



20. OFFENSIVE TEAM TACTICS AND PRINCIPLES

20. Offensive Team Tactics and Principles

Now that we have been exposed to individual offensive tactics, we should be better prepared for the introduction of offensive team tactics and principles.

Upon completion of this chapter, you will be better prepared to:

- *understand the basic offensive tactics and principles governing team tactics,*
- *teach offensive team tactics and principles.*

A flow chart depicting the interrelationship, between the various levels of hockey technical development is illustrated in Table 1. As well, the key content areas for team tactics and principles are outlined.

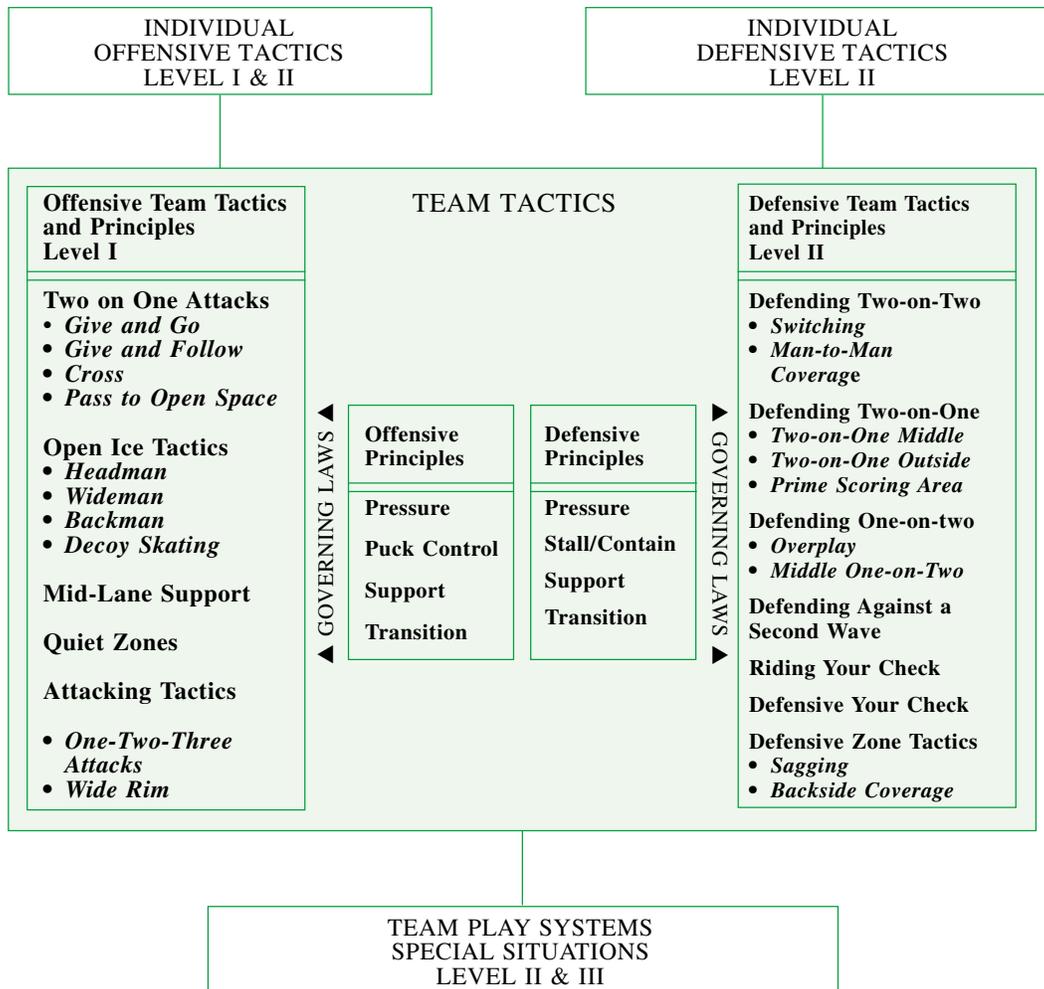


Table 1: Flow Chart Highlighting Team Tactics in Designing Team Play Systems.

20.1 Offensive Principles

Prior to presenting the offensive team tactics, it will be helpful to outline the principles that govern such tactics.

The offensive principles are:

General laws or rules which govern and guide the application of team tactics, systems, and strategies.

For example, offensive players away from the puck must move quickly to a position which makes them available as a passing option. Such player movement illustrate the principle of support.

