

Attacking the zone, Part II

By Greg Sillar

An effective offensive-zone attack is a two-stage process. The first stage involves moving the puck into the offensive zone (covered in last month's Chalk Talk). If the first stage does not produce a good scoring opportunity in itself, your team needs to implement stage two. This consists of maintaining possession of the puck in the offensive zone in order to get that good scoring opportunity. The strategy for maintaining the puck in the offensive zone involves the same six factors required to move the puck into the offensive zone, namely: puck control and movement, positioning of non-puck carrying players with respect to the puck carrier/shooter, defined plays with improvisation, shots on net from a high percentage scoring location, patience, and reading, reacting, and anticipating.

Three techniques that a team can use to score more goals while maintaining possession of the puck in their offensive zone include puck control down deep with an eventual pass across the slot; a shot from the point; and a slot shot by the center or a descending defenseman.

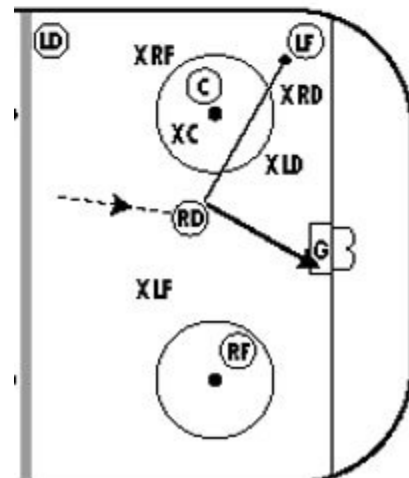
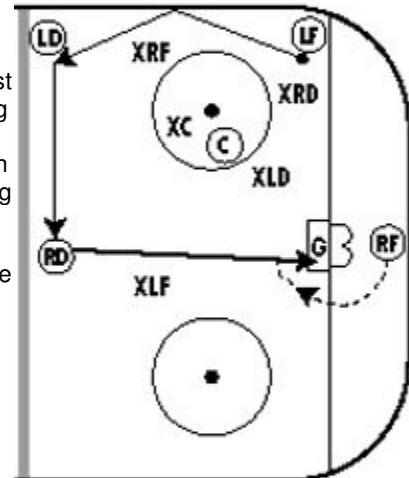
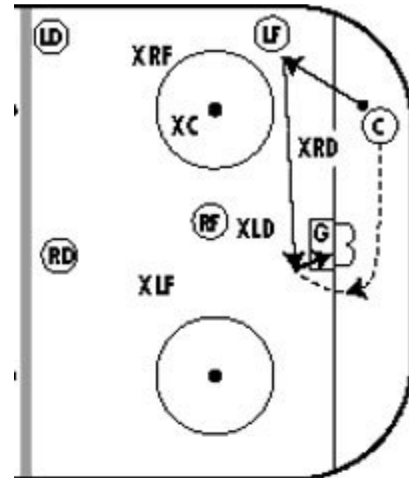


Figure 1 (top)
Figure 2 (middle)
Figure 3 (bottom)

Low crossing pass

During an offensive attack, a pass across the slot can be a very effective way to set up a scoring chance. This type of play works due to the quick lateral movement of the play (and the puck). Figure 1 shows the execution of this type of play in which the center (C) has control of the puck down low. The center passes the puck to the open forward (LF in this case) and then moves away from the play. With the puck along the left side of the rink (and most of the attention focused there), the center skates behind the net to avoid his coverage and positions himself on the far side of the net. LF maintains control the puck until C is open on the far side of the net, then makes a pass across the slot to him for a quick shot on net and a goal.

The point shot

Figure 2 shows the execution of a shot from the point. As with the previous example, rapid puck movement is essential. The puck is moved down deep in the offensive zone by the left forward (LF) to the strong-side defenseman (LD) and quickly over to RD. This rapid puck movement does not allow the defenders time to get set up to properly cover the offensive team. Once RD has the puck, he executes a low shot from the point as the right forward moves out from behind the net to the slot. If the initial shot does not go in, RF is positioned well for a rebound.

Reading and reacting

Figure 3, shows what can happen when the defending players collapse on the puck carrier. While LF has the puck in the lower corner, the defenders are seen collapsing on him in an attempt to regain control of the puck. RD reads the play and reacts by moving toward the slot in anticipation of a pass from LF. As LF sees RD moving in, he passes the puck to him for a quick shot on net. Both RD and RF are in excellent position for a rebound.

Maintaining control of the puck, using the six offensive zone strategy factors described here and in April's Chalk Talk, will give your team the edge it needs to consistently work your offensive-zone attack and score more goals. Practice these techniques and watch your offense improve!

Greg Siller, author of Roller Hockey: Skills and Strategies For Winning On Wheels, currently plays, coaches, officiates, and presents coaching and player development clinics throughout California.