able to see up ice the transition to offensive thinking begins.

Players must read the forward in the middle before switching lanes. If the fourth player swings to the strong side lane, then the number three player can either go up the boards and into the middle high or cut into the middle lane. If the defender has a lot of time the fourth player may swing to the weak side and now the fifth player can cut to the middle or skate down the boards and then into the middle to create depth in the attack. The key principles are: there must be strong side support, and only change lanes when the player from the middle lane is filling your lane.

## ***2.24. ATTACKING WITH THE 1-2-3-4-5 PRINCIPLE:***

By counting teammates ahead of them, players learn to read and react to the play. Number one is the first player to cross the blue line. Number two supports by driving to the far post or crossing with number one. Number three should trail from the mid slot area if two goes to the post. If one and two have crossed then number three should drive to the far post. Number four is the weak side defenseman and should join the attack as far as the top of the face-off circle then read whether it is worth the risk to go further.

Number five supports the attack from the blue line on the strong side. This gives a three wave 2-2-1 attack with two players deep, two in the high slot area and one back at the blue line.

## ***2.25. GAME ATTACKING WITH SHOOT IN AND FORECHECK:***

The attacking team must shoot the puck into the offensive zone and forecheck in order to regain puck possession. This game can be used to work on forechecking systems as well as practicing defending the forecheck. On the forecheck the first player must create immediate pressure from the inside out, the second player reads whether to; double team, cover a pass to the defenseman or backcheck. The third player mirrors the puck from the mid slot; ready to react to the pass to the strong-side boards, fill for a pinching defenseman, or cover the center lane. The fourth player supports from the middle of the blue line and pinches on a wide rim. The fifth player supports from the strong side blue line, either pinching on a board pass or quickly locking on the first forward breaking out of the zone. The key is to read whether the first forechecker makes contact. If contact is made, one should forecheck aggressively, outnumbering the defense in the corners. If the defending team gets control behind the net then use a trap by forcing the puck to one side then overloading that side with four players to cause a turnover.

## ***2.26. USING DEFENSEMEN IN THE OFFENSIVE ZONE:***

Players should avoid being forced into the corner, but instead pivot at the hashmarks and pass back or across to the defenseman or put the puck deep, if only high risk plays are available. These plays have a certain amount of high risk because the fourth and fifth man can easily give up outnumbered counter attacks if they mishandle the puck, so only safe passes should be made and shots from the point must go past the first wave of defenders. On a deep cycle in the corner the fourth man should look for opportunities to go to the far post. On a high cycle the fifth man can jump into the play. The puck can also be passed to the weak side defenseman corner to maintain possession, the third player has to cover the point. Don't let your team be outnumbered 5-3 in the offensive end by having the third attacker only as a backchecker and the fourth and fifth player passive. Teach red and green light situations and allow your

players to read the play. They all have to practice filling for each other and even the forwards must learn to play defensive situations when you have your defense jumping in. The reads depend upon the situation, the score and the time left in a game. Teach the players when it is a green light and when it is a red light situation.

## ***2.27. FACE-OFFS:***

In a controlled scrimmage have face-offs in all areas and teach offensive and defensive concepts

## **2.28. PLAYING A PUCK CONTROL GAME:**

To develop a flow type of team offense, play games that concentrate on puck control. In this scrimmage the point is not to score until all players have handled the puck in the offensive zone, while the players interchange positions following the principles of offense; using width, depth and support at all times. This game teaches the players to read the play and move into open lanes and supporting positions.

## **2.29. GAMES STRESSING WINNING LOOSE PUCKS IN THE OFFENSIVE ZONE:**

The closest player must go after "loose pucks" as quickly as possible. The other players support according to their distance from the puck. Dump the puck in from the neutral zone and forecheck in this game to create these loose puck situations.

