

HOCKEY MADE EASY - Tips for Young Defensemen

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Thanks, John Shorey- Author- Hockey Made Easy - Canada's Best Instruction Manual.

A Good Defenseman is worth his/her weight in gold!

Playing defense is a highly responsible position and defensemen must be very intelligent individuals as their number one job is to prevent goals, not score them. Any defensive error they make could result in a goal against. To help you avoid these errors here are a number of basic tips to help you prevent goals against your team and to play your position correctly.

The very first thing a defenseman must do is **to analyze the on coming rush**

Is it a 1 on 1 situation, or a 2 or 3 on 1 situation, are the wings covered or open? Depending on how you read the rush, you react differently.

If it's a 1 on 1, (the puck carrier against you) **you play the man**, don't even look at the puck, just play the man by staying in front of him and prevent him from getting around you or getting to the net for a shot. If you create a loose puck your backcheckers or you can go for it.

If it's a 2 or 3 on 1, (2 or 3 opposing players against you) **you play the puck**, don't even think of bodychecking as you will only take yourself out of the play and allow them to get to the net. Stay in the middle between the players and use your stick to deflect any across ice passes. Your goalie should always play the puckcarrier. Your job is to try to force him/her to a bad shooting angle, out side the slot area ,while retaining your position between the opposing players.

Net coverage- in your defensive zone the opposing player in front of your net must be covered at all times. Control his stick and don't let him get to any rebounds. S/he is the one most likely to score not the player in the corner with the puck. Your defense partner should go in the corner to check the puckcarrier. If he is late arriving play it as a 2 on 1 situation and when he arrives it's played as a 1on1 situation for each of you. Do not go rushing into the corner and leave an opposing player uncovered in front of the net unless there is a loose puck and you are 100% sure you can get it.

Corner work- if the player is covered in front of the net, 1 defenseman must go into the corner and try to bodycheck the puck carrier (if allowed, be aggressive and finish the check), or stick check (if not allowed to bodycheck) and retrieve or create a loose puck. Your backcheckers should pick up any loose puck then lead an offensive rush.

Communication- between defense partners is critical. Let your partner know what you are doing. " I've got the man out front, you take the man in the corner" This verbal communication will help you play your position correctly and not have 2 defensemen

going to the same player, as this will always leave someone uncovered for a potential pass and a goal against.

If you retrieve a loose puck in the corner try to pass the puck quickly up to an open forward with an accurate outlet pass. This could trap the opposition deep in your end zone and lead to a quality scoring opportunity for your team

These are but a few tips to help young defensemen play their position correctly and will help them prevent goals against their team if executed properly. Whether you're 5 or 55 these same skills are required to be an effective defenseman.