

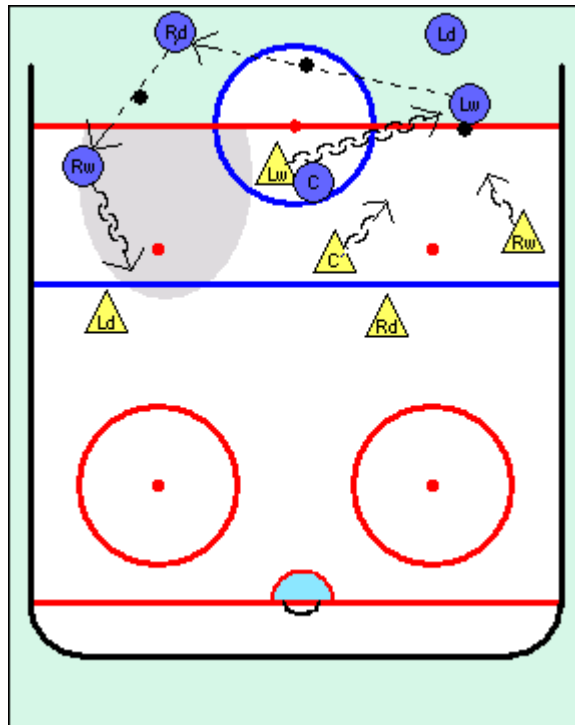


“The neutral zone is often forgotten as a key defensive zone when we do not have the puck. If forwards back check hard on their side but between the faceoff dots, or through the middle if there is just one lead backchecker, we may get the puck back and catch the other team off guard in the transition from defence to offence”

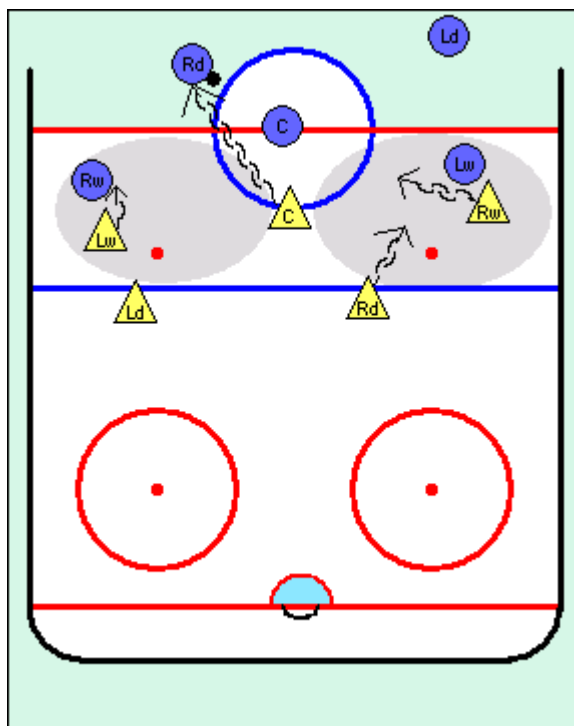
NEUTRAL ZONE – DIVIDE THE ZONE INTO 3 PARTS

It is very important not to allow the other team the time and space in the neutral zone to move freely with the puck, to get open or to pick up speed going into our zone. They will be trying to play wide and to cross into open spaces in the middle for passes. If we go at them in a pack of 3 fairly close together all on one side we are playing into their hands because they will just pass off to one of their open players on the other open side. So, if you are a winger, think about the responsibilities of your position on your side of the ice, and if you move from it expect your centre to rotate onto your side.

DON'T ALLOW LARGE OPEN GAPS OF ICE IN THE NEUTRAL ZONE LIKE THE GRAY AREA BELOW. IF OUR LEFT WINGER LEAVES HIS SIDE TO CHALLENGE, OUR CENTRE SHOULD ROTATE OVER TO THE LEFT SIDE.



The easiest effective system for our forwards is to divide up the neutral zone into segments. The left winger takes his left side of the ice as his primary responsibility from the goal post of our net to the left side boards and the right winger takes the right side. These wingers must challenge anyone with the puck on their side of the ice and finish the check.



The centre is the rover or like the free safety in football and he should be able to skate fast enough to cover whatever side of the ice the puck is on challenging their players to make hurried poor passes if he is the closest to the puck carrier. The wingers back him up and vice-versa. If the winger on his side is the closest he challenges, the centre backs him up, just like in their end in the 1,2,2 forechecking system. They will have nowhere to pass the puck safely.

ONLY ONE OF OUR FORWARDS SHOULD CHALLENGE THEIRS AT A TIME WHEN THEY HAVE CLEAR PUCK CONTROL AND SPACE OR ELSE A LARGE GAP WILL BE CREATED IN THE NEUTRAL ZONE AND A PASS COULD BEAT BOTH OF OUR FORWARDS WHO ARE PRESSING

As the other team approaches our blue line, as long as our forwards are back checking hard and are covering the opposition, our defencemen can challenge their players high in our zone around our blue line and probably force a turn over. This fast transition from defence to offence could catch their forwards at our blue line allowing us to have a 3 on 2 going the other way.

SO FORWARDS BACK CHECK HARD ALL THE TIME