



“Minimize the risks of a goal against off the face offs in the circle in our end - don't use the 'line' formations”

DEFENSIVE ZONE - FACE OFF POSITIONS – “THE LINE” FORMATION

In Our Face Off Circle

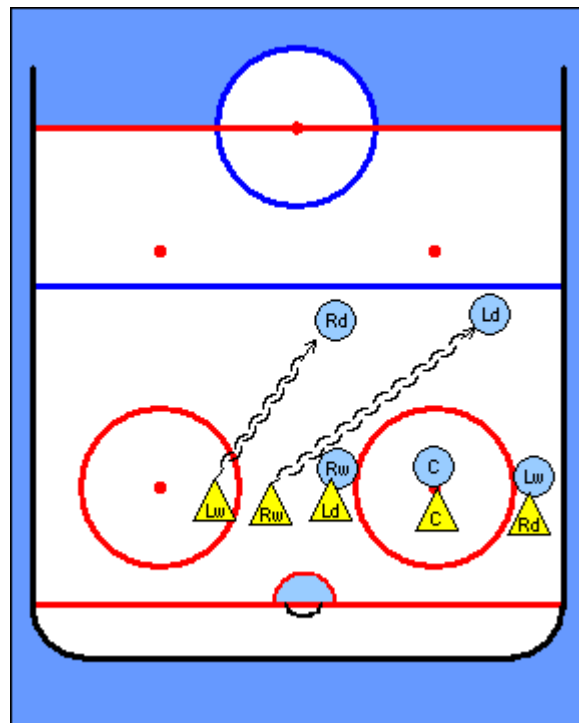
If the face off is to the right of our net (to our goalie's right) and they line up as usual, the so-called “line” face off positions have our left defenceman shoulder to shoulder with their right winger, our right winger to the left of our left defenceman, our left winger to the left of our right winger, and our right defenceman will be on the right side playing the right wing position (see diagram below).

The responsibilities of everyone at the drop of the puck are as follows:

Our centre – neutralize their centre to prevent the puck from going back to one of their defenceman at the point, don't try to win the draw (of course if you can win it, win it), but stop him from getting the puck back – it's easier to neutralize than win the draw. See the Tip on Face Off Techniques.

Our right winger – Go to their left defenceman hard immediately in case the puck goes to him. The lane to their left defenceman is open and the angle puts our right winger right in their defenceman's shooting lane if the puck comes to him (see diagram below)

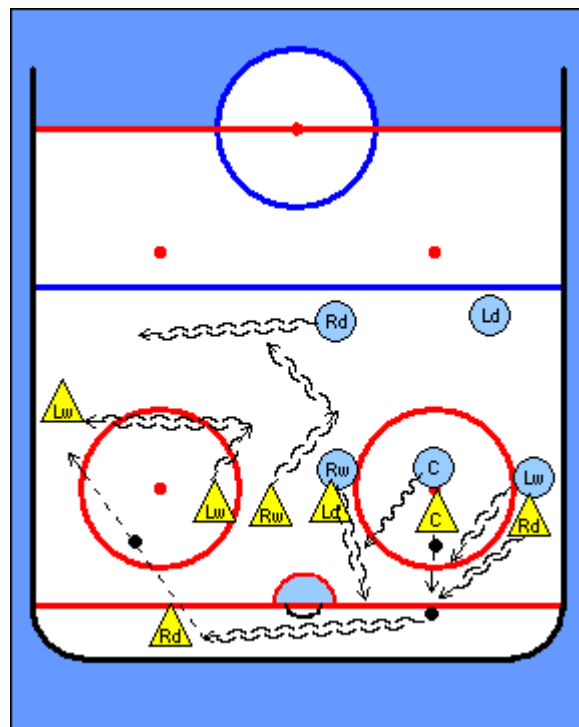
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Our left defenceman – make their right winger go around you if he tries to go to the net
Our right defenceman – make their left winger go around you if he tries to go to the net
or the corner

If our centre wins the draw backwards into our corner, our right defenceman will be facing in the right direction to pick the puck up quickly to try to carry the puck around our net or pass it around the boards behind our net to our left winger who will anticipate this pass and move to his position at the hash marks at the boards. This could turn into a pretty good break out play if the puck goes back close enough to our boards side defenceman. But their left winger should be instructed in this formation to immediately go to the corner on the drop of the puck to try to stop this play (see diagram below). And, their right winger should go directly to our corner if he sees us win the face off straight back.

