



CANADIAN AMATEUR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DE HOCKEY AMATEUR



ADVANCED II — AVANCÉ II

DEFENSIVE TEAM SYSTEMS

*Canadian Amateur Hockey Association
National Coaching Certification Program*

ADVANCED II Seminar

June 29 - July 5, 1989

Calgary, Alberta

*Presented By: Jacques Martin
Assistant Coach
Chicago Blackhawks
c/o Chicago Stadium
Chicago, Illinois 60612*

NATIONAL COACHING CERTIFICATION PROGRAM/PROGRAMME NATIONAL DE CERTIFICATION DES ENTRAÎNEURS



Government of Canada
Fitness and Amateur Sport



I. INTRODUCTION

A. What Is It?

- Defensive team play is a basic phase of the game when you don't have possession of the puck. It begins when the team has lost the puck and ends when the puck has been recovered.
- The objective of defensive play is to recover the lost puck and to prevent the opposing team from scoring.
- This objective can be reached by:
 - i) a player's individual defensive action
 - ii) co-operation with several players
(team defensive play)
- Defensive hockey is a style of play related to the coach philosophy and belief, "You can't win without a good defense". A coach can teach solid defensive hockey when his team plays without the puck but he must also teach a solid system of play when his team has the puck. A well organized defense remains the base of the attack. It causes turnovers by playing smart physical and by staying away from the penalty box.
- When the team's performance needs to be stabilized, players need to be regrouped. You come back on defense and emphasize certain points of reference:
 - angling
 - finishing checks
 - play the puck corner on the defensive side
- Defensive hockey requires aggressiveness as well as patience.
- Defense requires as much intelligence to read and react as offense does. While one or two players can carry the attack of the club defense will always be a (6) man job.

B. Nature of the System

- boring
- dull
- lack of recognition
- lack of identity

III. KEY ELEMENTS IN DEFENSIVE TEAM PLAY

1) *Player's Good Physical Condition*

2) *Player's Enthusiasm For His Defensive Obligations*

An atmosphere must be created among the players which will lead them in all situations to realize the importance of defensive play and to accept it not as a chore but as one of the essential conditions of success. "ATTITUDE".

3) *Player's Knowledge in Theory and Practice of Defensive Skills and Team Systems*

- *face and concentrate on the opponent, not on the puck*
- *protect your own net and position yourself accordingly*
- *face the play - be aware of your man (feel) but still try to face the play*
- *pressure - make contact as soon as possible*
- *commitment - once you are within range you must go through with it*

4) *Reading and Reacting*

- *The fundamental condition of successful defensive team play lies in quick reacting to everchanging situations in a game.*
Ex. the ability to shift from attack to defensive tactics the moment the puck has been lost
- *Anticipation of what is next. It is easy if you know what your opponent's options are.*
- *Predict the options the the offensive player has towards the boards and then use the boards as an ally.*
- *Approach all scrambles from the defensive side.*

5) *Forward's Responsibilities*

6) *Defenceman's Responsibilities*

All defensive team systems must be based on the four defensive principles:

- *pressure*
- *contain*
- *support*
- *transition*

FORECHECKING

I. GENERAL CONCEPTS: From Neutral Zone to Offensive Zone

A. Pressure (physical contact, finishing your check)

If a team wishes to stress pressure on the offense, it will normally stress speed, pursuit, and space reduction and commit at least two players to the puck.

B. Containing the Opponent

- pushing the puck carrier towards the boards
- reducing his skating room
- forcing passes in one area and cutting down the passing options of the breakout team

C. Delaying the Play

- forcing the puck carrier in the neutral zone only

D. Blocking the Blue Line to make them dump the puck in

II. 2 - 1 - 2 PRESSURE FORECHECKING

A. Offensive Weapon

When a team forces the rivals to make mistakes, takes possession of the puck and manages a good shot on the net.

B. Pressure on the Puck

- 1) HUSTLE - The first forward has to be quick, aggressive on the puck carrier. Direct the puck carrier towards the traffic which is around the hash marks of the face-off circle. Hurry the defence and finish the check.
- 2) ANTICIPATION - The second and third forecheckers must read the play. Often it means taking away the pass around the boards or reading a reverse. The third forward becomes the "high man".
- 3) LOCK THE MIDDLE - The high forward prevents passes up the middle and is ready to support pinches by the defence. If you are unable to keep the puck in, be sure to take a man to prevent a 3 on 2 against us.

