



*“Sure hockey is a game of puck possession, but more specifically it is a game of transition possessions from defence to offence, and vice - versa”*

## **ALL ZONES –TRANSITIONS FROM DEFENCE TO OFFENCE AND OFFENCE TO DEFENCE**

Sure having puck possession is very important in hockey, but time of possession is not the panacea in winning games. Why? Because where you have possession and how many opposition players you have to beat in a particular location may make a team’s time of possession measurement greater but misleading as to the value of the possession in that location.

For example, suppose there’s a puck battle in the neutral zone which we win and the coach’s system is to pass the puck back to our D to start a D to D regroup. This immediately creates the need to beat 5 of their players to get into a Grade A or AA scoring area in their zone. Rather, if there was an opportunity for a quick counter attack pass in the neutral zone by the D who first got the puck to an open forward, we could be heading into their zone with puck possession in stead of executing a lengthy backing up regroup play that lead to a dump and chase.

A second example would be coming out of our own end when they are changing. Some teams retreat to behind our net to set up a controlled breakout allowing them time to set up their 5 player trap rather than passing into the neutral zone to a forward left open on the change. Again more possession time on the breakout but less effective result.

A further example would be in their zone on a long cycle on the periphery while the opposition plays contain and effectively lets us have the outside Grade B shooting areas protecting the Grade A and AA shooting areas. Lots of possession time but nothing really happening. How about a short cycle, set up a screen and shoot rebound. Less possession time but more chance of scoring.

There are hundreds of changes of puck possession in a regular hockey game. So if time of possession isn’t really it. What is? I think it’s what a team instantly does when they get possession anywhere to turn the transition into an excellent scoring chance and surprise the other team.

And most importantly, how does a team create transition possessions in the first place?

What are examples of transition possessions giving us or them chances to score?

- Turnovers anywhere whether they are takeaways, lost puck battles, bad passes, missed nets, blocked shots or simply losing the puck off your stick on your own – the closer this happens to their net the better for us and vice-versa
- Forechecking loose puck wins in their zone and in the neutral zone
- Faceoffs Wins



- Taking Penalties – effectively giving them up to 2 minutes of possession in the zone of the team taking the penalty

And what type of Transition Possessions are more likely to lead to a Grade A or AA shot or a goal?

- A turnover or failure to clear a rebound in a Grade A or AA scoring area
- A goalie allowing a rebound to them
- Pinching at their blueline in the neutral zone or at our blueline giving them a 2 on 1
- Forechecking 2 or 3 forwards, losing the forecheck, and allowing 3 on 2's
- Losing a neutral zone faceoff leading to a stretch pass breakaway
- Losing a defensive zone faceoff clean
- Allowing our goalie to be screened at the top of our crease as they take a Grade B shot after an entry into our zone off a neutral zone turnover
- Making a bad pass in the neutral zone leading to an odd man rush against
- A stretch pass on a regular or controlled breakout leading to a breakaway or odd man rush
- A power play

So, if one team has many more significant transition possessions than another and about the same quality of goaltending, they will probably get more Grade A and AA scoring chances than the opposition and more goals and win the game.

So, if we were to measure each team's relative results on the number of significant transition possessions they present to themselves and to the other team during a game, wouldn't we be able to predict with some level of certainty who will win the game?

Yes. More on how to do this in the Analytics section of this website.

And most importantly, once we measure and create standards for our team in the league we are in we can use the results to improve our team's performance in the various transition possession areas outlined above and others, and get buy-in from our players because we can prove the effect on game outcomes.