

10 Golden Hockey Rules for Offensive Play

TCS+

To kick off 2023, Aaron Wilbur welcomed Pyry Lukkarila, Head of Coach Development for the Finnish Ice Hockey Association, onto the Glass & Out Podcast. The discussion centred around why coach education must always precede player development, why nothing is accomplished without good player-coach communication, and why alignment is critical to an effective development process.

1. Offensive play begins as soon as you gain possession of the puck

“This is a simple sentence, but it has a whole lot of things in it. This isn’t just for the puck carrier, it applies to every player on the ice, whether it’s small area games or the real game.”

2. The puck is always faster than the player

“Of course that’s the case. But what does that actually mean? That’s where a lot of our secret sauce is.”

3. Offensive play requires depth and width

“I’m not going to get into this one. There are some important elements to this that really mean something to us and how we see the game.”

4. The player with the puck should move towards open space

“The open space here means coming off the boards and into the centre of the ice. You want to move to where you have options to your left and to your right. Open space might be the wrong word for it, but it’s thinking if I get a puck along the boards, how can I get myself and the puck into bigger, open ice so that I have more options and can make a play.”

5. If your teammate moves towards you, move towards an open area or lane

“This is basic invasion sports stuff.”

6. Players without the puck should find open space

“This is making things happen without the puck.”

7. The player with the puck should always try to move over the next line

“This is something that doesn’t necessarily happen all the time, but it’s more of a way of thinking that you want to get closer to the net that you want to score on. So this is something concrete for kids to try to get them thinking that way; try to move towards that next line. It’s more a principal thing.”

8. After crossing the offensive blueline, two players should drive hard towards the net

“This rule used to have one player driving to the net hard, but now I’ve changed it to two players. This is important.”

9. Goals are scored from the goal-scoring area

“We’ve got zones one and two in front of the net, the goal-scoring circles, where most goals are scored.”

10. Defence starts as soon as the puck is lost

“We all know this one.”

“Like I said,” Lukkarila added, “these are nothing fancy. The fancy stuff comes as a result of these things happening.”

Fancy things are happening in Finland, as a matter-of-fact, because of Lukkarila and how he has played a key role in reshaping Finland’s coach education system. If you look at the recent string of international success by a country of just under 67,000 hockey players, it’s clear that his work is paying off.

In the past three World Championships, the Finns have captured two Golds and one Silver. The previous eight World Junior Championships have resulted in three Golds, one Silver and one Bronze. And in the past six U18 World Championships, they have brought home two Golds, a Silver and a Bronze.

Is it because of the Golden Rules? We can neither confirm, or deny this. But we do understand why Lukkarila is guarding the exact recipe to his Finland’s hockey secret sauce so closely.

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