There are four principles which govern offensive play:

- pressure
- puck control
- support
- transition

Offensive principles serve to create a high percentage of scoring opportunities. **Offensive play begins the moment your team gains possession of the puck.**

Offensive Principle #1

Pressure A quick player and/or puck movement that forces the defender to react (e.g., adjust one's position) more quickly than they would like. It creates time and space for the attacker(s).

Accomplished by:

Speed

A quickness to attack that will limit the reaction time of the defender (stress the defence) and force defensive error.

Concentration of Attack

Any action or movement in a confined area which creates an offensive numerical advantage.

Offensive Principle #2

Puck Control As in all possession-oriented sports, the principle of puck control is an important factor contributing to offensive success. A team which is able to maintain possession of the puck will be able to create scoring opportunities.

Accomplished by:

Puck Protection

Any action or movement that keeps the puck away from the defender through the use of one's body. For example, driving to the net.

Individual Skills

The individual who develops quick skating strides, acceleration with the puck, drive skating, sculling, crossing over to cut in, and cutting to the net, will contribute to a team's ability to execute effective puck control.

Offensive Principle #3

Support Players away from the puck must involve themselves as a passing option and as part of the attack. This requires that players are able to read the checking intentions and anticipate the movements of the puck carrier in order to react accordingly.

Accomplished by:

Triangulation

Any offensive formation which creates offensive triangles, thus providing the puck carrier two passing options and enabling the offensive team to create *width and depth* in the attack.

Mid Lane

This applies to the offensive attack through the neutral zone which by passing to a teammate in the mid-lane or carrying the puck from an outside lane to the mid-lane, the puck carrier is in a position to initiate a play to either side. In the offensive zone, the attackers will also attempt to penetrate the slot (mid-lane) for a good scoring opportunity.

Numerical Advantage

Good support can contribute to the pressure applied on the defence by creating numerical advantage and outnumbering the defenders in a confined area.

Movement

Players away from the puck must be *active* in order to be involved in the attack.

Balance

Although it is desirable to outnumber the opponent in the area of the puck, it is equally desirable to have balance in your attack by filling all three lanes. This will assist *in stretching the defence* which increases the space and time available to the attacking team.

Offensive Principle #4

Transition This is defined as the ability of a team to quickly move from defence to offence and vice versa.

Accomplished by:

Counter Attack

This can be done quickly by a fast break (pressure) or in a controlled manner with puck control.

20.2 Offensive Team Tactics

20.2.1 Two-on-One Attack

When a two-on-one situation is created against a defender, a number of tactics can be utilized to advance the puck past the defender.

Give and Go

As illustrated in Figure 1a and 1b:

- The puck carrier ○ attempts to force the defender △ to commit by threatening to attack with the puck.
- A teammate ○ moves to a position of support to create an open passing lane.
- The puck carrier ○ passes to the teammate ○ and accelerates into an opening for a return pass.

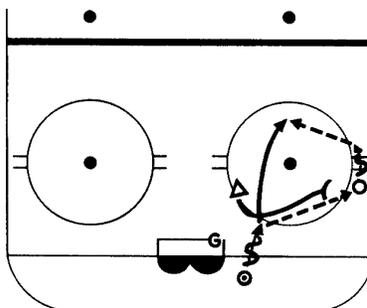


Figure 1a: Give and Go (Two-on-One) Defensive Zone Break Out

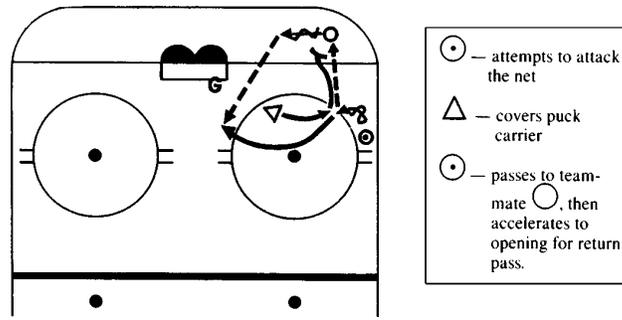


Figure 1b: Give and Go Offensive Zone Attack

Give and Follow

As illustrated in Figure 2:

- Puck carrier \triangle attempts to force the defender \triangle to adjust position by threatening with the puck.
- The puck carrier passes to a teammate \circ who has opened up a passing lane.
- The puck carrier moves in the direction of the pass receiver to a position of support for a return pass (e.g, back or drop).