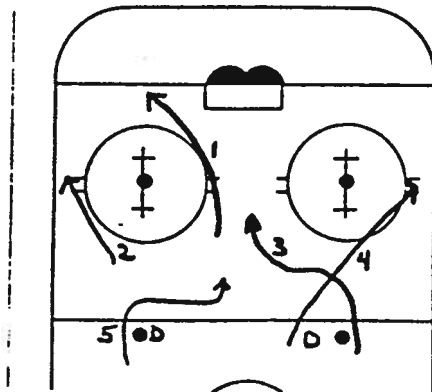
B. Pressure on the Puck (cont'd)

- 4) 3RD MAN - The "high" forward must realize that he is responsible for not getting caught.
- 5) PINCHING - Defencemen may "pinch" down the boards when the following two conditions exist:
 - i) the puck carrier is under strong pressure
 - ii) a support forward is in a position to back up the pinchBe sure to get either the puck or the man.

C. Situations

1) 2 Man Corner Forecheck

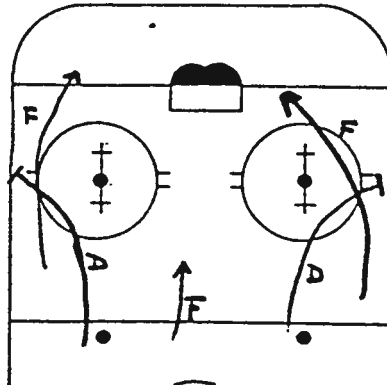
- a) Used in soft dump-in situations.
- b) Takes away the typical first two options of short side outlet and center curl.
- c) Forces the opposition to consistently use the reverse of 'D' to 'D'.
- d) Forces longer passes for opposition to break out.
- e) Tests their support man coverage in their defensive zone; ie. often takes their 'C' out of their breakout.
- f) Makes good use of physical wingers and often victimizes their weakest 'D' nicely.
- g) Makes their breakout predictable.



C. Situations (cont'd)

2) 2 Man Wide Forecheck

- a) *Used in rinks that have fast boards and shallow corners.*
- b) *Greatly restricts puck exchanges between defensive partners.*
- c) *Stretches their support man coverage; ie. support or break out?*
- d) *Physically tiring for both their D and our wingers; ie. who's in the best condition?*
- e) *Forces their goaltender to often try to handle the puck.*
- f) *Leads to scrumbly defensive hockey if the defensive team can't execute the short side corner reverse.*
- g) *Forces the opposition to play smart away from the puck.*



D. Summary

The basic qualities that should be demonstrated by the first two players in are:

- *being able to move towards the check with a proper angle - to eliminate the puck carrier's options*
- *finishing off the check; not turning away when the puck carrier passes the puck or is perceived to have passed it*
- *constant hustle*
- *two players working together; the second man must be very good at reading his partner*

D. Summary (cont'd)

The third man in must be good at:

- reading the play so as to know whether to pinch, back up the first two, or pick up the man coming up the centre
- locking the centre
- not moving in too deep when his team doesn't have full control and therefore getting caught
- locking the centre when the defenseman pinches

III. 1 - 2 - 2 CONTAIN FORECHECKING

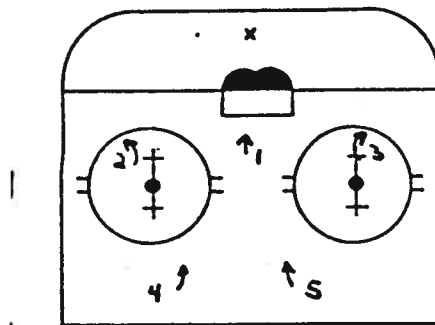
A. Defensive Weapon:

When the offensive team can't get any form of organized attack (continued defense).

B. Systems

1) 1 - 2 - 2

- a) Used against all net screen controlled situations.
- b) Objective is to produce a turnover in the high offensive or early neutral zone.
- c) Forces their two 'D' to carry the puck.
- d) Predetermines that the puck will be moved to one side or the other early.
- e) Frustrating and dull to play against - tests their patience.



