



“Creating fatigue in the other team by skating hard everywhere with physical contact finishing checks is a good strategy for us”

ALL ZONES – HOW TO BEAT SMALLER SIMILAR SPEED TEAMS

One year in the playoffs we were playing a very good team who finished first in a 13 team AA league. They could skate about as well as we could skate and shoot about as well as we could and pass about as well as we could. After 3 games in a 6 point series we were tied with 3 points each. We were beaten 3 – 0 in the previous game and completely out played. We needed a new strategy. Overall they were smaller than we were. The following is what we decided to do. We emailed the game plan to our players and discussed it with them. We won the series.

Here’s what we sent to the players.

RE: 3 – 0 Loss – FEEDBACK – GUT CHECK TIME!!!

Hi Guys,

What will it take to win this series?

1. Partly the same old same old that we all know - play harder and smarter than they do – in our 3 - 0 loss much of the time they played harder (out - hustled, out – bodychecked us and won more puck battles) and sometimes they played smarter than we did (good coverages in front of their net, on us fast everywhere, played their positions, hardly any odd man rushes against them, shot from everywhere, went to the net well, give and go passing hockey – they made less mistakes than we did)
2. **But there is one large advantage we have over them if every player on our team will do it. So simple.** Overall, although they skate and pass well, they are smaller and weaker than we are physically. **They cannot out skate or out pass or out shoot us overall, so if we decide to out bodycheck and out hustle them they do not have the size or strength to stop us and they will get tired.** But if we forget the bodychecking game and even with speed and some good passing plays play soft, careful, hesitant, containment, “I don’t want to take a penalty” style hockey they may beat us in the series. And I don’t mean we should play stupid reckless hit from behind or to the head bodychecking hockey and take pinching and step-up chances everywhere.

You know what I mean. **EVERY PLAYER** must decide to out-hustle and out-bodycheck them on every shift playing smart at the same time. **Their speed and passing can be neutralized with good old fashion Canadian style hockey – speed, passing, clean hard bodychecking, and finishing the bodycheck after they pass.**



Some facts on our 6 regular season games against them so far this year:

Game 1: 2 – 0 Loss We had 15 hits/finished checks

Game 2: 2 – 1 Loss We had 24 hits/finished checks

Game 3: 2 – 0 Win We had 42 hits/finished checks

Game 4: 3 – 3 Tie We had 10 hits/finished checks

Game 5: 3 – 2 Win We had 22 hits/finished checks

Game 6: 3 – 0 Loss We had 29 hits/finished checks (14 in the 3rd period after it was 2 – 0)

Teams don't score hardly at all against us when we hustle, play smart and play physical with lots of hits – same thing last year when we won the Ontario Provincial championship when we were averaging 40 – 50 hits per game.

There's nothing a small speedy team hates more than hard hitting tight checking hockey that makes them feel in every second and I mean every second, someone is on them, there is no room, and they are going to get bodychecked. In this situation sometimes after a while these players just kind of go through the motions or ease up just a bit and stay away from the puck battles or more importantly don't really want the puck to come their way or are on their heels particularly in the third period when they are tired. They really don't want any part of the physical action any more. **And they will get tired faster if we play physically.** There will be penalties called against us as we do this, we just have to minimize them and prevent major penalties. We will kill the minors. **No poke checking, sweep checking, one hand stuff or semi circle turn away skating past their player with the puck ("fly bys") – make physical contact all the time and finish checks.**

3. Let's get specific:

In Their Zone and the Neutral Zone

1. Every time they carry the puck in their zone or in the neutral zone coming at us they will get bodychecked by one of our forwards on that side even if they pass off just as you are getting to him/her – we will finish the check - no exceptions – must get in front not hook from behind
2. If they try to pass up the middle or to the side in a stretch breakout play our D will position himself in the neutral zone so that he will get to them and the puck before they will for a large collision. Next time their forward will have a harder time concentrating on taking the pass – he'll be worried about the bodycheck.

In Our Zone



1. In our corners or behind our net, our D and our centre will not hesitate and will not play containment hesitant hockey (except on penalty kills) giving their forwards time and space to think, to move into scoring position or to make a good pass or play. Our D or centre will aggressively attack the puck carrier with fast foot movement with his stick on the ice and in front forgetting about the puck looking only at their player's chest so he doesn't stickhandle around you. We will bodycheck him hard and clean letting another one of our players get the puck if our original player can't. Their other players will see that so the next time one of their forwards is in our corner with the puck he will remember that check and make a hurried pass or cough the puck up.
2. In front of our net same thing – under his stick with your stick and through him hard with your body – no just fishing for the puck with your stick “hoping”
3. None of their forwards cross our blueline or carry the puck in our zone without getting bodychecked as they try to go by us – no stepups and misses – and that means one or more forwards must always get back fast to support our D or to pick up the loose puck
4. When the puck is passed to their D in our end at our blueline and our winger charges at him you must make him believe with your speed and control that he is going to get bodychecked hard even if he shoots or passes off and then do it every time without slowing down but not taking a charging penalty - no more than 2 hard steps before your bodycheck – no coasting with both skates side by side as you get close to him – step into him low
3. When our winger has the puck coming out of our end and their D pinch for the unavoidable bodycheck we should not slow down spin around etc to avoid the bodycheck that is going to happen anyway, we should release the puck forward out over our blue line and administer the bodycheck on their D (turn shoulder into the middle of his chest) hard so he will think twice the next time about doing this or he may tend to be more hesitant next time

In Their Zone

1. If their D are standing up at their blue line and stepping up in the neutral zone on our puck carrier. **SHOOT THE PUCK IN.** On our 2 – 1- 2 forecheck our first player takes the man and if he misses our second player takes the man – their D must be made to feel a train is coming at them every time in their corner so they fumble or release the puck too fast
2. When we go to bodycheck their player anywhere we should do so with speed not coasting and if he passes off if we are close enough we should finish the bodycheck on him as this prevents the give and go play or him joining the rush every time and will make them hurry their passes the next time



3. Any time one of their D or forwards decide to start a rush from deep in their end one of our forwards should angle and collide with him asap and not let him get speed up through the neutral zone – no head contact stay low
4. When one of their D comes around their net with the puck and our forward is coming at him from the opposite direction our forward must collide with him hard and not try to poke check the puck and hope he gets the puck – the play is to stop him physically hard

All Zones

1. Every time we line up at a face off we line up right next to them and give them no room to move after the puck is dropped, not several feet away hoping the puck will come to us for an offensive play – we've talked about this before, make them feel there is no room all the time

With this style there will be lots of loose pucks for us to pick up which will give us more offensive opportunities with our speed and talent.