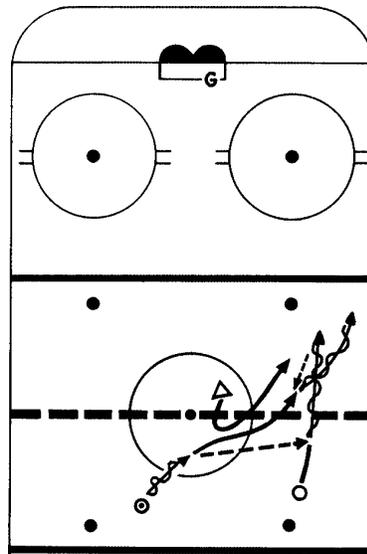


Figure 2: Give and Follow

Cross

As illustrated in Figure 3a, 3b and 3c:

- A cross can be initiated either by the puck carrier or a teammate.
- It involves an exchange of position by two offensive players who try to isolate a defender and force a decision by the defender.
- It is critical that the cross forces the defender to adjust position by moving laterally rather than diagonally.
- By cutting across in a flat arc the attacker is better able to protect the puck and also prolong the decision of the defender.
- The puck carrier should attempt to establish an outside position initially in order to increase the adjustment for the defender once the cross is executed.
- A number of options are available to the puck carrier (e.g., lateral feed, drop or back pass, hold puck and accelerate into opening) as a result of a cross.

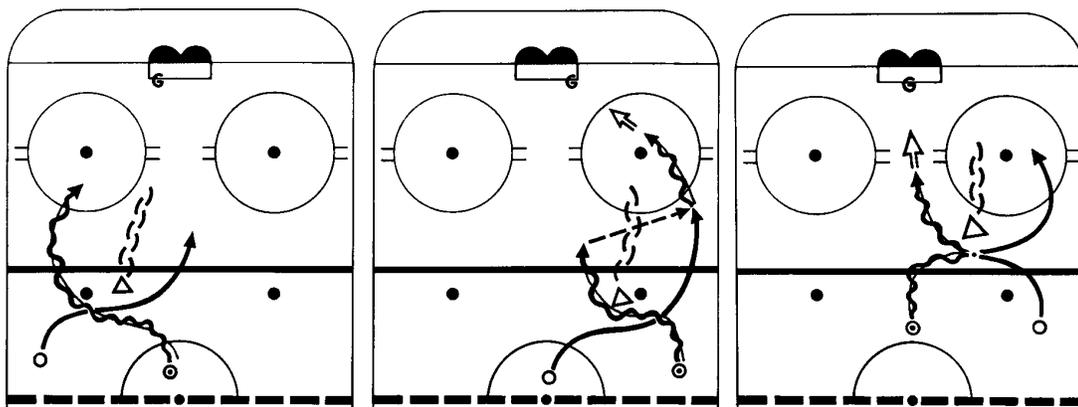


Figure 3a: Cross

**Figure 3b: Cross
(Lateral Feed)**

**Figure 3c: Cross
(Drop After the Cross)**

Pass to Open Space

The puck carrier, by passing to open space instead of attempting a devious pass to a teammate who has arrived at a particular location, does so in such a manner which is difficult for the defender to block. This tactic is difficult to defend against and enables the pass receiver to take the puck at speed (Figure 4).

- The offensive players read the checking pressure and positioning of the defender.
- The player away from the puck initiates the play by attempting to move to open space behind the defender.
- The puck carrier reads the movement of the second attacker and passes the puck into this open space.
- A soft pass is utilized in order to ensure that the puck can be retrieved by the player moving to open space. The boards may also be used to get the puck to open space (e.g., dumping the puck).

- Passing to open space instead of attempting to complete a pass once the teammate has arrived at a particular location, the puck carrier makes it difficult for the defender to block this passing lane.
- This tactic is difficult to defend against since it permits the pass receiver to take the puck at speed.

