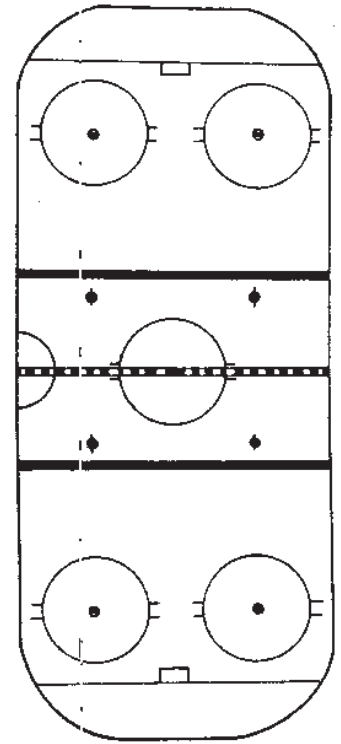


Left Wing Lock

Much was made of the New Jersey Devils and the Neutral Zone Trap on their march to the Stanley Cup last year and many teams have emulated their style of play. This year the Detroit Red Wings cruised through the 1995-96 regular season in record breaking fashion employing a checking system known as the Left Wing Lock. Not many teams use the Left Wing Lock and it hasn't received the notoriety, (positive or negative) as the Trap. The Lock, like the Trap, has been around for years in one form or another. The beauty of the Left Wing Lock lies in its simplicity allowing the players to read off of each other, eliminate second-guessing and make intelligent decisions. The Left Wing Lock works as follows:

- In the offensive zone, the left wing is responsible to **“lock up” the opposition right wing lane of the ice**. In effect he becomes the “third man back” and his primary focus is on being in good defensive position. In a more standard offensive zone set-up, the third man is usually “high” in the middle of the ice and picks up the nearest opposition player joining the rush. The defensemen have to read this situation and then react to the other two offensive people accordingly, (often times, these players are spread out across the ice, creating more space for the offensive attack and possible confusion for the defenders).
- The positioning of the left winger in effect **“shrinks the ice surface”** for the defensemen allowing them to focus on two-thirds of the rink.
- The defensive posture of the left winger **creates offensive opportunities** by allowing the defensemen to get more active in the offensive zone. They have more freedom to jump into the play or drive to the net which creates a lot of confusion for the defenders in terms of their coverage and responsibilities.
- As the play moves into the neutral zone the **defensemen can play “man to man” coverage** and not have to worry about the “width of the attack” as the right wing lane is covered defensively. This eliminates confusion of responsibilities and reduces the chances of mistakes or breakdowns in coverage.
- As the play moves into the defensive zone, the defensemen **can be more aggressive and “stand up at the blue line”**, taking away time and space of the offensive players, confident that the off-winger is picked up defensively by the left winger.
- In the defensive zone, as the first man back, the left winger is often the third man down low, working in a defensive posture with his defensemen. As a rule, wingers are often bigger and stronger than centermen, allowing them to be more effective in a checking mode in their zone. It also allows the centers, who are often more gifted offensively, to be in more of an offensive mode, not having to concentrate as much on defense.

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STANDARD POSITIONING

LEFT WING LOCK

