

OPEN-ICE PUCK PROTECTION

Tuesday, October 8th, 2024

Please Note: The Practice of the Week is usually designed to be utilized across multiple age levels. With that being said, we highly encourage you to adjust the drills based on your team's age and skill levels. IHS should always be used as a starting point and you can add/remove constraints to fit your team.

Practice Theme: This practice plan is focused on puck protection skills for players' to develop confidence in their ability to possess pucks in open ice (not along the walls). This is a "position-less" practice where players should play both offensive and defensive roles in every situation.

Key Coaching Points

Puck protection is a skill that should be utilized to create more time and space to make a play.

Offensively, players are working to understand how they can use their positioning, puck skills, edge work and awareness to protect and possess pucks in various areas of the ice.

Defensively, players are working to separate the puck carrier from the puck and regain possession as quickly as possible.

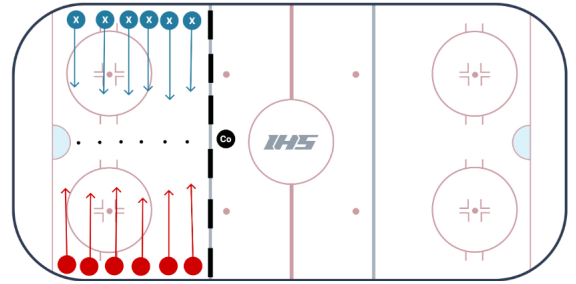
The 3 Focus Points for this Practice

- 1 Be aware and recognize where pressure is coming from
- 2 Use your body positioning and weight shifting to shield the puck from pressure and into space where you can make a play
- 3 **Cut the hands of the defender** - invade the defenders space by moving your body into the defenders hands to protect the puck and drive to the inside

Finders Keepers (Teams) - Passing and Puck Control Drill

Details:

This drill is great for working on awareness and puck support. It is a variation of the original "Finders Keepers" drill but now players are divided up into two teams. Players will need to communicate, protect the puck, support the puck, and pass in order to be successful.



Set Up

To set up the drill divide the players into 2 teams and use an odd number of pucks and less than half as many players. For example, if you have two teams of 7 players then use 7 pucks. If you have two teams of 6 players then use 5 pucks. You can play in one end from the blue line down, half-ice, or even full ice depending on the amount of players.

How to Play

Each team will start on the wall or on the end line. The coach will blow the whistle and shoot the pucks into play. The players will work in their teams to possess as many pucks as possible. The coach will decide on a length of time to play and then blow the whistle. On the whistle all the players must stop. The team that is in possession of the most pucks wins that round.

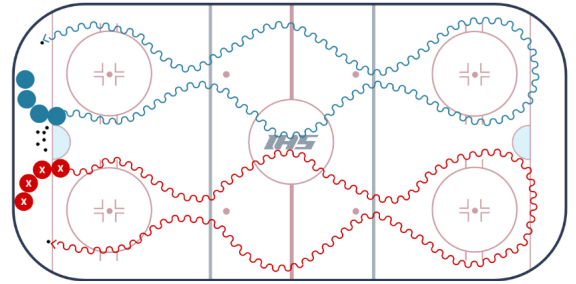
Players need to communicate and have good awareness. When they have the puck they need to be looking to make a pass to a teammate that will not have pressure when they receive it. When they do not have the puck they can work with teammates to surround the puck or force passes into crowded areas.

Puck Protection Weight Shift Moving

Details:

Drill Setup:

- 2 lines of players on goal line.
- Recommend performing drill without a puck for a few reps then adding a puck once understanding show.
- Player is going to skate down the middle alternating/weight shifting down the ice. Stick and puck on one side of body as they lean the opposite way.
- Drill is meant to be done slow and controlled. Player should be feeling out the position and making sure they are performing all the details correctly.



Drill Purpose:

- Purpose of this drill is to add movement to weight shift position, but still perform it in a slow controlled manner. Players should be really getting the feel of the position and all the details of weight shifting and protecting the puck before putting it into drills.

