



“Every year it is well worth refreshing all players’ memories on the fundamentals of getting out of our zone”

BREAKOUTS – PLAYER REFRESHER

Here’s a handout for players I use after a chalk talk with them demonstrating and discussing ways of exiting our zone effectively against aggressive forechecking systems.

PLAYERS’ REFRESHER - KEYS TO GETTING OUT OF OWN END AGAINST A STRONG 2 -1 -2 FORECHECK

READ CAREFULLY PLEASE

Our D, forwards and goalies before they step on the ice need to understand all of our break out options in order to react to the various systems of forechecking we may face from the opposition.

Remember, in our zone when the puck is shot into our corner, if our players all get back and position quickly below or just below the $\frac{1}{2}$ boards, we out number their forecheckers 5 to 3 and we should be able to find our open player if each of us position properly and select the preferred play option to our open player. Their D usually stay at our blue line and only pinch when our wingers set up and receive passes above the $\frac{1}{2}$ boards or on a strong side to weak side behind the net rim reverse to our winger on the $\frac{1}{2}$ boards, or when there is an errant pass or cough up.

DEFENCE

Knowing these options in advance gives a D a better chance of adapting and choosing his best option under intense forechecking pressure as our D turns and goes to the corner to get the puck in our zone. Our D is usually but not always the first player back in our corner to get the puck.

From previous game video, or game attendance, or at the beginning of the game the coaches will identify their forechecking system if they follow a pattern - many teams use the 2 – 1 - 2 overload forecheck as their first forechecking option with their first man in skating hard and bodychecking our D, and their second man supposed to take the puck, with their third man high in slot favouring one side, or a spread 2 – 1 - 2 forecheck with their first 2 forwards covering our anticipated D to D pass behind our net with their high forechecker anticipating which side the puck will go to. *Good teams will adapt their forechecking system to what the other team’s time and space on each forecheck is, and good breakout teams will read the forechecking system coming at them and adapt to it on the spot to beat it.*



Before our D turns to go to our corner our D should read where their forechecking forwards are around our blue line (which side is overloaded or not), so he understands their likely forechecking speed, which side *their forechecking flow* is likely to be on, and our D's likely time and space when he gets to the puck – *if it appears our D will have lots of time he shouldn't cruise in at 1/3 or 3/4 speed – take advantage of the extra time and space your speed will give you – always go back full speed to form good habits. All good teams will 2 – 1 – 2 forecheck at full speed.*

To help our D when his back is turned as he goes to the puck in our corner, our other D and our goalie should communicate with our D going to the puck whether there is a “man on”, whether to “wheel”, whether to go “D to D” or whether to reverse the puck hard immediately, either a same side reverse or a reverse rimmed behind out net to the forward at the half boards on the weak side. *And again our D should look back once as he is going back to get the puck in our corner if he can. Head on a swivel.*

D OPTIONS

D must get to the puck in our corner at full speed to maximize time and space with the puck – it really is a race – successful breakouts all start here

1. D should pick up the puck in the corner *without telegraphing which way you are likely to go by the angle you take to the puck* (that is go straight in to the puck vertically until the last second) skating hard, *wheel behind and around our net if it appears clear on the other side and you hear “wheel”, then carry the puck until pressured and pass to F's* - if you can get to the face off dot or top of the circle in our end stretch pass to F's in the neutral zone indirect off the boards or to a F cutting across the middle low or high – D should expect lots of traffic usually if you do this as all their forechecking flow is probably coming at you, or, you can go D to D carefully in our end with our other D hinging back to make the D to D an easy safe pass, or you can simply shoot the puck out off the glass and out, if there is no safe pass to make: **OR**
2. Pick up the puck in our corner skating hard, wheel to behind the net, **stop if no one is following you closely** (but rather is going to the other side of our net to where you were heading), go the opposite way, and pass to the



winger at the $\frac{1}{2}$ boards, or carry until pressured and then pass, or shoot the puck out off the glass – if you can get to the face off dot or the top of our circle stretch pass to F's in the neutral zone, or go D to D carefully in our end with our other D hinging back to make it an easy safe pass: OR