IV. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Many teams play a heavy dump and run game for about 10 minutes early in the game for these reasons:

IV. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS (cont'd)

- Evaluation of the opposite defenseman
- Evaluation of the opposition's goalie - puck and skating skills.
- It makes the opposition's blue line easier to penetrate later.

Coaching Tips for Forechecking:

- The nearest man to the puck pressures the puck carrier to reduce his reaction time.
- Force the opponent towards the boards where his space is reduced.
- The checker should remain between his own net and the puck whenever possible (defensive side).
- The first checker's prime goal is to make the puck carrier give up the puck - force a pass.
- Physically (body check) eliminate the give and go offensive tactic.
- Hesitation gives the puck carrier too much time. If you're too late - think containment.
- Never let one pass beat two checkers.
- A forward should always cover a defensive "pinch".

NEUTRAL ZONE: DEFENSIVE TEAM PLAY

There should be a logical connection with checking in the neutral zone and the style of forechecking used.

Again, there is need to read the offense and understand what the opponent is trying to accomplish.

Preventing the offense from gaining your defensive blueline is a priority. The defence should close the gap with their check. The forwards should be on the defensive side of their checks.

I. COACHING TIPS FOR NEUTRAL ZONE, DEFENSIVE SYSTEM:

- Make physical contact with the check early and often to break his concentration on the play.
- The head on a swivel tactic allows the checker to watch both the puck and the check constantly.
- If forced to chase, stride hard instead of reaching with the stick.
- When one of your mates covers your responsibilities, make sure you "switch" to cover his.
- Don't chase the flow, stay in the checking lane and wait for the flow.
- The gap between the checker and the check should be as narrow as possible.
- Forwards are responsible for loose pucks behind the defence allowing the defenceman to close on the attacker with confidence.
- Make sure someone is aware of the trailer (usually this would be a forward's responsibility).

II. SYSTEMS

A. Attacking the Puck Carrier

This system is based on the same sort of approach as "locking the centre" in that you don't want the puck carried easily up the ice. So the puck carrier is pressured as much as possible.

The attack on the puck carrier can only be done on the offensive zone side of the centre red line. This style requires a good skating team as well as good defensemen and quick working wingers.

1) Advantages

- Makes it tough for the opponents to get over the red line so they can shoot it in.
- Prevents a good puck carrier from skating over the red line with speed.
- Gets everyone involved; the focus is to upset the attack before it gets to the centre line.

B. Picking Up the Wings

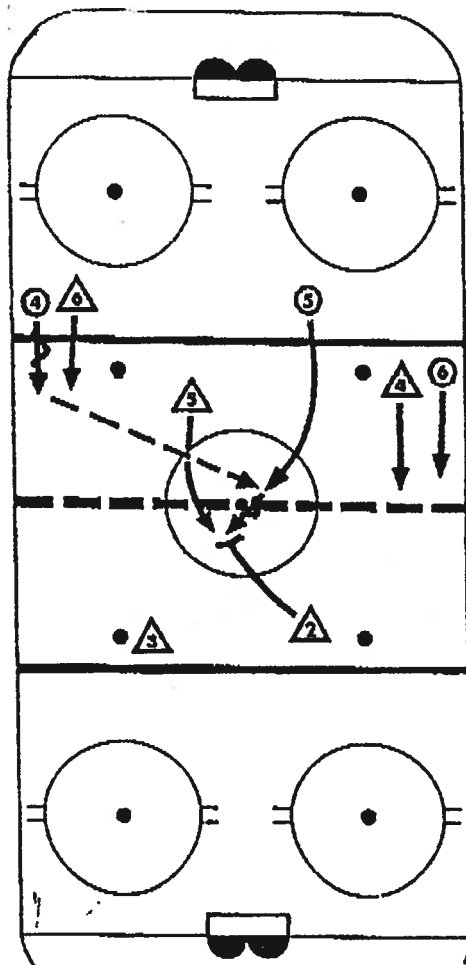
1) Advantages

- This approach gives a lot more support to the defensemen.
- Encourages the defensemen to stand up at the blue line.
- This style results in a lot of loose pucks behind the defending team's blue line.
- * This style is more suitable to the big lumbering wingers and the less alert and less mobile defensemen.