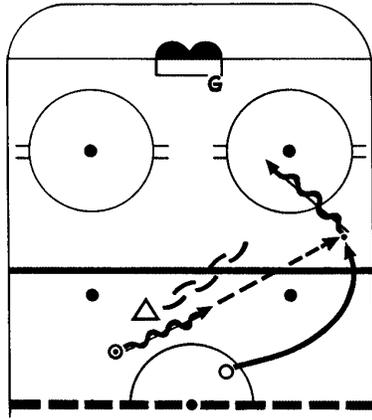


Figure 4a: Pass to Open Space
(Offensive Zone)

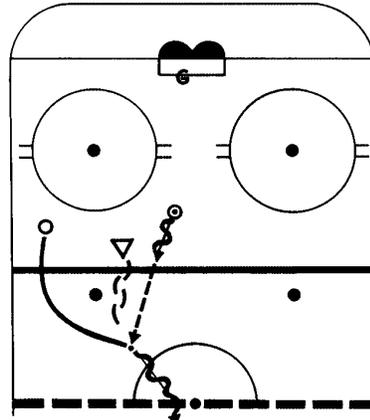


Figure 4b: Pass to Open Space
(Neutral Zone)

20.2.2 Open Ice Tactics

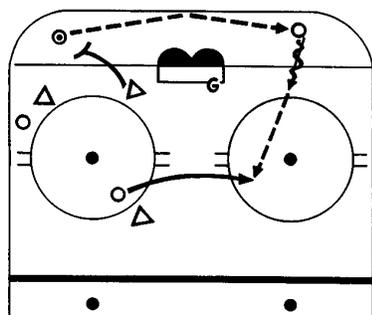
In open ice, a number of passing tactics can be used to maintain puck possession, and apply the offensive principles previously described as well as the following tactics:

Headman

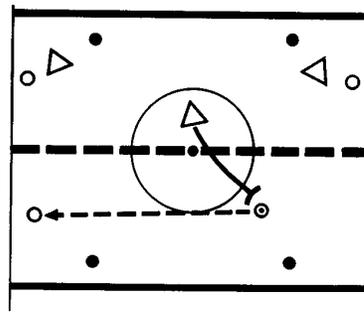
- The attack is quicker by using a headman pass to a teammate either higher in the same zone or in an advanced zone.
- This manoeuvre forces the defence to adjust their position by changing the point of attack and thus opens up space offensively.
- It is important the attackers move quickly to support the puck carrier.

Wideman

- A wideman pass can be used effectively in situations in which the defenders are overloaded in the same lane as the puck carrier (Figure 5).
- The puck carrier either reads an overload situation or attempts to draw the checking pressure.
- By moving the puck quickly to a teammate across the width of the ice, the point of attack is changed and the receiver can now use open space to advance the puck.
- Again, the defence is stretched as it attempts to adjust its position to counter this tactic.



**Figure 5a: Wideman
Offensive Zone**



**Figure 5b: Wideman
Open Ice**

Backman

- In certain situations it may be advantageous for the offensive team to pass the puck back in the direction of their own goal in order to maintain puck control.
- Once again this should result in stretching the defence, thus creating additional space to generate an attack.
- This tactic also creates additional time for the offensive team to regroup and begin a new attack.
- A backman pass is often used to start a counterattack after a turnover in the neutral zone.

Stretch Skating

- This is a variation of the headman tactic which, again, can be used to stretch the defence in the neutral zone (Figure 6).
- As the puck carrier (⊙) begins an attack from the defensive zone, a teammate (①) moves quickly up the boards and cuts laterally just outside the offensive blue line.
- This creates an offensive threat which the defenders must respect by sagging deeper, otherwise, a headman pass can be executed.
- By forcing defenders to retreat, additional space is created in the mid-ice zone.
- The defenders must then either honour this threat by backing off their own blue line or risk being caught without speed against the attackers.

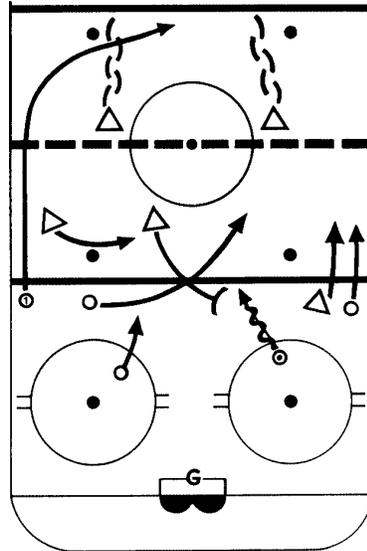


Figure 6: Stretch Skating

20.2.3 Mid-Lane Support

- This tactic is particularly effective on the breakout (Figure 7).
- As the puck carrier ① advances in an outside lane, a weakside ③ winger or a player away from the puck skates into the mid-lane in order to provide close and quick support for ①.
- In order to maintain balance in the attack, another offensive ② player should move to fill the vacated outside lane.