## **2.30. GAME WITH ONLY DEFENSEMEN SHOOTING:**

Play a game where only goals scored by direct or deflected shots from the blue line or from passes from the defense are counted. This promotes the players tight turning and passing to the point, as well as screening and tipping. Defensemen should only shoot if they can miss the first checker, otherwise they should pass or put the puck behind the net. The other defenseman supports from the middle and one forward should come back toward the puck on the strong side. This strong side support rule should be

used in all situations, it is almost like setting up in an overload power play when the puck is at the point,

giving the point man at least one safe possession pass.

## **2.31. OFFENSIVE POSSESSION BEHIND THE OPPONENT'S NET:**

When the puck is behind the opponent's net number two and three should move towards the face-off dots where it is hard for defenders to cover or they can screen the defenseman. A defenseman can move into the slot for a pass if the defenders backs are turned.

## **2.32. GAME WITH CYCLING IN THE OFFENSIVE CORNER:**

To create space from the corner the puck carrier skates up the boards, if he\she is pressured he passes back to the corner where his teammate cycles to the corner from near the front of the net. The passer becomes the third man and the third man cycles toward the puck on the net side.

### **2.33. GAME WITH REGROUPING IN THE NEUTRAL ZONE:**

Play a game where the offensive team must pass the puck back and regroup at least once before they enter the offensive zone. The same principles of the 1-2-3-4-5 breakout are used whenever the last two players have the puck. If all of the forwards are covered the defenseman should carry the puck and the strong side supporting forward can swing in behind and support.

### **2.34. SUPPORTING THE PUCK ON OFFENSE BY ATTACKING AS A TEAM TRANSITION TO**

#### **DEFENSE**

In order to give more options for the puck carrier, remember—when the team has the puck, everyone supports the attack. A game with the rule that a goal only counts if everyone is in the attacking zone can emphasize this offensive support. This can be encouraged by not allowing a goal until all players on the team are over the blue line in the offensive zone.

### **Role Three:**

Checking the puck carrier, individual defensive skill games

### **3.1. DEFENSIVE SIDE GAME; PLAYERS HAVE NO STICKS:**

Two players using a pylon as a goal have a contest to see who can touch the pylon while on offense. The defensive player stays between the offensive player and the pylon goal. He\she faces and stays square to the offensive player and tries to stop him\her from touching the pylon.

### **3.2. DEFENSIVE SIDE GAME WITH DEFENDERS STICK UPSIDE DOWN:**

Two players play one on one using one goal. The defensive player stays on the defensive side preventing the offensive player from scoring. Play 30 seconds then switch positions.



### **3.3. DEFENSIVE SIDE GAME OF ONE ON ONE USING ONE GOAL:**

Small goals or pylons are placed along the sideboards. The offensive player tries to score, the defensive player stays between the puck carrier and the net. When the defensive player gets the puck he\she skates to mid ice then turns around and tries to score on the same goal against his\her opponent.

### **3.4. ONE GOAL GAME; DEFENDER PLAYS WITHOUT A STICK:**

The offensive player tries to score against the defender with no stick. The defender stays between the offensive player and the net on the "defensive side". Play 15-30 seconds and then switch. The winner is the player who allows the least goals against.

### **3.5. GAME OF ONE ON ONE STRESSING THE DEFENSIVE SIDE:**

The players play a full, half or cross-ice game but the defender learns that he\she knows where the puck carrier is going. He\she is going to the net. The coach teaches the defender to always stay between the puck carrier and her\his own goal. This is the first step in teaching good defensive technique. When backchecking the defender must get her\his shoulder in front of the puck carrier to get on the defensive side.

### **3.6. ONE ON ONE GAME OF DEFEND-ATTACK-LEAVE METHOD STRESSING THAT THE**

**DEFENSE GET A TIGHT GAP BEFORE THE RED LINE:**

By playing a tight gap the defense can control the rush. The players are lined up along the sideboards, there can be one team on each side of the ice. The offensive player carries the puck towards the defensive players goal. The defensive player tries to keep a tight gap, not backing in too far. When the offensive player crosses the red line, the offensive players teammate follows the play as far as the blue line, ready to defend against the attack when the original defender rushes the puck. The new player defends, attacks and when the puck is over the blue line, leaves back to the line up. A great flow game for all players to develop

both offensive and defensive skills. The coach can allow passes to the point, the pointman must either shoot or pass right away, they cannot go in and shoot. The defender covers the first attacker, moving him\her from the front of the net, controlling the stick, or body on the defensive side and stick in the passing lane. This game can be played up to 3 on 3 and also in situations like 2-1, 1-2, 2-2, 2-3, 3-2.