B. "Picking Up the Wings"

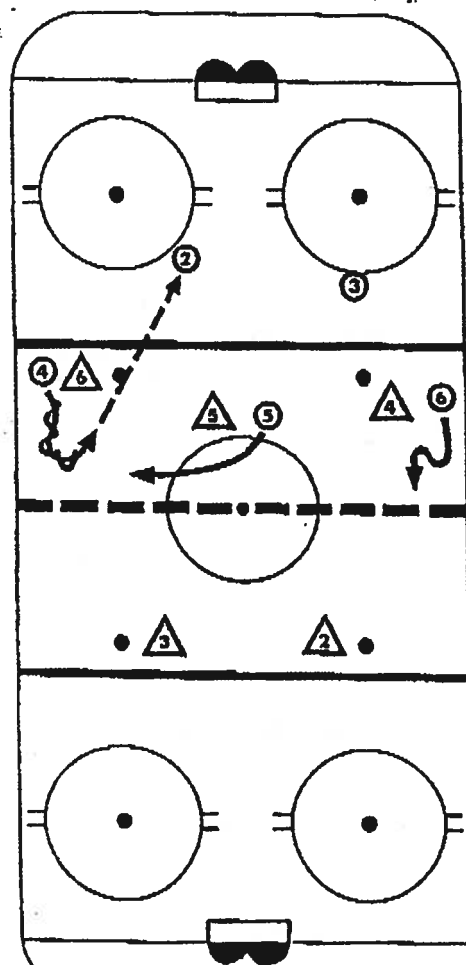
Force Turnover

- As (5) cuts across to receive a pass from (4), (2) steps into the same lane to check (5).
- (2) should make contact and not try to steal the puck.
- (4) and (6) hold ice and stay with checking responsibilities.
- (5) supports (2) and tries to gain possession of the puck.



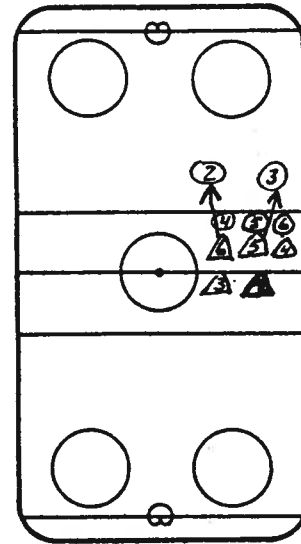
C. "Counter Defence"

- (4) counters the puck back to (2).
 - (6) pressures (2) and (4) pressures (3) to eliminate a D to D play.
 - (2) and (3) move up to cover forwards with (5).
- ** A more conservative approach would have (4) stay with (6) and only (6) give pressure.



D. Faceoffs

- $\triangle 4$ locks his man $\odot 6$
- $\triangle 5$ pressures $\odot 3$
- $\triangle 6$ pressures $\odot 2$
- $\triangle 2$ soft punches on $\odot 5$



III. READING THE RUSH

Reading the rush is a skill that can be developed in 3 vs 3, 3 vs 2, or 2 vs 2 situations different reactions are needed by the defense.

1) 3 vs 3

- This is the most common rush in hockey.
- Basic play in this situation - everyone takes a man.
- Tendency for the defensemen to back in too deep.

2) 3 vs 2

The basic strategy is to stall the play so that one of the forwards can get back and cover the man in the slot. The defenseman plays a zone defense in the middle of the ice. In close, they protect the slot and let the goalie play the wide man.

3) 2 vs 2

The play is "man to man" but the defensemen have to be careful not to be double-teamed or lose their man in a switch or criss-cross manoeuvre by the attacking forwards.

4) Drill

- read the rush
- trailer drill

I. GENERAL CONCEPTS

- Pressure must be applied on the puck carrier at all times.
- The space and time available to the puck carrier must be kept to a minimum.
- The offense must be contained and not allowed to move the puck into the prime scoring area.
- All defence players must be on the defensive side of their checks, hold their ice and force the offense outside.
- Forwards should backcheck all the way to the net and not release until a defenceman can take responsibility for coverage.
- Forwards are also responsible for a second wave attack (trailers).
- The defence should be responsible for the puck carrier as he enters the zone.
- The defence should be positioned to prevent rebound shots and gain possession of the puck.