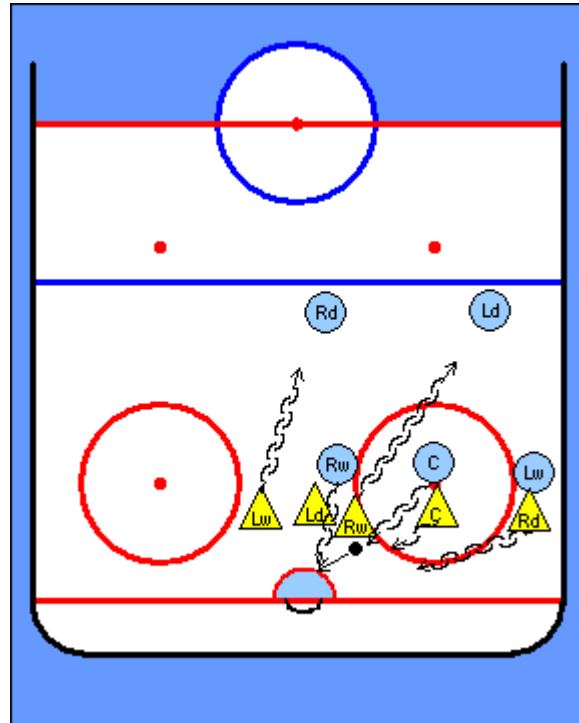


A Variation to the above positions might be:

Have our right winger switch positions with our left defenceman so our right winger is on the face off circle a little away from their right winger not shoulder to shoulder. This will help create a better lane for our right winger to get to their left defenceman through the face off circle and reduce our right winger's distance and time to get there – the risk created here is this gives their right winger direct access to our net as our right winger breaks to their left

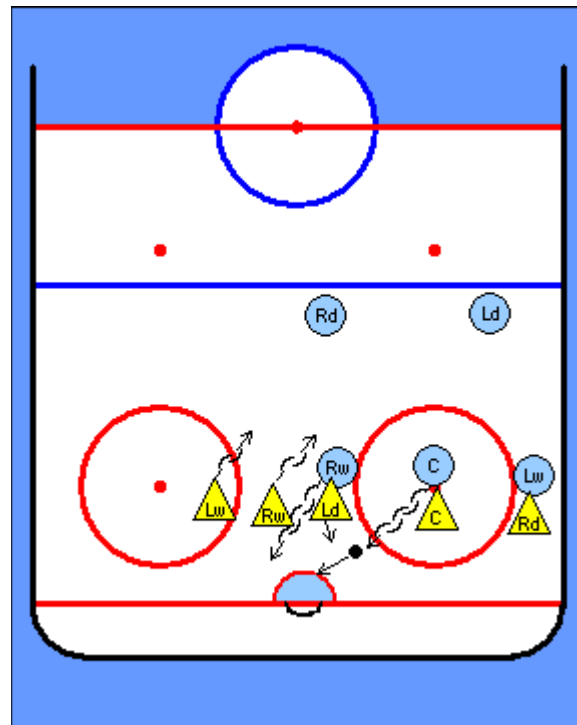


defenceman at the drop of the puck . As soon as their centre sees this formation he should simply go to the net, flip the puck towards the net or shoot the puck at the net – very dangerous.



The most important risk of “the line” formation is what could happen if the puck ends up behind “the line” closer to our net than to the corner close to our defenceman at the boards. The idea used to be that going to our net would be made very difficult with players who have the right size and strength, but under the new face off obstruction rules, this cannot be as easily accomplished.

What if their centre in stead of trying to draw the puck back, flips the puck softly a few feet forward towards our net or into our corner towards our net and at the same time breaks hard to get the puck or just shoots the puck on our net? What if that’s their play when they see us lined up this way? Our centre can’t interfere with their centre as their centre steps by him, it’s obstruction, the puck is a few feet away and our centre is stopped. Our left defenceman is tying up their right winger and leaning towards him as the puck is dropped so he likely can’t help in time on the angle unless he can react very quickly and has the reach and strength to do so. Their centre will have a clear path to the net or corner without a defenceman behind our centre to bodycheck their centre and strip him of the puck immediately (see diagram below).



Also, if our centre wins the draw directly back into the corner we have no defenceman **right there** to pick the puck up. Our right defenceman has to take a couple of strides to get to the puck, get puck control and as long as none of their players break “the line” he should be able to do so but this takes time. Why have our defenceman take 2 strides to get to some pucks in the corner when we could be right there if our defenceman was positioned right behind our centre a little towards our net as described in a previous Tip.

In addition, in the “line” formation our right winger will have to go a little further distance to check their left defenceman at the point than he would have to if he were lined up in his usual right wing position by the boards. Remember their left winger can no longer obstruct our right winger going to the point, other than to make him take a step around him. If our right winger is fast enough he may be able to get to their left defenceman in time to stop or block his shot but not likely if the puck comes back crisply and cleanly from the draw and their left defenceman is shot ready.

The “line” face off positioning is another example of a tactic that could work quite well with less risk at higher levels of hockey as players get older, faster, stronger and more skilled.

REMEMBER ON THE DRAW IN OUR CORNER THEY ARE ONLY A FEW FEET AWAY FROM OUR NET – SET UP IN THE BEST DEFENSIVE POSITION THAT MINIMIZES RISKS