### **3.7 GAME STRESSING IMMEDIATE PRESSURE BY THE CLOSEST DEFENDER:**

In a small area game, stress that the closest defending player pressures the puck. It is important to get immediate pressure on the puck from the inside out. This delays the attack, deflects it wide and hurries the puck carrier into making mistakes. Deep in the zone the defender must quickly close the gap and make contact if the player is not in good control of the puck and if the offensive player has good control, then maintain the defensive side by stopping and going back, staying on the defensive side.

### **3.8 HALF ICE TRANSITION GAME OF ONE ON ONE THEN ONE ON TWO .**

One offensive player attacks one on one versus a defender. A backchecker follows the play from the boards and gives defensive support from a few meters away on the defensive side. When the defense regains the puck the backchecker skates to the red line and turns back trying to score on a new defender who has skated from the lineup on the boards and plays a defensive one on one.

## **Role Four:**

### **Defensive support; team defensive skill games**

#### Principles:

- all attack-defend-leave half ice and full and cross-ice games can isolate the defensive zone team play concepts of 2-1 up to 5-6.
- all defend-attack-leave half and full ice games can isolate the defensive zone team play skills of 2-1 up to 5-6 as well as the penalty killing skills.
- all full, half and cross ice games where one defensive player waits outside of the defensive zone are good for practicing defensive skills in outnumbered situations. e.g. 5-5 full ice game with one defensive forward staying in the neutral zone creates a 5-4 in the zone.

### **4.1. TWO vs. TWO USING ONE GOAL NEAR THE BOARDS:**

The defensive players cover one offensive player each. The first player stays on the defensive

side of the puck carrier. The second defender supports by covering the pass receiver from the defensive side, with the stick in the passing lane. When the defenders get the puck they skate to mid ice then turn around and attack the same goal.

#### 4.2. PRACTICE COMING BACK DEEP IN A FULL ICE GAME OF 2 v 2, OR 3 v 3:

The coach emphasizes that the closest checker gives immediate pressure on the puck and deflects the attack from the middle. The second player in the zone supports from the front of the net and the third player supports in a position to beat the two offensive players to the net and react to a pass to the supporting forward.

#### 4.3. LEARNING DEFENSIVE PRINCIPLES:

Play a 2-2, 3-3, 4-4 or 5-5 game focusing on defensive coverage. The defending players; stay between the puck and the goal, force the puck wide, finish checks, cover their checks, immediate pressure on the puck from inside to outside”PLAYING OFF THE BACK SHOULDER OF THE PUCK CARRIER”. Use the guideline “Body on body and stick on the puck.” All players have a one on one responsibility in their own zone. If someone loses a one on one then the supporting player has a 1-2, he\she doesn’t simply leave his\her player uncovered.

#### 4.4. DEFENDING THE SLOT

Play a full ice game of 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5, with shifts of 30 to 60 seconds. The main principle of defending is simple. It is to control the slot area in front of your goal. Concentrate on determining who is covering who by the red line and deflect the puck out of the middle lane. All players maintain defensive side body position and keep sticks in the passing lanes.

#### 4.5. DEFENDING THE SLOT WITH A PASSIVE 2-1-2

Game inside blue line. The defensive team stands in the slot area in a 2-1-2 formation. They are in a tight box with one forward in the middle. The defenders are only allowed to take one step. If the puck is coming out of the corner the defenseman takes one step toward the puck and the forward in the middle fills the corner of the box. The weak-side forward sags into the slot and the strong side forward collapses down one stride. The offensive team can do anything it wants to score. The defenders keep their sticks in the passing lanes. Have the same thing going on at both ends. The offense gets one minute to score, then switch and allow the defense to attack. The main principle of defending is simple, it is to control the slot area in front of your goal. When teaching defensive zone coverage the coach should show the players where to skate back to in order to protect the slot area. Defend from inside out, always staying between the opponent and the net.