II. SYSTEM "2 - 1 - 2"

A 2 - 1 - 2 is the most common system of coverage in one's own defensive zone.

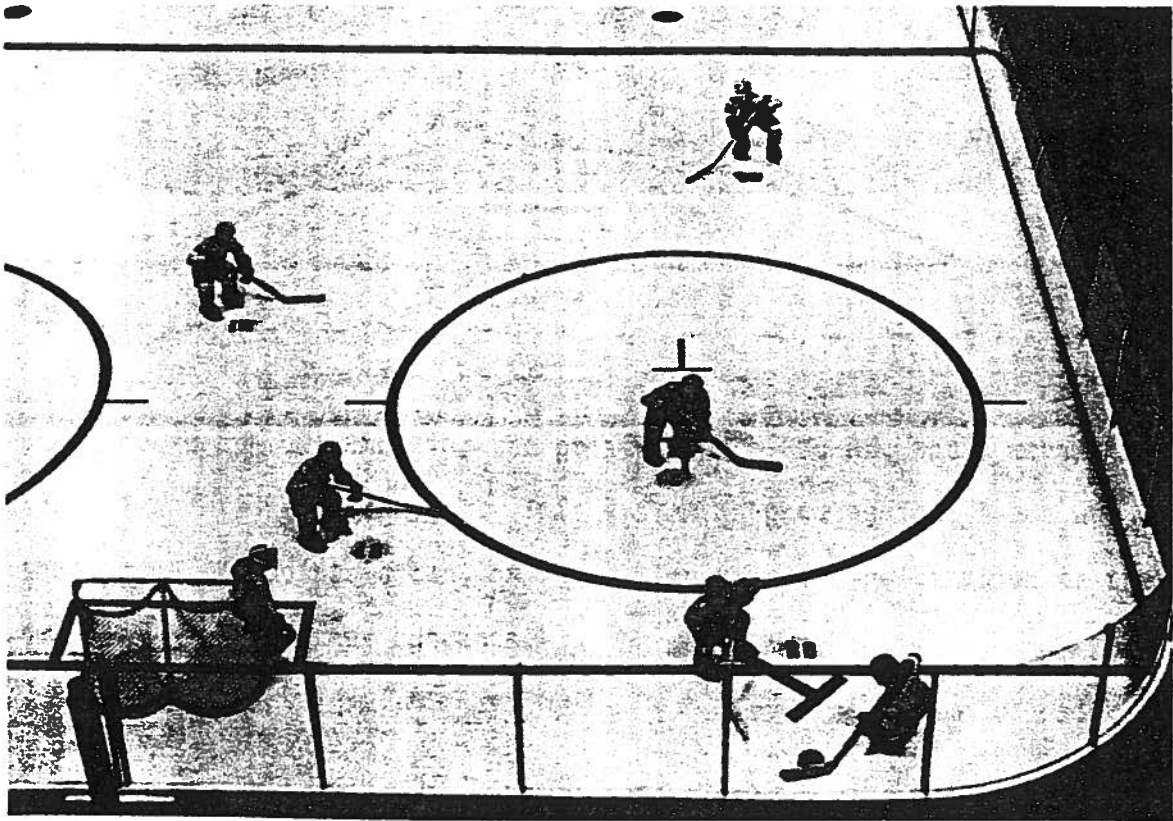
Advantages

- The 2 - 1 - 2 provides good support for defensemen when they are working in the corners; the centre or a winger is always close by ready to help out.
- simple system to learn
- The zones of individual player responsibility are quite clear and easy to relate to.

Diagram A shows a 2 - 1 - 2 zone setup. Here, O_1 (an opposition player) has the puck in the corner. RD (probably the Right Defenceman) is attempting to take him out using his body. LD is covering the front of the net, C (centre) is 15-20' away ready to get the loose puck, RW is out at the point, and LW is in the slot, between the hash marks, ready to help LD.

Each player has his zone of responsibilities and must do his job well. The concepts of defensive play are well demonstrated here, particularly those of playing the man, closest man attack, pressure, and attacking in two's.

