



ANGLING

Checking, with or without body contact, is one of the most difficult skills to master. And it most certainly doesn't receive enough attention in practice because, like all defensive concepts, teaching it requires time spent

without handling and shooting pucks.

Angling, which is simply getting yourself and the puck carrier in position to complete the check, is the foundation for all checking. When we say checking, we don't necessarily mean body checking or body contact, we mean stripping the opposing player of the puck. At the older age groups (Pee Wee and up) where body contact is allowed, this is certainly part of the skill. But the basics of positioning can be taught at the younger levels where players can complete the check with a stick check. The bottom line is that if you aren't in proper position, you won't be able to make the check at all.

"It's like herding a bunch of cattle into an open gate." says Los Angeles Kings head coach Larry Robinson in describing angling. And that is how you should describe it and teach it to your players. The concept is actually quite simple. If you let a puck carrier move up the middle of the ice, he has four options. He can carry the puck either way around you, or he can pass the puck to either side around you. On the other hand, if you take away the middle of the ice and force the puck carrier toward the boards on one side or the other, his options, and the amount of ice that he has to work with are limited.

The following are some points to remember in teaching angling.

- checker should **approach puck carrier from the middle of the ice** and force him to move toward the boards on one side or the other. (At the higher levels of hockey where the game is faster, puck carriers should be forced out if possible on their backhand side so it is more difficult for them to make a play with the puck.)
- checker should have **stick on the ice** to take away potential passing lanes and space from the puck carrier.
- checker should **move on an angle, parallel to the puck carrier**. He should be about a 1/2 step behind the puck carrier, moving at the same speed, careful not to get too far ahead to allow

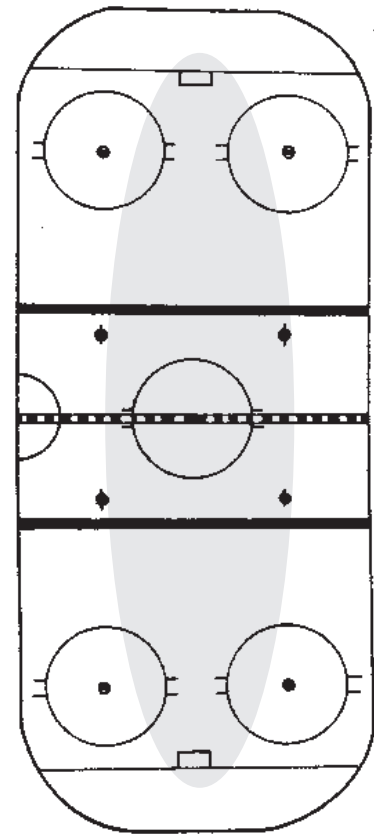
the puck carrier to cut behind him and get to the middle of the ice. At the same time he must make sure not to get too far behind, where he can be beaten up the boards and out of the zone.

- ideally **the check should come somewhere along the boards between the goal line and the blue line where the checker has gotten the proper angling positioning and can "close" on the puck carrier**. In the event that the puck carrier beats the checker out of the zone, it is still effective checking because the puck carrier is **not in the middle of the ice with many options**, but is along the boards with limited options and is a much easier target for the checker's teammates to play.

- checker should **watch the puck carrier's upper body (chest area), not the puck**. He should be able to see both, but should focus on the body, not overplay the puck. It is a lot easier for the puck carrier to make fake a pass or move with the puck to get a checker out of position than it is for him to move his body.

Teaching angling skills

In teaching angling skills to players, **you will initially have to "create the angle" for them**. A good drill to do this is as follows. Have the puck carriers (X) start on the goal line along the boards, and the "anglers" (Y) at the top of the circles on the same side of the ice. On the whistle, the puck carrier moves behind the net with



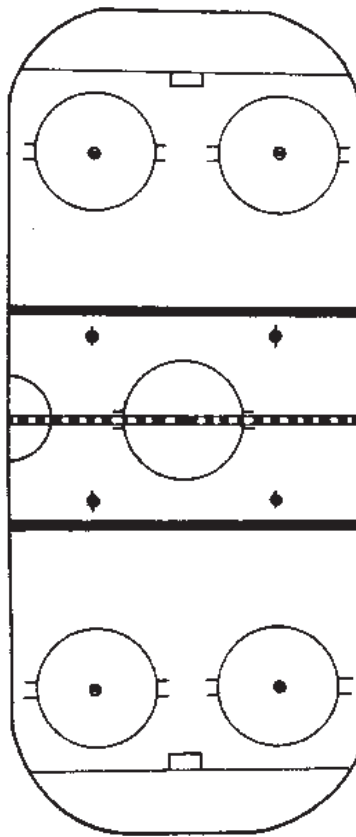
Taking away the middle of the ice limits space and options.

the puck and up the ice on the other side. The angler must get a sense of positioning and timing for the skill and it may take some time. Initially, make your puck carriers skate up the boards. Eventually, give them the option of cutting back behind the checker if he is too far ahead and in improper position. This drill should be conducted from both sides of the ice to ensure that players get a proper sense of the timing, positioning and skating skills they need to do it correctly.

If body checking is allowed for your team, **allow the players to make the contact only after they have mastered the timing and positioning.** After all, if they aren't in proper position at the right time, they won't be able to make contact anyway.

Eventually, you can progress to moving the anglers more toward the middle of the ice and giving the puck carriers more room and more options with the puck. As in all teaching, take the time to master the basics before moving on to more difficult tasks.

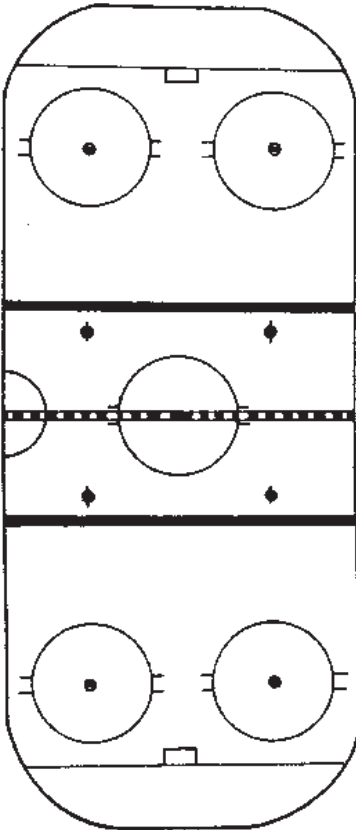
The concept of angling is not limited to the offensive zone of the ice but is to be adapted in all zones, both by forwards and defensemen and should be used in conjunction with the checking philosophies and systems of you and your team.



POOR POSITIONING

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Los Angeles Kings
Head Coach
Larry Robinson



PROPER POSITIONING