As the puck gets closer to the goal more man to man coverage is used on players without the puck. The slot area is where the defenders skate to on defense trying to force the puck to the outside and up the boards.

#### 4.6. ONE THIRD ICE GAME WITH AGGRESSIVE 2-1-2 DEFENSE

The defense sets up in a tight box with one forward in the middle. The description of the "one checker pressure and a box behind" follows. The offense starts with the puck at the blue line. One defensive player from one corner pressures the puck from the inside out. When he/she does this the middle forward rotates to his place on the corner of the box and the box slides from one side to the other overloading an area of the ice. The remaining four players have sticks in the passing lanes and are on the defensive side of the offensive players. When pressuring the puck the defender skates in straight lines and always finishes checks. The middle forward supports the 2 on 1 attack from the inside of the box, always in a position to maintain the defensive side of his/her man while supporting the first checker. When the play goes to another area the closest player forces the play in the same way. All players are responsible to cover one attacker.

#### 4.7. DEFENDING 3-3, 2-2, IN DEFENSIVE ZONE:

In a full ice game each team leaves two players in the neutral zone. When the defending team gets the puck they pass to the neutral zone and there will be a 2-2 situation at the other end. After the players have the basic flow of the game, make it more game-like by having the next offensive players waiting for the puck at the top of the circle and the defense standing on the blue line. If the puck is brought above the circles, the new offensive players can check the puck carrier as in a game. If the puck is dumped to the new defense, they should shoot it back into the zone.

One line plays two defense and one forward as a backchecker while defending and the other two forwards attacking two on two the other way. The other line has three forwards on offense and two defensemen for the 2 on 2 at the other end. Many other numerical situations can be practiced using this Attack-Defend-Pass-Leave sequence. Have all forwards take turns being the backchecker.

Halfway through the game change so the other defense play 2 on 2 and the other team has a backchecker. A five on five in each end can be created by simply having the next forwards and defenseman follow the play into the zone and play as a regular game. The forwards leave after the puck is over the offensive blue line; the defenseman and backchecker leave when they have cleared the puck.

#### 4.8. PLAY A GAME OF 5-5 STRESSING DEFENSIVE ZONE

## COVERAGE; 1-2-3-4-5 PRINCIPLE:

As the players come back into their zone they cover the opposition according to their closeness to the play. They play a combined man-to-man zone defense. Number one covers the puck carrier, number two the front of the net, number three supports the play from the mid slot area covering 3-3 with the first two players back (usually defensemen). Number four covers the mid high slot area where the far defenseman may come in as the fourth man on the attack. Number five covers the strong side defenseman. Everyone stays on the "defensive side" of their man with their sticks on the ice denying passes to the slot. When the puck is in deep the first three players play three on three deep in the zone. The closest player checks the puck carrier and is supported by the second player who covers the front of the net and the third player who covers the supporting forward while supporting the first checker. Four and five have zone coverage high. When the puck is at the point, everyone covers man to man from the defensive side. The low defenders must allow the goalie to see the puck, and control the offensive sticks to prevent tip-ins and deflections.

### 4.9. GAME WITH STICKS UPSIDE DOWN IN THE DEFENSIVE ZONE:

A good teaching technique is to practice defense while holding the sticks upside down in the defensive zone. This helps the players to focus on staying between their check and the net, with their shoulders square. They must stop and start and learn to always play the body deep in their own zone. The coach can blow the whistle and signal that the sticks may be held properly and the other team can defend with their sticks upside down.

### 4.10. GAME PRACTICING THE DEFENSEMEN READING THE QUICK COUNTER ATTACK:

Play a 4-4 or 5-5 game with two forwards floating in the neutral zone. Have the defending team try long passes to the forwards in the neutral zone. The defensemen at the blue line will have to read and react when to cover for the long pass to the forwards in the neutral zone.

