One-on-One

As much as hockey is a team game with as many as 40 players participating in a game and 6 from each team on the ice at one time, it is also very much a one-on-one game within that team game. Individual skills, offensive and defensive, with and without the puck and in all zones of the ice, play a very important role in the outcome of the game.

OFFENSIVE PERSPECTIVE

From an offensive perspective, a one-on-one is a situation really something to avoid as players should be taught to "support the puck" and create two-on-one's so that the puck carrier has some options. Nevertheless, the following are some things to teach your players to keep in mind when they have the puck on their stick.

Never try to beat someone when you are the last man

When you have no support, don't try to beat someone by yourself and risk a turnover resulting in a breakaway. If you are pressured and have no passing options, throw the puck up-ice off of the boards.

Special teams are teams, not individuals

In a power play situation, you should never try to (or have to) beat someone one on one. The whole concept of a power play is that you have an extra man and should be able to outnumber the opposition around the puck creating 2 on 1's or 3 on 1's. Make the puck do the work – it moves faster than any player can. When shorthanded, the puck should always be shot down the ice when you are confronted.

Speed is your best weapon

The easiest way to get checked is to quit moving your feet. Players need to work on handling the puck at top speed which forces defenders back on their heels.

Get the puck deep in the offensive zone

Turnovers at the offensive blue lines are one of the worst plays in hockey. The primary objective is to get the puck deep into the offensive zone and maintain possession, looking for a lane to the net for a shot, or for the support of a teammate.

Be creative and use your skills

The art of stickhandling is a tremendous individual skill and can be used to maintain puck control and get defenders out of position. It is best to "test" these skills in the offensive zone where a resulting turnover requires the opposition to beat some of your teammates as well to get to your net.

Be able to shoot

Work to get the puck to a position where you can shoot it at any time when you are in the offensive zone. Many goals are scored when goaltenders and defenders don't expect a shot, but because the puck carrier has the puck in a position where he can shoot, they have the element of surprise on their side. A shot on net is never a bad play.

Know when to say when

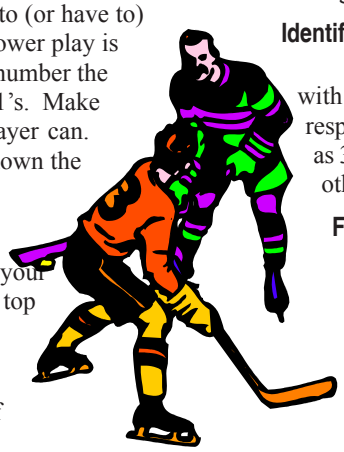
As a last resort, dump the puck in and battle to regain possession. It is better to have the puck deep in the opposition end than in your end.

Win battles for loose pucks

Do whatever it takes to get the puck when it is up for grabs - whether it is being quick to win a race for possession or being strong with your body or stick to win a battle for possession.

DEFENSIVE PERSPECTIVE

Defensively, all evenly matched-up situations such as 3 on 3's, 2 on 2's and 1 on 1's are to the advantage of the defending team. Even though the opposition has the puck, they still need to get it to the net. In all situations, defensive players need to be able to identify which opposing player is their responsibility and stay between them and the puck and them and the net. In effect, they break the play down into a 1 on 1. Things to keep in mind from a defending viewpoint are:



Identify your defensive responsibility

Break all plays down into 1 on 1's when possible with each player identifying the opposing player they are responsible for. Obviously in outnumber situations such as 3 on 2's, one of the defenders plays a 1 on 1 while the other is forced to play a 2 on 1.

Force the puck carrier to where you want him to go

Establish inside (toward the middle of the ice) positioning whether forechecking or defending a rush, forcing the puck carrier out of the middle of the ice toward the boards.

Take away passing options

Keep your stick on the ice taking away space for the puck carrier to handle the puck and passing lanes to teammates. Just by positioning your stick properly, you can force the puck carrier to a position he doesn't want to be in.

Close under control

Don't overcommit and when the time is right (when you have forced the puck carrier into a poor position with no room to maneuver) move in on him under control, careful to maintain proper positioning, where you can make the check with either your body (if allowed) or stick

Maintain defensive side positioning

In all battles for the puck, in all zones of the ice, you should always try to stay between the opposing player and your net.

Win battles for loose pucks

See *offensive perspective* above. .

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