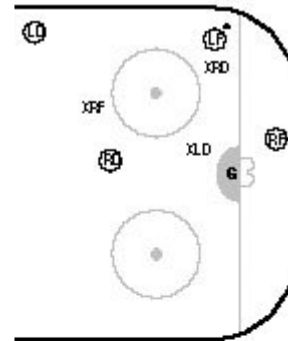


Putting more power in your power play

By Greg Siller



Figures 1 and 2

Your power play unit should be designed to take advantage of your teams numerical superiority while your opponent is serving a penalty. The power play consists of the following player scenarios: 5-on-4, 4-on-3, and 5-on-3 for ice hockey and 4-on-3, 3-on-2, and 4-on-2 for roller hockey. The objective of the power play unit is to use your additional player(s) to move the puck into your offensive zone, maintain possession until a scoring opportunity can be set up, shoot, and score!

There are several keys to an effective power play. After the coach establishes which players to use, he or she must ensure that the power play unit understands and executes the following three power play fundamentals:

Player Movement. An effective power play should always be based on plenty of player movement. Movement creates the potential for disorganizing the opponents through confusion and missed assignments. The power play unit should move players around the perimeter of the penalty killing unit as well as penetrating the perimeter. In some cases, it may cause two defenders to cover one attacker, allowing the remaining attackers to converge on net for a very high percentage scoring opportunity.

Puck Control. Movement and control are essential for an effective power play. By moving the puck around, you force the opponents to move, including the goaltender, creating openings for passes and shots. Always position one non-puck carrier close to the puck carrier/shooter to maintain team puck control. If the puck carrier/shooter gets pressured, the supporting teammate is close by to receive a short, low-risk pass or retrieve a loose puck. The power play is really a series of two-on-ones played by the puck carrier and a

support player in an attempt to isolate and defeat a defender. Give-and-go and one-time passing plays are very effective on the power play.

Shots on Net. Some teams pass the puck around and wait for the perfect scoring play (take a look at many European teams). They end up getting very few shots on net. Too many passes provide the penalty killers with the opportunity to intercept the puck and shoot it down the playing surface, reducing valuable power play time. Shots should generally be taken from high percentage scoring locations, however, a slap shot from the point, with the potential for a rebound or deflection, can be just as effective on the power play. For every two minute power play, the power play unit should get at least five good shots on net. Balancing all-out shooting with patient passing makes each player think about whether a shot at this time has a good chance to score or not.

One-man advantage

In Figure 1 (roller hockey 4-on-3 power play), the circled players have established their positions on the perimeter. The puck carrier (LF) has four options; to skate with the puck or to pass it to one of the three teammates. Two excellent plays are to pass the puck to RF (behind the net) and then have RD move into the slot for a shot, or pass it to RD (in front of the net) who moves to the right and then passes it to RF (moving to the side of the net) for a one-timer into the net.

In Figure 2 (ice hockey 5-on-4 power play), the circled players can operate the same as described in Figure 1, using C and RF as excellent options. If pressured down low, LF should move the puck back to the point (LD) and have LD shoot a low shot to get a deflection/rebound or pass the puck to RD for the same option. One player should always be in front of the net (RF) to block the goaltender's direct vision of the shooter and one player (C) should be positioned near the goal line for a rebound or one-timer.

Two-man advantage

When there is a two-man advantage, move the puck into the offensive zone, set up, and shoot, shoot, shoot. There is not much more to it than that. Just make sure that your players are in position to get any rebounds and always send in two forecheckers when the other team is trying to gain control of the puck.

Power play proficiency comes with knowledge and practice. Utilize the three power play fundamentals (player movement, puck movement, and shooting) described above, practice those fundamentals, and watch your team put more power into each power play opportunity.

Greg Siller, author of the book Roller Hockey: Skills And Strategies For Winning On Wheels