### 4.11. ALL FIVE HAVE THE PUCK IN FRONT OF THEM

This is the strongest defensive position to be in as no one is trapped behind the play. This is a passive forechecking style that allows the offense to turn the puck up ice and then deflects the puck to one side of the rink and outnumbers the attackers.

Whenever the puck is above the circles in the defensive zone it must be cleared over the blue line. In the offensive zone dump or carry the puck into the corner or behind the net. It is a safe play to make when only high risk offensive options are available to the puck carrier.

## 4.12. GAMES TEACHING FORECHECKING WITH DEFENSIVE TRANSITION COVERAGE:

In this game the offensive team dumps the puck in on the rush and forechecks. When attacking in the offensive zone and the puck is loose, players must support thinking both offense and defense. The closest player must go after "loose pucks" as quickly as possible. The other players support according to their distance from the puck, the second player reads either double team, react to the pass or backcheck, the third player reacts to the pass to the boards, covers for a pinching defenseman or backchecks. The fourth player supports from the far post at the blue line, and pinches on a rim. The fifth player either supports the play from the blue line or takes a pre-pinch position, depending on what forechecking system is being used. The third man would play high in the slot when pinching, lower when he is reacting to the boards pass.

## 4.13. A 2-2, 3-3, 4-4, 5-5 GAME STRESSING DEFENSIVE TEAM PLAY:

The team must have a style of play that allows for simple transition from offense to defense and defense to offense. The most efficient way to do this is to have the last three players defending in a triangle, with two men back. If the backchecker can force the puck carrier wide before the red line he/she should do this. If the puck carrier is in front of the backchecker she/he should let the defenseman play him/her and cover a trailer. The 2-3-4 rule should apply; 2 players are always at the offensive blue line, 3 are back deflecting the play wide by the red line and 4 are back by the defensive blue line, this fourth player will fill the middle if the first backchecker has taken the puck carrier wide or he will cover the far wing if the defense are playing the puck carrier.

This style protects the middle lane and allows the backchecker to; force the puck wide, play 2-2 crossing situations with the defenseman or pick up the trailer on a rush. The other defenseman covers the man going to the far post if the backchecker picks up the trailer. In this way you avoid two defensemen in one corner with a forward covering the front of the net, as happens when the forward backchecks on the weak side winger. The triangle also prevents the attacker from going to the middle when the defense backs in too fast. Transition is also easy from this triangular positioning, as the breakout pattern is easily begun. If passive forechecking 1-2-2 was used because of a set up behind the net then the first backchecker forces the play into a wide lane, the second backchecker forces the puck, the third backchecker fills the middle lane and the strong side defenseman stands up the play. The weak side defenseman covers the attacker going to the post. The neutral zone is the best area to create turnovers and to go into offensive transition.

## 4.14. PLAY 4-4 FOCUSING ON TEAM PLAY CONCEPTS:

Forwards cover the defense and defense cover forwards. Center goes to point on face-off.

#### 4.15. CLEARING THE FRONT OF THE NET:

The D1, 64 game of full ice 5-5 with 5-3 inside the blue lines and two forwards in the neutral zone can be modified to practice clearing out the front of the net. The rule is that the attacking defensemen cannot come closer than the top of the circles and must shoot or pass within one second. The three defenders play 3-3 against the offensive forwards. Goals only count on shots from the point, tip-ins, deflections or rebounds. The defenders must learn to clear the opponents out so the goalie can see the shot and the attackers sticks are tied up.

#### 4.16. FACE-OFFS:

In a controlled scrimmage have face-offs in all areas and teach offensive and defensive concepts

#### 4.17. ACTIVE FORECHECKING:

The first players force the puck wide, the second player pressure a pass to the defensive partner, third player mirror the puck from the mid slot and react to the pass to the strong side wing or fill on a rim for the pinching defenseman, the fourth player pinch on a wide rim, support the play from the middle at the blue line, the fifth player support on the strong side point.

