



*“ Often talked about by coaches but maybe one of the most fundamentally important tactics not valued enough by many forwards”*

## **ALL ZONES - BACKCHECKING**

Even when we have the puck in their zone or are on the forecheck to win it, one forward must assume the role of the higher forward in their zone and the primary lead backchecker if we lose or don't win the puck in their end. This forward, the so-called F3 cannot commit himself to a puck win around their blueline unless he is very sure he will win it because if he lunges and misses they will likely have an odd man rush.

So, when we lose the puck in the offensive zone or in the neutral zone and they transition up ice, our F3 and all forwards must come back as fast as they can, even if it doesn't appear they will be able to catch their forwards with or without the puck. However if they begin a play in our zone it will take time and our backchecking forward will be able to contribute to the defensive play there to beat it.

Our lead forechecker or our forward the closest to their puck carrier and the highest among our forwards must come back through the middle of the ice so our defencemen can close the gaps more easily between them and the puck carrier and take care of their sides. Our lead backchecking forward can take care of the middle of the ice stopping passing plays and forcing whatever play they are running wide, not in the Grade A shooting area.

If our backchecker can catch their puck carrier from behind, great, he should get beside or in front of him and go under stick, then nudge his body and then take or dislodge the puck. Many times our backchecking forward comes back in the vicinity of their puck carrier and hands him off to our D rather than finishing the check himself. Finish the check.

And if you are backchecking and covering their non puck carrier get in front of him so you are between him and our net, so –called “goal side”.

If you are a centre come all the way back to net front and if you are a winger come back to around our faceoff dots in our end assuming the puck has been brought down that low, and assume your coverage responsibilities.

If they are coming with 3 of them against our 2 D the speed of your forecheck will determine what type of play they will be able to run so the faster back the better. Focus on their trailing forward in this situation as he will probably be their primary target for a pass.

Again, most forwards skate into their zone when we have the puck a lot faster than they do when they are backchecking. Don't be one of those forwards. Backcheck hard.