



Keeping it Fun in the Dog Days of Winter

As we pass the mid-point of the season and head into the dog days of winter, it is only natural for your players to start to get a little down in the dumps. The excitement of the beginning of the season has long since departed, the holiday season is over and it is a couple of long cold months before play-offs begin.

Now is the time, more than ever, to make your practices fun for your team. They should be in reasonably good shape by now and the last thing they need to do is skate for conditioning. Here are some fun drills that you can incorporate into your practices for the next couple of months to add some life and raise the level of enthusiasm.

Be sure to divide your players into equal teams based on their skill levels to ensure that the games are competitive and fun for everyone.

TRIPLE PLAY

This is an excellent conditioning drill that your players will be sure to enjoy. The game is played full-ice with goaltenders in each net. Three players from each team line up at center as though they are at a face-off, with three pucks on the face-off dot between the center men. The threesomes play against each other until all three pucks have been used to score a goal. To add interest and encourage intensity, you might want to make the first goal scored worth one point, the second one worth two and the third worth three.

TWO PASS SCRIMMAGE

Players are divided into four teams with two teams playing a four-on-four (or three-on-three or five-on-five) scrimmage in each end zone of the rink. Play is confined to inside the blue line and the team with possession must make two passes before attempting to score. On each possession change, two passes must be made, counted out loud by the goaltender, to put that team on offense. Games end once one team reaches five goals. Make a mini-tournament out of it by having the winners and losers play off.

STICK RELAY

Divide your players into two teams with each team standing along the boards at the blue line. Move the nets up to the hash marks in the middle of the ice at each end. One stick is used as the baton for each team with each player making a complete lap around the ice (outside the nets). The player being handed the stick can begin moving at any time, but the passing of the stick must occur between the two blue lines. The first team to have all players complete a lap is the winner.

SECOND EFFORT SHOOTING

Divide your players into two even teams and place them along the boards at each end between the blue line and goal line. A player from each team starts on the blue line and skates to the far end and back as fast as possible while carrying a puck. Once back past the blue line, he turns and shoots his puck at the empty net at the other end, and the next player in line begins. The first team to have all of its players score is the winner.

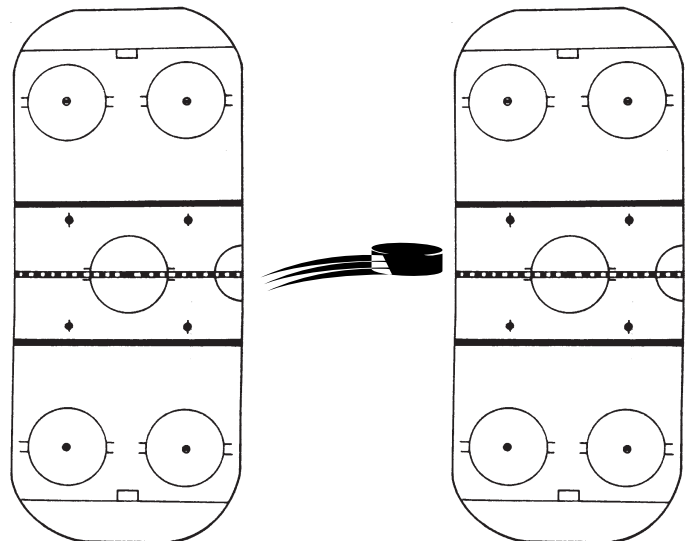
INDIANA JONES

This is a fun stickhandling drill which also works on passing accuracy. Divide your players into two teams and spread them out along the boards on each side of ice (from the top of the circle at one end to the top of the circle at the other) with pucks.

Place a cone on a face-off dot at each end and a goaltender in each net. On the whistle one player from the beginning of line for each team carries a puck down around the cone and up the middle of the ice to shoot at the goaltender at the other end.

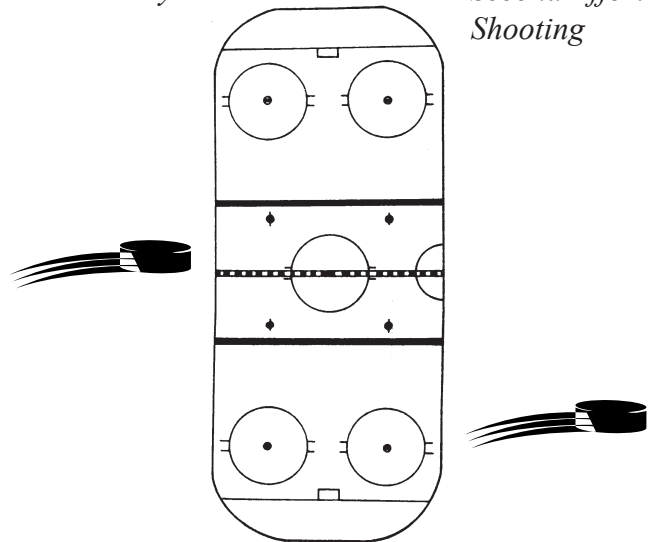
As they carry the puck up-ice (one player moving in each direction) the players along the boards pass the puck at the puck carrier on the other team, trying to knock the puck off of his stick. If the puck carrier makes it down the ice with the puck on his stick, he tries to score on the goaltender and then takes his place at the end of his team's line. If the puck is knocked off of his stick, he does not get the opportunity to score and proceeds directly to the end of the line.

Keep track of the goals scored and determine a winner once each player has had the opportunity to participate.



Stick Relay

Second Effort Shooting



Indiana Jones

The excitement of the beginning of the season has long since departed, the holiday season is over and it is a couple of long cold months before play-offs begin. Now is the time, more than ever, to make your practices fun for your team.

BASEBALL

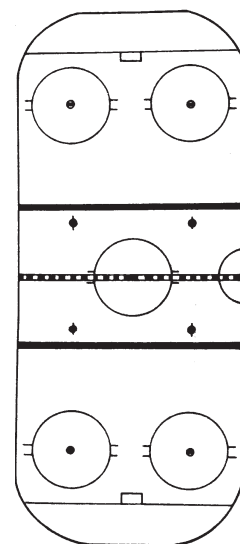


Divide your players into four teams with two teams competing at each end, from the center red line to the end of the rink. The fielding team spreads out from the goal line to the red line and the batting team lines up in the corner at the goal line.

The batter puts the "ball" into play by shooting it anywhere on his half of the ice. If it goes over the red line without being touched by a defensive player, the batter is out. If the puck is flipped into the air and is caught by a defensive player, the batter is out. And if the puck is flipped over the boards out of the ice surface, the batter is out.

Once putting the "ball" into play, the batter skates up the boards, around two cones placed just inside the red line in the neutral zone, and back along the boards on the other side of the ice.

The defenders need to retrieve the puck and make at least three passes (four different players must touch the puck) before they can attempt to score. If they score before the batter crosses between the hash marks and face off dot, the batter is out. If not, a run is scored for the batting team. Each team gets three outs as in a regular baseball game.



Baseball