Common Mistakes:

- All the same mistakes as standing still weight shift drill (leaning on pants, leaning into puck and not away, stick ahead of front leg).
- A mistake that is common with movement that you do not see when performing this drill standing still is both feet at on edges. Many players tend to drag their outside foot putting 90% of their weight on one leg (off balance). A gain we are looking for more of a~60 -40 weight distribution. Both feet should be at on the ice creating a solid foundation to take a hit. If a player is dragging their foot they really are just on one leg and can will be easily knocked off the puck.

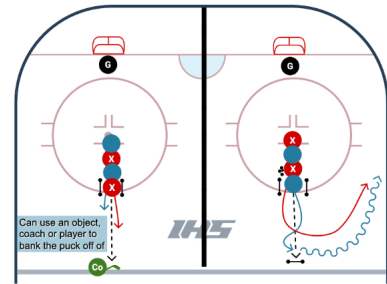
Chute Angling 1 v 1

Details:

Chute Angling 1 v 1 is a fun drill that allows offensive players to practice deceptive retrievals while a defender works to angle them away from a scoring chance.

Setup

- Set the net up below the face-off circle on the goal line.
- Players line up on top of the face-off circle.
- On the whistle, the second player in line shoots the puck up towards the blue line, either hitting a pad, or a coach's stick.
- The first player in line skates up to the puck and works to deceive the second player in line before they retrieve it.
- When the puck is picked up the 1 v 1 starts and the defender is working to take the puck away and skate past the blueline, while the puck carrier works to score.



Coaching Points

- Defender:
 - Gap up and match the offensive skaters speed.
 - Pay attention to their body, not their head or skates.
 - Keep your stick on the ice and angle them towards the boards, do not let them cut back into the middle of the ice.
 - Go stick on puck and finish through their hands to remove the puck from their stick.
- Offensive skater:
 - Use deception with your skates, legs, body and head to try to throw off the defender.
 - Keep your head up and look for an opportunity to cut back into the middle of the ice.
 - If there is no space, keep feet moving and try to protect the puck along the boards and drive to the net.

Variations

- Can set up to be 1/4 ice or 1/2 ice
- Can set up in different areas of the ice
- Can bounce the puck off of a pad, bumper, coach, player, or boards

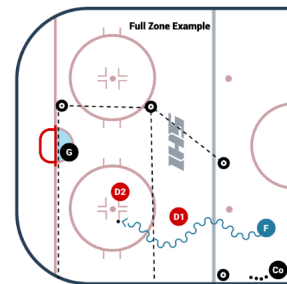
Station Number: Station #1

Layered 1 v 1's

Details:

Layered 1v1s

- Drill starts with the Forward slightly outside of the zone. Two Defense (D1 & D2) are positioned in the zone with imaginary lines for their respective areas. D1's zone is between the top of the circle to the blue line. D2's zone from the goal line to the top of the circle.
- The objective is for F1 to use heads-up awareness, anticipation, skating, and puck skills to evade both defensemen in their respective "zones" and try to score.
- The D must stay in their respective area to shut down the F, focusing on angling, body and stick positioning and spatial awareness. If F gets past D1 and into the next zone, D1 will let up and stop pressuring. When the F enters the zone for D2, D2 activates to pressure and try to shut down the forward from a scoring chance.



Great for small area stations and skill groups.

Progressions for more players involved: Have 2 Fs start so it becomes layered 2v1s in small/tight areas

Progression for transition or SAG: If F gets a shot on net, 1 pt. If F scores a goal, 2 pts. If either D steals the puck from the F, they must make a successful pass to the other defensemen and then skate it out for a point.

Progression for Continuous: Set up players on both halves of the zone so that each side has 1F, 2D (6 total players). One side starts the drill. If D breaks up the play, they must make a pass to the F on the other side to immediately activate the other side. If the F makes it through both defensemen for a shot, coach puts a new puck in the corner, the 2 D battle the 1 F to gain possession and make the pass to the other side.

