

Getting the puck into the offensive zone

By Greg Siller



Along the boards (top); Reverse with drop pass option (middle); Up the middle -- with plenty of options (bottom).

Moving the puck, and your team, into the offensive zone is the first step toward a successful attack. Some teams do it by skating, and some by passing. But if you can combine both elements in your playbook, and vary them, you'll be able to successfully penetrate any team's offensive zone.

Three effective offensive zone penetration techniques that every team should practice include along-the-boards, reverse, and up-the-middle. Each of these techniques has a variety of built-in options to use, and that make them both more effective and less predictable.

Along-the-boards. In this play, shown in Figure 1, the strong side forward (LF) moves the puck just over the red line, skating at about 3/4 speed. If the opposing defenseman (XRD) gives up room along the boards, then LF puts on the burners and skates to the outside and around XRD toward the net, as shown in Option 1. If XRD is doing an adequate job of covering LF, then LF can choose Option 2 and execute a drop pass to LD. LD immediately moves toward the center of the playing surface to set up the offensive zone attack. If RF is open, LF can utilize Option 3 and pass the puck to RF who will initiate the offensive zone attack.

Reverse. Use this technique to confuse the defensive coverage through lateral movement. The reverse works by having the puck carrier (LF) and his counterpart (RF) exchange positions just after crossing the red line. As they move through the reverse, LF continues to carry the puck up the right side or the middle, or he executes a drop pass to RF. This technique produces dramatic results by changing the flow of the play, confusing the opposition, and creating the opportunity for either forward to initiate the offensive zone attack.

Up-the-middle. This is probably the most often employed technique for penetrating the offensive zone, and for good reason. With the puck in the middle of the playing surface, the attacking team should have quite a few skating and passing options (due to variety of open areas on the playing surface). Figure 3 shows five (of many) options that are available to move the puck into the offensive zone. Option 1 has the right forward (RF) making a pass to LF, just in front of the opposing defenseman (XRD). Option 2 is similar, but requires RF to hold off on the pass until LF moves past XRD. Option 3 allows RF to skate with the puck to the outside and around the other opposing defenseman (XLD). Options 4 and 5 provide a drop pass and lateral pass to hustling defensemen as they move over the red line. Other options can be developed based on particular player strengths, team strategies, and opponent strategies.

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