DIAGRAM A



III. COACHING TIPS FOR DEFENSIVE ZONE, DEFENSIVE SYSTEM:

- *Don't back in deep when the defenders match the attackers numerically.*
- *When outnumbered, guard the inside lanes and leave the outside lanes for the backchecker.*
- *Maintain numerical equality at all times - the offence will be trying for 2 vs 1's and 3 vs 2's.*
- *Always force the attack away from the prime scoring areas.*
- *The closer the play gets to the net, the more physical the defensive attitude will become.*
- *Once a checker commits himself to an opponent he must stay with him all the way to the net.*
- *Forwards are responsible for delayed attackers (trailers).*
- *"Stagger" the defence only after the defenceman goes to the puck carrier to force the play.*

DEFENDING A LEAD

Guard against making plays which may trap players on our team.

DANGEROUS PLAYS

Opposition End

- 1) passes back to point
- 2) shots from point
- 3) passes from point to point
- 4) drop passes
- 5) blind passouts from corner or behind net

Center Ice

- 1) unsafe stick handling
- 2) long passes
- 3) carrying puck back towards our end
- 4) stickhandling at blueline

Our End

- 1) unsafe stickhandling
- 2) soft passes
- 3) passes up middle

SAFEGUARDS

- 1) Avoid penalties - no head-on body checks.
- no checking from behind
- 2) Falling on the puck near goal - goalkeeper get to puck quickly so referee has an out.
- 3) Forechecking - no forward gets caught. Try to contain rather than set up scoring plays.
- 4) When shooting it in - pick open space for sure.
- 5) Never more than 2-man rush - shoot it in more.
- 6) In our end, dump it out more. Be sure to get puck past point man, not to him. Play off the boards more, because point man often charges.
- 7) The opposition is taking chances at our blueline - -
No unsafe stickhandling.
- 8) Faceoffs - think defensively at all faceoffs.
Don't get trapped at faceoff in their end.
- 9) Faceoffs in opposition end are good when defending a lead.
- 10) Drop man is vital. Be concerned with second drop man (usually point).
- 11) Centre ice area - one man only checking - wings covered for sure and well ahead of their man - defence up at the blueline.
- 12) If opposing team has six attackers, try to get over centre before "icing" the puck.

SUMMARY

Regardless of the offensive or defensive situations, players should base their team play on the basic principles cited. Knowledge of the principles will allow players to be innovative when set plays break down.

Elimination of hesitation and an increase in overall speed will enhance team play.

Stress the elements that improve the individual tactics and skills. As these improve, so will the overall team play.

On ice communication is very important. Players should be constantly talking or signalling to each other and giving any other cues as a means of communicating.

The coach must take into account his players abilities when designing team systems. He must also understand what opponents systems are trying to accomplish.

All team play systems are only as good as a team's ability to read and react. This is best taught by explaining the theory and the basic principles governing offence and defence.

When designing team systems the coach should be creative. When possible, allow your players to be innovative within team systems. This will promote fun, success, believability, acceptance, motivation, etc.

Unbalance Man by Pressuring One Leg or Skate, By Lifting His Stick or by Unweighting His Skates by Upward Lifting Through the Seat of His Pants; And Then Drive Him Out of Position so That He Cannot be Involved in the Play and So the Goaltender has a Clear View of the Play
Ensure that the Attacker's Stick is Taken Out of Play

Defending an Opponent in the Slot Area

The Tactic Selected Varies According to the Position of the Opponent in the Slot and His Immediacy to Receive a Pass, to Shoot Off the Pass or Execute Tip or Redirection of the Puck

A Major Concern is to Prevent an Uncontested Shot or Redirection of the Puck by the Slot Man, so His Stick Must be Jammed or Prevented from Making Contact With the Puck. Body Position on the Defensive Side May Not be Possible; However, When Moving to Contact the Slot Man or His Stick It Would be Easier and Preferable to Make the Play From the Defensive Side

Tight Coverage is Desirable but Not Always Possible, So Anticipation by a Defenceman or the Forward in the Low Position or the Forward Moving in from Off-Side

Point Coverage as to When the Slot Man Can be Used is Important

Defending an Opponent Along the Boards

Pressure Check if Possible and Either Pin the Man or Seal Him Away from Further Progress by Rubbing Him Off on the Sideboards

Pinning Technique:

Close Quickly on Man

Normally He Will be Facing Along Sideboards or Towards Sideboards, So Play Through Him to Exert Sustained Pressure While Lassoing or Executing a Wraparound Motion With the Stick Placed Between the Man and the Boards; Pressure Through His Elbow in Order to Force Him to Face the Boards; Pin Him by Placing One Knee Between His Legs; T-Push With the Other Skate; and Lean Upper Body to Side of His Body Away From Your Stick Lasso.

