

# Forechecking systems tailored to your team

Implementing a good team forechecking system will not only help your offensive attack, but will improve your team's defensive play as well. Does that sound like a contradiction? It really isn't when you think about it.

The purpose of a team forechecking system is to add organization to the movement of the group of players, with an emphasis on their positioning as it relates to the puck, and to one another. A well designed and executed team forechecking system will help dictate the flow of the puck movement and will put the offensive players in good defensive position for transition as the puck changes possession.

There are various theories to consider when designing a team forechecking system. Some teams, with highly skilled players are best offensively when they create their offensive attack from transition or during a rush up the ice. In this case, a coach may want to use a system that permits flow up and down the ice rather than try to pin the opposition in their defensive zone. On the other hand, some teams may have the benefit of big forwards who are strong along the boards and in front of the net. In this case, the team may wish to keep puck possession deep in the offensive zone and "grind out" offensive movement in the corners and try to open up scoring chances as a result of this movement.

Whether your team is designed to win the game or stop the opposition from winning, one thing remains constant; you must implement a system that is compatible to your personnel and one that they can all understand. Not understanding the system and its execution will result in errors and goals against.

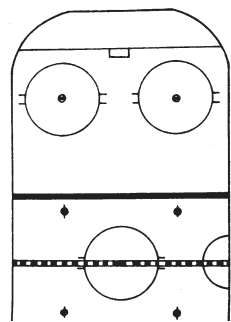
There are a few key points to remember when implementing a team forechecking system. They include; defensive "side" positioning at all times, good communication, keep the sticks on the ice to take away ice and passing lanes, finish checks (take the body whenever possible) and attack under control.

In this article we will take a look at three basic systems: the 1-2-2 "Inside-out," the 2-1-2 and the 2-3.

## 1-2-2 "INSIDE-OUT" FORECHECK

The 1-2-2 "Inside-out" forecheck has been designed to funnel the puck from the center of the ice to the boards. This system is a defensive-oriented attack that places the forecheckers in the offensive zone in good position to both attack and/or backcheck.

**A**



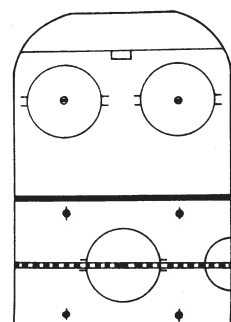
This system also is more conducive for flow up and down the ice.

The initial attack formation is detailed in diagram "A." The first forechecker in the offensive zone is responsible to attack the puck with speed (F1). F1 must make sure that the puck movement is to the outside and cannot allow the puck carrier to beat him one on one and carry the puck up the center of the ice. Ideally F1 hopes to force a pass up the boards (better yet – around the boards) before the offensive player crosses the goal line. F2 and F3 enter the zone near the middle of the ice and are positioned in the high slot (approximately at the top of the circles – hence the "Inside-out"). F2 and F3 must be

positioned on the "defensive" side of the offensive wingers, so that when they attack them, the offensive players are forced to

"pass through" them. When the puck moves up the strong side (diagram "B") F2 would force the play and F3 would move into the high slot. Upon a turnover, two players would continue to pursue the puck and a third man remains high. The defense (D) remains in support position at the blue line. We recommend that the weak side D drift into the neutral zone as the play moves near the blue line. In addition, the defense are encouraged to pinch down on the offensive wingers only if they are 100% sure that they can keep the play in the zone. If not, remain

**B**



in good defensive position at the blue line as the pinching responsibilities lie with the forwards.

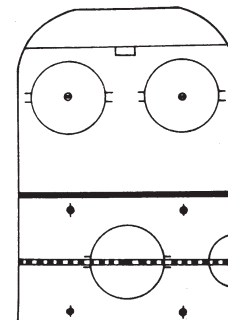
## 2-1-2 FORECHECK

The 2-1-2 system is appropriate for teams who like to play aggressively in the offensive zone, yet want to establish good defensive positioning for backchecking purposes. The 2-1-2 system is much easier to execute because there is considerably less "reading and reacting" by the forechecking players.

Diagram "C" outlines the basic attack position of the forwards. Note that F1 and F2 must attack from each side of the net, otherwise a simple D-to-D pass will beat the forecheck.

As with the 1-2-2 "Inside-out," the objective is to force the offensive defenseman to move the puck without having much time

**D**



to make a decision. As the puck moves to the strong side, F3 (the high man) would pinch down on the puck (diagram "D"). The defensemen hold their ground at the blue line (as in the 1-2-2) with the weak side defenseman backing off the line when the puck nears the blue line. It is very important that the high forward (F3) takes the body and does not get beaten back into the play after pinching down on the offensive winger. By doing this, it will eliminate an out-manned offensive attack by the opposition.

## 2-3 FORECHECK

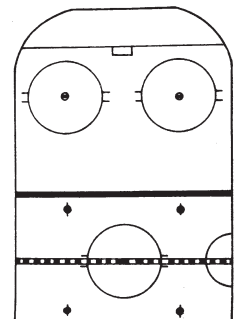
The 2-3 team forechecking system is a high-temp, extremely aggressive forechecking system that is designed to create a lot of pressure in the offensive zone.

The biggest drawback of this system is that a missed assignment could result in 2 on 1's and 3 on 2's against.

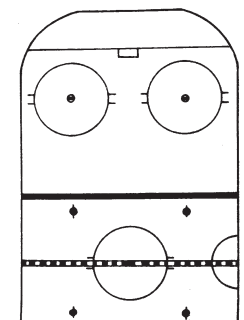
Similar to the 2-1-2, the first two forecheckers entering the zone attack the opposition's defensemen (diagram "E"). The third forward (F3) remains extra high – approximately five feet inside the blue line. The defensemen are positioned to play extremely aggressive, as they are responsible to pinch 100% of the time when the puck ravel to the offensive winger on their side. In fact, the strong-side defenseman will cheat down as the play is moving in his direction. The weak-side defenseman will remain high and lend support. As the strong-side defenseman pinches, the high forward will fill his spot (diagram "F"). Contrary to the 2-1-2 system in which the high forward is pinching, this system has the defensemen doing the pinching.

Team forechecking, like many parts of the game, take a lot of practice. Some players have the ability to learn their responsibilities quickly, and others, although they may understand it conceptually, have difficulty reacting spontaneously as situations develop on the ice. Make sure that when practicing these, and other concepts of the game, drill your players heavily in "reactionary" type drills so they become accustomed to making quick decisions on the ice.

**C**



**E**



**F**

