

How To Develop A Good Offense

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1. Breakouts

Quick puck movement is the secret for effective breakouts. The puck carrier, usually a defenseman, must find the open man. His defensive partner and the forwards must get available quickly. When the pass goes to a winger on the boards, the other forwards must be quick to support.

For example, if the puck goes to the left-winger on the boards, the center must hustle to support him for a quick outlet pass or a "chip" off the boards. The right-winger should slide across into the middle of the ice as an option for an outlet pass. He also acts as a "safety valve" in case the puck is turned over. The right defenseman can then move up to join the rush especially if the opposing forwards have been caught in deep. Occasionally if no play is available, a "clear" off the glass or a high flip can be effective.

Keys

- a) Move puck quickly
- b) Receivers get available
- c) Wingers should be "high" on the boards
- d) Support the pass
- e) Defense should be ready to join the rush
- f) Reverses can be effective against a lone forechecker
- g) "Up the middle" passes should be right away and hard

2. Entries

One of the most important factors in winning hockey is getting the puck in deep on every rush. Turning the puck over at the blue line often results in a counter attack and a scoring chance for the opposition. If possible, the puck should enter the zone along the boards and then be worked back into the middle. A man without the puck should drive through the middle to draw a defenseman and open up the other forward for a pass. Dangerous stick handling at the blue line can result in a turnover. The puck carrier must recognize when it is necessary to chip the puck into the zone or rim it hard around the boards.

Keys

- a) Attack with Speed
- b) Pass wide before or at the blue line
- c) Work the puck into a scoring position
- d) Always have a middle drive to the net
- e) Chip or rim if necessary

3. Counters

Counter attacks occur when the offensive team turns the puck over in the neutral zone or at the opposition's blue line. When the puck is recovered, quickness is key. All the forwards must get available quickly before the opposition can recover. In the Stanley Cup playoffs when the checking gets really close, counters are often the best way to get scoring chances.

Keys

- a) Quickness
- b) A middle drive to the net
- c) Shoot at every opportunity – a shot and rebound is usually better than a pass

4. Offensive Zone Play

Good puck control in the offensive zone can disorganize the defending team. "Give and Go" plays, wraps and walkouts can create good chances. Cycling the puck can often open up a man. On occasion, a point man can join the cycle to further confuse the defenders. Getting shots away quickly is a key factor in scoring goals. It is important to screen the goalkeeper and look for tips and rebounds. Of course, to score goals you must get the puck to the net. Offensive zone pressure is helped considerably by timely pinching from the point man. Pinching should only be used when there is pressure down low and a support forward in position. All forwards should back-up a pinch. A defenseman who is skilled at pinching is a huge asset to a team that likes to forecheck and controls the puck down low.

Keys

- a) Cycle the puck to test the defender's coverage
- b) Get the puck to the net whenever possible
- c) Be ready to screen, tip and get to the rebounds
- d) Use the net for wraps and walkouts
- e) Pinches require support from the forwards

5. Faceoffs

Goals can result from faceoffs. The centreman is the quarterback. He should call the play for every faceoff in the offensive zone. Each player should know his responsibilities for both won and lost draws. All centers should practice draws for five minutes at every practice. Every so often, the coaches should organize a ten-minute face-off drill where each line tries different plays in the offensive zone. Games are won and lost in the faceoff circle.

Keys

- a) Quickness, strength and determination
- b) Must win the battles in the circle
- c) Every player must know his responsibilities

Checklist for Developing A Good Offense

- ✓ Quickness – with and without the puck
- ✓ Puck Control – passing and stickhandling
- ✓ Driving wide with the puck
- ✓ Driving to the net without the puck
- ✓ Screens, tips and rebounds
- ✓ Getting open in the slot
- ✓ Shooting skills – wrist, snap, slap, one-timers, backhands and wraps
- ✓ Pride in the faceoff circle

Good luck,

Roger Neilson

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Jack Adams Trophy Runner-up, pioneer in the use of video for coaching, and firm believer in
practicing