Sustain Pressure Until Support Man Picks Up Puck or if No Support When Defender Decides He Can Play Puck.

Always Stay on Defensive Side When Attacker is Released So That Defender Neutralizes Attacker

Sealing Technique:

Usually Executed From Backchecking Position When Both Players Are Skating Same Direction

Play Through Man's Elbow to Spin Him to Face the Glass; Follow Through to Full Pin or Simply Rub Him Against Boards to Retard His Progress While Defender Gains Puck or Defensive Side Positioning

Playing an Opponent in Point Area

Onside Point Area (Puck Side):

Play Man From Inside of Ice Towards Outside and from Slot Towards Blueline in Order to Take Away His Movement or the Movement of the Puck Towards the Slot and Across the Ice

Use an Active Stick to Cut Off Receiving and Passing Lanes

Vary Pressure in Anticipation of Point Man Being Used

Offside Point Area:

Slough Off the Man in Order to Assume a Position in the Slot Area and Thereby Concentrate the Defensive Zone Coverage

When Required, Close on Man and Play Him as an Onside Point Man

DEFENDING VERSUS SPECIAL OFFENSIVE TACTICS

Versus Drive Skating

Outside Drive -

Maintain Tight Gap Control and Inside Positioning Aligned with Face-off Dots to Ensure that the Drive Skater is Even With Defender at the Defensive Zone Face-off Dot

Open Out When Ready to Make Contact with Drive Skater - Use a Heel-To-Heel Technique Rather Than a Crossover Technique to Stay Square and Face Attacker Use Two Hands on Stick to Prevent Drive to Net; Or Use One Hand to Pokecheck and Then One (Or Two Hands) to Control Attacker
Be Particularly Aware of a Man Who is On His Off Wing

Inside Drive (By Defender Away from Puck Area)

Respect and Control Attacker's Penetration so that Attacker is Impeded from Direct Access to the Goal. Lift Up or Control Attacker's Stick in Addition to Controlling His Body.

Versus Delay Move

Maintain Tight Gap Control and Inside Positioning as per Drive Skating
Maintain Positioning on Defensive Side of Delay Skater
When He Delays Towards the Boards, Jump Up Quickly to Close the Gap and Thereby Prevent Him from Gaining Time and Space in Order to Make a Play
Communicate with Other Defenders so that They Cover Attackers Going to Net

Versus Cross to Inside Move

Maintain Tight Gap Control and Defensive Side Positioning as per Drive Skating
Do Not Allow Attacker to Slow Down to Create Space in Front of Defender as This is Essential to Initiate Cross Move; Maintain Tight Gap Control
Open Up to Inside of Ice if Necessary and Jam Opponent's Stick
Be Particularly Aware of Man Who is On His Off Wing
Defender Should Always Look Through Attack
When Attacker Crosses High in Defensive Zone or in Neutral Zone and is Not an Immediate Shooting Threat, Then a Switch May be Used with the Defender's Partner
When Attacker Crosses Low in Defensive Zone, the Defender Should Stay on Him and Prevent Further Attack

Versus Carry Behind Net Move

Maintain Tight Gap Control and Defensive Side Positioning as per Drive Skating
If Within "½ Shaft" of Stick Length, Then Go with Him to Execute Pin
If Not, Then Cup Up in Front of Goal to Contain Attacker; and then Play Man as per Man Behind Net

Versus Pick (Screen/Interference) and Drop/Trailer Pass

Anticipate Situation if Possible by Looking Through Attack
Fight Through Pick Man and Jam Stick of Intended Shooter; or Make Appropriate Play Depending Upon the Situation
Defender May Have to Play the Space Between Pick Man and Second Attacker Until One Attacker Can be Turned Over to Partner or Goaltender