#### 4.19. TWO FORECHECKERS

Two forecheckers aggressively force the play while the other three support in a triangle defending the middle lane. The first forechecker forces the puck, while the second double teams if the puck is loose or reacts to a pass to the defenseman. With the third player high the defense can pinch from either side.

#### 4.20. THREE FORECHECKERS

This is a common style on the smaller North American rinks. If this style is chosen it is very important that the third man slide back into the mid slot area so that he\she can lock the center and backcheck. It is a very effective forechecking style if the players are able to read and react and have the discipline to become the third man. If there is no third man the other team will get many 3-2's.

#### 4.21. DEFENSE STRESS GETTING A TIGHT GAP BEFORE THE RED LINE USING A SEQUENCE

## OF DEFEND, ATTACK, LEAVE IN A 2-2, 3-3 GAME:

By playing a tight gap the defense can control the rush. The players are lined up along the sideboards, there can be one team on each side of the ice. The offensive player carries the puck towards the defensive players goal. The defensive players try to keep a tight gap, not backing in too far. When the offensive player crosses the red line, the attacking player's teammates follows into the zone, ready to defend against the attack when the original defender rushes the puck. The new players defend, attack, and when the puck is over the blue line, leave and return to the line up. A great flow game for all players to develop both offensive and defensive skills. Passes to the point can be allowed but the pointman must pass or shoot right away. The two or three defenders deep in the zone maintain their low coverage.

## 4.22. GAME PRACTICING DEFENDING THE PLAY OUT OF THE CORNER:

In this game the rule is that goals only count if they are started by plays out of the offensive corners. The closest player defends the attack out of the corner. If he\she reads that the opponent is not in full control of the puck, has their back to the play or is within half a stick length of the player, the defender should play the body and pin the attacker to the boards. If the player is under full control and is facing up ice, the defender should close the gap then pivot and skate backwards, maintaining his"defensive side" so that he\she can get his\her stick between the attackers legs and high in the crotch making contact with the player outside of the slot area. If the player passes the defender stays with him\her eliminating the give and go. "Both the man and the puck cannot come out of the corner."

## 4.23. FOUR PLAYERS FORECHECK:

Pressure forecheck, the first four forecheckers cover four lanes while the fifth player is at the strong side blue line. All checks must be completed.

## 4.24. CHANGE ON FLY, DEFEND, ATTACK, DEFEND, SHOOT-IN:

Practice for changing lines on the fly. When a new line goes out they defend, attack, defend then shoot the puck into the corner opposite their bench. If they have trouble getting the puck out on the first rush, then dump the puck in on first rush and change.



## **4.24. A TRANSITION GAME OF 2-1 THEN 3-3 IN THE DEFENSIVE ZONE.**

Two players attack from the red line 2-1. When the puck crosses the blue line two forwards from the defending team follow the play into the zone. The backcheckers assume the role of defenseman in front of net and supporting forward. When they regain the puck they breakout as far as the red line and then the two forwards, turn back and attack two on one versus a new defenseman on the other team. In a full ice game the new forwards attack a new defenseman who has followed the play inside the blue line.

Use this method to play games and tournaments. Other situations such as 2-2 to 4-4, 3-1 to 4-4 and 3-2 to 5-5 can be played. It is a good way to keep a continuous flow going, practice team play and change the players efficiently.

## **4.28. GAME OF OUTNUMBER SITUATIONS WITH BACKCHECKERS SUPPORTING**

Start a full ice game of 2-1 with two backcheckers and a new defenseman following the play into the zone. When the defenders break out 2-1 both of the original attackers backcheck as far as the red line or until one of them covers the supporting forward. They play 2-2 deep in the zone and two new attackers and one defenseman follow the play into the zone making it a 3-4 attack.

This game can be also be played 3-1, two attackers backcheck, causing a three on three deep in zone and 3 forwards and one defender ready to go the other way. The new defenders stay above the circles. As a 3-2 game one forward backchecks, making it 3-3 deep in the zone and three forwards and two defensemen waiting to go the other way