3. *Beat their first forechecker with a strong misdirection spin move when you get to the puck with their player right on you* (very dangerous if their forechecker is taking the man all the way and your move fails) and then pass to the winger at the $\frac{1}{2}$ boards, or carry the puck until pressured and then pass, or shoot out off the glass - if you can get to the face off dot or the top of our circle stretch pass to F's in the neutral zone, or go D to D carefully in our end with our other D hinging back to make it an easy safe pass: OR
4. *If their forechecker is right on you which is usually the case against good teams, one touch D to D pass on the tape behind our net without taking full puck handling control and expect a D to D pass back sometimes – COMMUNICATE – passing on the tape to our other D is key – in his skates takes too much extra time for him - our second D may reverse the puck back to our now weak side winger: OR*
5. *Get puck control if there is time and space, look and then D to D pass on the tape to our other D and expect a D to D pass back sometimes – COMMUNICATE – passing on the tape to our other D is key – our second D may reverse the puck back to our now weak side winger: OR*
6. *If their forechecker is right on you which is usually the case against good teams, one touch pass immediately to the strong side forward at $\frac{1}{2}$ boards if open tape to tape if able or rim the puck to this forward – forward should be facing their D not our net – the strong side forward pass is unlikely to work as that is what they will normally expect as their forechecking flow will usually be to the strong or puck side – they will usually cover our strong side winger at the $\frac{1}{2}$ boards: OR*
7. *If their forechecker is right on you which is usually the case against good teams, one touch reverse pass the puck hard immediately against their forechecking flow behind our net to our weak side winger at the $\frac{1}{2}$ boards past our other D waiting for the D to D pass: our winger should anticipate this pass coming, get to the $\frac{1}{2}$ boards in time to receive the pass, and be facing their D not our net so he can make a play up ice – This option will usually work*



- 8. If our centre is open in our faceoff circle or in front of our net, pass carefully to him- only use this at higher hockey skill levels**
- 9. Eat the puck, and wait for help, usually this will be our centre coming back hard.***

FORWARDS

- 1. Because our 2 D may be outnumbered by their 3 forecheckers and to enable a D to D play behind our net (no D in front of our net), our centre must get back deep in our own end at full speed and play like a D in case any of the above goes wrong to pick up the puck after they have bodychecked our D, to cover their uncovered high forechecker in front of our net if they win the puck early, or to help a winger at the half boards when the puck comes around to the half boards, or to get into position for a pass with speed, either a chip out, or a direct pass.**
- 2. Our wingers must get back to the ½ boards at full speed when our D has possession but not high beyond the hash marks to enable their D to easily pinch and keep the puck in, and so our winger can cover one of their points if they win possession in our corner. If our D has possession our wingers should ideally have gone low enough to be able to curl and take our D's pass at the half boards on the tape or off a rim pass in motion. This is often not possible, so our wingers getting open at the ½ boards ready for the D to D pass is more important than being in motion when we have puck control in our corner.***
- 3. If our centre is caught behind the play and will be the last man back, the first winger back must assume his role and the centre must read that and assume the winger's role in our end and then switch back when they can communicating this to each other clearly.***
- 4. Once the puck is at the half boards with our winger, our winger can chip the puck off the boards over our blue line to our centre hard enough so the puck gets there, or pass to the weak side winger cutting across in the neutral zone between their 2 D, or our winger just shoots the puck out hard if under extreme pinching pressure by their D. The pros' and elite wingers at the half boards sometimes chip sideways in their own zone to the centre coming up beside them or pass back to a D coming up in our end but if either of these plays fail and the opposition intercepts the puck it's very dangerous so it's not a recommended option for everyone.***



As the season progresses we will continue to practice specific basic breakout and stretch breakout plays, with and without resistance for our wingers, centre and D, depending on the time and space they have available and the opposition's forechecking system. But everything starts with our D and our forwards reading their forechecking system, and their player forechecking flow, communicating with one another and getting into position as fast as we can in our zone as outlined above.