



*“What good does it do your team if you are on the ice five on five for as many goals against as goals for”*

## **ALL ZONES – THE TRUE TWO WAY PLAYER**

The words “two – way player” usually refers to a forward being as defensive minded as offensive, rather than referring to a defenceman being as offensive minded as defensive, but “two – way player” can obviously refer to both forwards and defencemen.

It is very important in the development of a young hockey player to help him think and develop as a “two- way player”, that is learn both aspects of the game, and not just develop his physical skills of skating, passing, shooting, scoring, bodychecking and conditioning, and hockey intelligence skills. So, what is meant by the words “two – way player” specifically?

It’s not as simple as just expecting a forward, for example, to backcheck hard.

Let’s take a centre as our first example. If a centre is too offensive minded he will likely be doing one or more of the following on the ice to name a few:

1. Not going all the way back in his own end to join his defencemen to cover one of their 3 forwards (assuming we are playing the centre down low defensive system) but rather staying higher positioning himself for the transition to offence in our zone too early hoping the D win puck possession. This may have disastrous results if they win the puck and pass it to their player our centre is supposed to be covering
2. In stead of going under our opponent’s stick, taking the body and then worrying about getting the puck in our corner or behind our net he tries to poke check the puck away from their player to himself so he can break away with the puck with his wingers. This is a high risk play that rarely works consistently. If he’s unsuccessful it allows their player to maintain puck possession in our zone many times for a good scoring chance
3. In the neutral zone when he tries to win the puck he stays on the side closest to their blue line and not on the safe side or as we say “goal side”, that is on the side between their player and our net in case their player wins the puck
4. In their zone when two of our forwards are down low forechecking but without puck possession, rather than staying high as he should he goes down low also either to help win the puck or to wait for a pass close to their net. If they win possession, 3 of our players may well be caught down low as they breakout of their zone with a 3 on 2
5. He does not normally backcheck as fast as he skates with the puck or on a rush with his line mates, and he rarely takes the puck away from them or win or even engage in many puck battles. He hopes someone else will check their player and transition the puck to going on offence again with him



6. He waits for passes in the offensive zone on the forecheck rather than winning the puck or helping another player win the puck
7. In the neutral zone as their player is skating with the puck trying to get by our player, our player tries to poke check or sweep check their player to try to get puck possession himself rather than being sure to stop their player by bodychecking him
8. On faceoffs in our zone he tries to win all draws rather than tying up their centre to prevent him from winning the draw to allow our wingers time to move to cover their shooters. Or he tries very offensive draws in our own end that rarely work

A Winger may exhibit some of the same tendencies as above and others as follows:

1. He may position himself in their own zone too high around the  $\frac{1}{2}$  boards covering their D and then break out into the neutral zone for a pass too early hoping we gain puck possession in our own zone but before we actually do – can be very dangerous if they instead get puck possession in our zone 5 on 4
2. On the forecheck in their corner when our winger is the second man in on a 2 – 1 – 2 forecheck, in stead of supporting the first man in who is bodychecking their player, our winger positions himself in front of the other team's net hoping our player wins the puck and passes to him
3. He hardly ever is the first man in on the forecheck or first man back on the backcheck
4. He often tries to stickhandle by their players in his zone when there is no passing play open rather than just shooting the puck out
5. He often tries to stickhandle past their defencemen in their zone when his linemates are going to the net ahead of him. If he loses the puck stickhandling there will be a 3 on 2 rush against us

With defencemen it's a little different. We do want our defencemen to be a two way player, that is be offensive minded at the right times. We want our D to make safe passes out of our zone on the break out or stretch break out, or be the fourth forward trailer on a 3 on 2 rush when the other team's forwards are caught behind the play or pinch at their blueline when we are 100% sure of at least knocking the puck towards their end and there is forward support behind him. However, we do not want the same equal attention to offence vs defence by our D generally speaking as we do our forwards. This is because our D are the last players usually back between their players and our goalie. Our forwards on the other hand have our D to fall back on if our forwards give up puck possession. We want our D to be more defensive minded than offensive minded.

Not so with our forwards. We want them to be both offensive and defensive, balanced equally. A true two-way player.