Versus Two Crossing Attackers

If in Open Ice and Above Top of Face-off Circles in the Defensive Zone, Gain Depth Quickly to Maintain Potential to Play Either Player from as Much of the Mid-Ice Corridor Position as is Possible
 If Inside Blueline Area and At or Below the Top of the Face-Off Circles, Then a Decision Must Be Made as to Which Player Will Be Least Dangerous So That Player Will Become the Responsibility of the Goaltender. The Closer to the Goal that the Cross Occurs, Then Generally the Rule Is To Take the Puck Carrier Unless He Cannot Be a Threat as a Shooter.

Versus Stretch or Decoy Attacker

Defender Should Be on Defensive Side and Respect or Honor Attacker's Speed and Ability to Contribute to the Attack
 If Man Cannot Be Involved with the Play, Then Close the Gap to the Play; Keep "Head on a Swivel" To Locate Him Behind; and if Appropriate, Let Partner Know Stretch Man's Position Behind in His Area

BLOCKING SHOTS

Anticipate Shot as Timing of the Block is Critical
 If Possible, Go in the Same Direction as the Shot Releases
 Whenever Possible, Execute the Block By Leading with Stacked Legs into the Shot
 Use Upper Body and Stick to Prevent Fake Shot Deke by Shooter
 Shot Blocker Must Ensure that Puck Does Not Get Past Him
 Defencemen May Use Single Knee Drop Technique and Directly Face Shooter in a Compact Body Position

FORECHECKING

Checking Technique as per Closing on Man Plus Additional Comment That Individual Tactic - Whether Pressure or Contain - Will Fit Within Team Tactics in Offensive and Neutral Zones
 Generally an Inside Out Direction Will be Employed for Forechecking in the Neutral Zone
 Forechecking Versus Regroup:
 Pressure if Regroup Is Just Starting or if Puck Carrier is Not Facing Up Ice With Good Puck Control
 Inside Out Pursuit Should Be Used to Take Away Defenceman to Defenceman Cross-Ice Pass
 Contain Tactic May Be Used When Good Puck Control Is Already Established
 Forechecking Using Contain Tactic Can Use Controlled Skating To Prevent Cross-Ice Pass and/or Force Puck Carrier To Go Up Desired Side of Ice

BACKCHECKING

Establish Defensive Side Body Position By Assuming Position Ahead and to the Inside of Opponent. Rule of Thumb is One Stick Length or One Full Stride Be Aware of Puck Position to Anticipate What Attacker Can Accomplish or When He Can Make a Decisive Move
 Glue to Man Early and Be Prepared to Backcheck Man to the Goal Post
 Use Body to Screen and Legally Impede the Opponent
 The Closer and Opponent Moves to the Goal Area, Then Body Contact and Stick Contact Must Be Used to Prevent a Pass Reception, Tip In, Rebound Shot and To Prevent Attacker From Screening Goaltender

Backchecking Situations:

If Opponent Crosses in Front of Defenceman, Then Give Him to the Defenceman: Stay in Lane. (Backchecker May Turn and Face Up-Ice to Get Better View of Attack Situation)

If Opponent Cuts Across Ice Behind Defenceman, Then Stay With the Attacker Until the Right Time to Release the Man to the Defenceman or Assume Area in Defensive Zone Coverage

If Opponent Delays or Slows Down in Lane, Close Gap and Hold Lane From Defensive Side Positioning

If Late in Assuming Backchecking Role, Skate Hard to Complete Defensive Triangle and Pick Up Any Trailing Attackers

Communicate Intentions to Teammates, Especially Defensemen

Generally Avoid Chasing Puck Carriers in Neutral-Defensive Zones: Look to Pick Up Trailers or Other Attackers

PINCHING

Anticipate and Be Early for the Arrival of the Puck to the Offensive Forward on the Boards

Keep Body Tight to the Boards in Order to Take Away the Chip Pass off the Boards. Use Stick to Take Away Pass to Inside of Offensive or Neutral Zone

If Puck Gets by Pinching Defender, Then Play the Man and Maintain Defensive Side Positioning

Play Percentage in Risk-Taking When Deciding to Pinch