Coaching Points

- This drill challenges players to not only think about getting past the first defender, but immediately getting past the second defender in a very tight area.
- After each rep, ask the offensive player what they saw or noticed (i.e. the defenders' stick positioning, defenders' body positioning or where they saw an opening to create a scoring chance).
- Encourage creativity in these small areas - players must think and move quickly.
- Increase or decrease the space of the drill or starting point of each position to change up the challenge for the players.

Station Number: Station #2

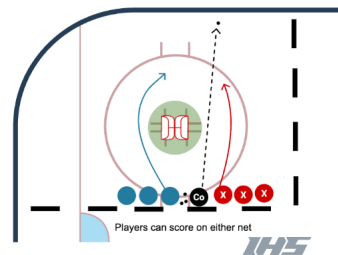
Back to Back 1 vs 1 with Mini Nets

Details:

This is a really good battle drill where players work on puck protection in a tight space. This game was first posted on Twitter by Dave Breen ([view video here](#)).

Setup

- Create a small space using borders and the wall as shown in the diagram. Place two mini nets back to back in the center of the playing area. The coach has the pucks between the two lines of players.



How to Play

- The coach dumps a puck into the playing area and one player from each line competes for the puck. Players are allowed to score on either net. If a player scores the coach plays a puck into the playing area right away. Allow players to play for 30 - 40 seconds.

VARIATIONS

- Can use 2 mini nets, 2 large nets, or even just one tire!
- Only allow the players to score on a certain net.
- Make the game 1v1 or 2v2.
- Modify the playing area.
- Add goalies.

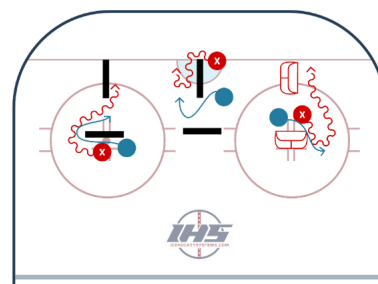
Station Number: Station #3

Use the Pads 1v1 Keep Away

Details:

DRILL SETUP:

- Set up 2 nets or divider pads perpendicular with space in between
- You can set up 3 per zone if needed
- It's a 1 v 1 drill and they are just trying to play keep away from each other and use the nets (or pads) to work on their angling



DRILL PURPOSE:

- Reading Pressure
- Change of direction and escapes
- Puck Protection in open space
- Angling in tight spaces

Station Number: Station #4

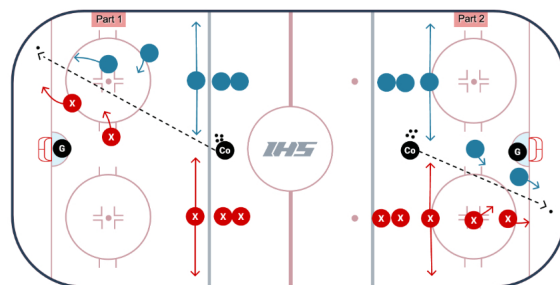
The Box Game

Details:

The Box Game from [Brad Flynn](#) is a small area game that works on quick decision making, transitions, give & goes and net front play.

Setup

- Teams line up at the blue line.
- Coach dumps a puck in the corner, which starts an in zone 2 on 2.
- The 3rd person in each line jumps into the zone at the point and they are the "slide player" at the blue line. They are allowed to go to the boards, to the coach. The slide player can pass or shoot.
- Anytime there is a change of possession, the team that got the puck must pass to their slide player and work to get open, or get to the front of the net.
- Part 2 progression option: Coaches can move the slide players up to the tops of the circle, so there is a smaller amount of space, which will require quicker decision making and give the slide players more opportunities for quick shots to the net.



Coaching Points

- Defending team: keep sticks on the ice to block passing lanes and angle players to the outside of the ice.
- Offensive team: communicate, practice give & goes, and quick shots on net.
- Slide players: keep your head up and look to make quick passes, or shots on net if there is traffic in front.

Variations

- Can reduce the playing area as shown in the video
- Can make this a 2 v 2 or 3 v 3 game.