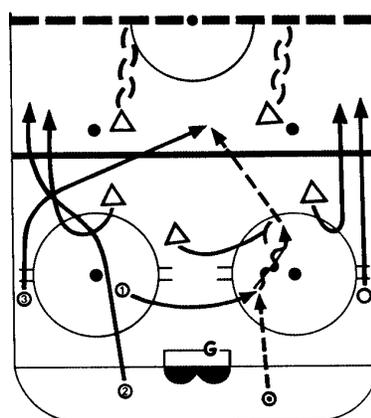


Figure 7: Mid-Lane Support

20.2.4 Attacking Tactics

One-Two-Three Principle of Attack

- The one-two-three principle of attack respects the offensive principles of puck control, pressure, triangulation, and balance (Figure 8).
- I The puck carrier is advancing to attack the net. This will usually take the form of a “driving to the net” action which forces one defender to go with the puck carrier.
 - II A second attacker pressures the net (backside post) in order to create a passing option for the puck carrier, or to draw the second defender deep into the zone.
 - III A third attacker takes up a trail position by slowing down and drifting towards the puck carrier’s lane. This establishes depth to the attack and also puts the third attacker in position to provide good defensive support if the attacking team loses possession of the puck.
- A number of play options can be executed using the one-two-three principle of attack.

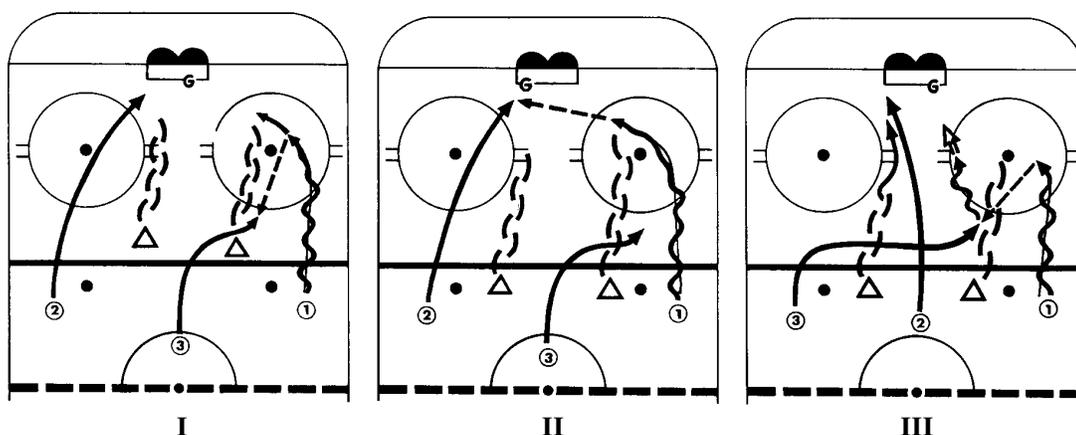


Figure 8: One-Two-Three Principle of Attack

20.2.5 Quiet Zones

- In order to maintain possession of the puck in the offensive zone, the puck can be moved to specific areas of the ice which are considered non-threatening by the defenders. These areas exist in the corners and behind the net (Figure 9a).
- In an attempt to move towards the prime scoring area, the puck carrier may be cut off by a defender. Rather than throwing the puck blindly to the slot, the puck carrier dumps or reverses the puck into one of these quiet zones (Figure 9b).
- A teammate must anticipate this action and begin moving into the area to retrieve the puck.
- The initial puck carrier must then circle around into the slot area in order to create a passing option with a good scoring position.

- The third offensive player also becomes a scoring threat by taking up a position for a possible pass from the initial puck carrier or the player retrieving the puck from the quiet zone.
- If the new puck carrier is also pressured before being able to make a high percentage pass, the same tactic can be repeated with another teammate moving into the quiet zone to retrieve the puck.

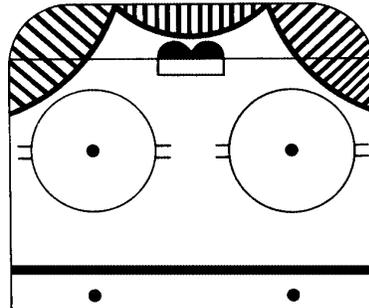


Figure 9a: Quiet Zones

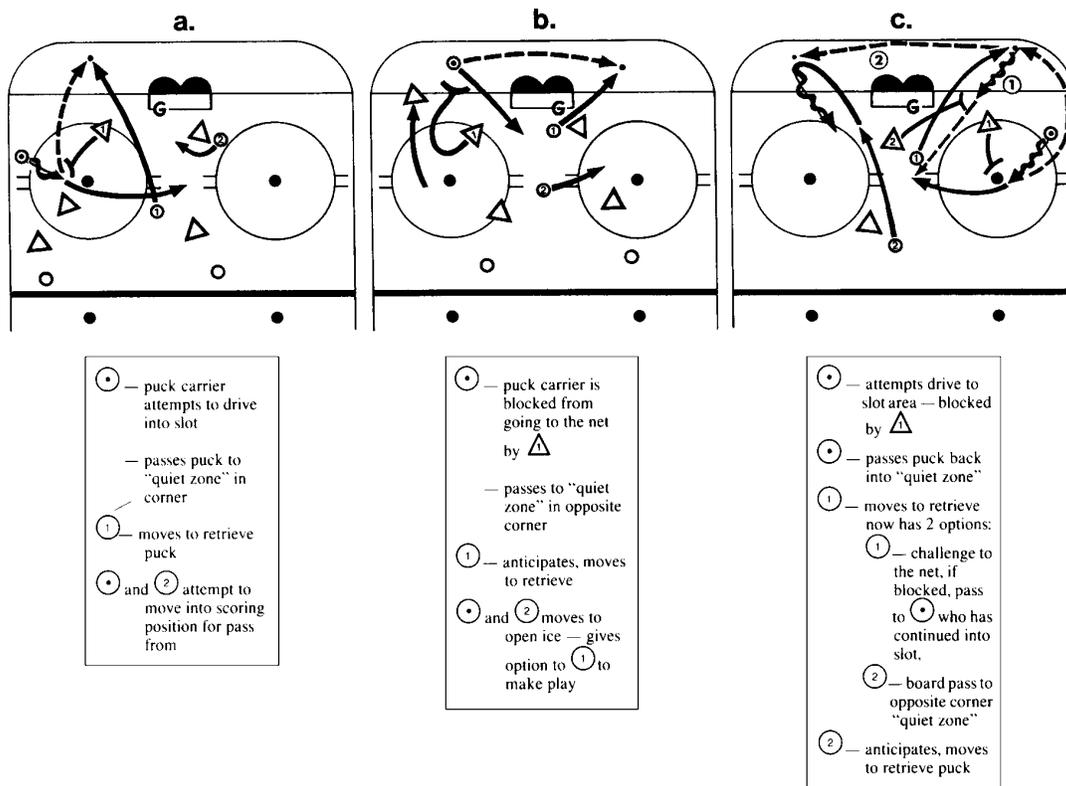


Figure 9b: Attack Exploiting Quiet Zones

Wide Rim

- It may not always be possible to carry the puck into the attacking zone.
- In order to respect the principle of puck control (e.g., maintain possession) a wide rim tactic may be used (Figure 10).
- The puck carrier skates to the centre red line, either already in an outside lane or drifting towards an outside lane.
- On reaching the centre red line, the puck carrier shoots the puck hard into the zone around the boards.
- It is essential that the puck be shot with enough speed to prevent the goalkeeper from being able to stop the puck behind the net.
- A second and third attacker anticipates the movement of the puck and breaks immediately for the boards on the far side in the vicinity of the hash marks in order to trap the puck.
- A third attacker moves quickly into a position of support to assist the player retrieving the puck.

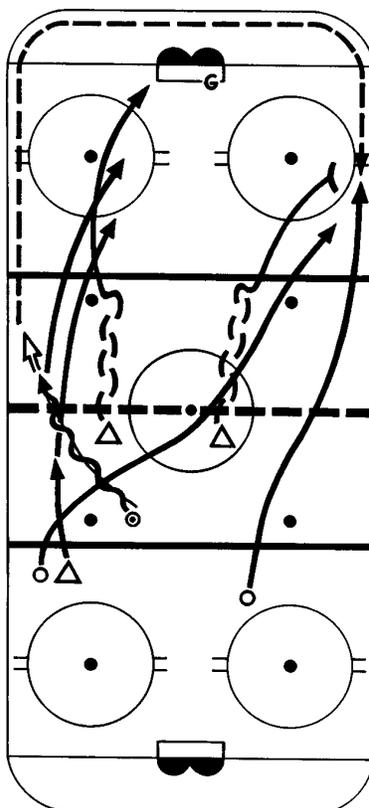


Figure 10: Wide Rim