

Developing Defensemen Offensively

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Offensive Skills of Elite Defense:

- The ability to make a quick hard tape to tape pass
- The ability to make a move around a player and deliver a hard tape to tape pass
- The ability to take a hit – protect the puck, and make a pass
- Passing deception – the art of the look away to “buy time”. Faking a pass – freezing the opponent – or forcing the opponent to turn their feet.
- Deception when retrieving the puck to lose the forechecker
- Reading (seeing) the open passing option
- Aggressively joining the attack at the right time
- Getting pucks through to the net when faced with screens and shot blockers
- One timing pucks from the point position
- Sliding along the blue line and shooting



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Guiding Rules – When to Activate

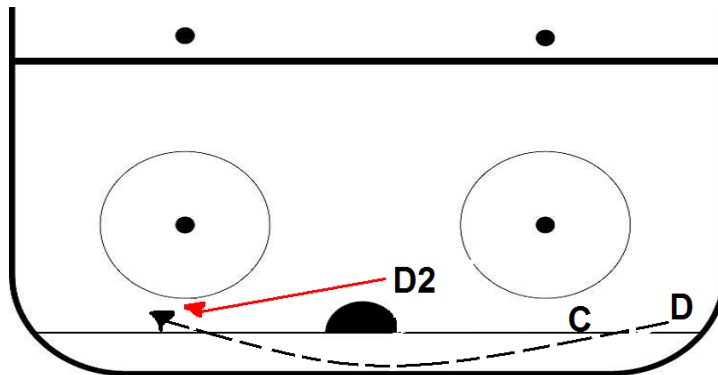
- Defense jump up through mid ice or slightly wider on all breakouts
- Continue to join the rush on successful breakouts and make your decision “how far to go” as you cross center
- The number 1 determining factor on when to activate is - quality of puck possession
- Drive the net if you are one of the two players joining the puck carrier
- Fill the high lane if you are moving up behind the three forwards on the rush.
- Activate in the offensive zone on low cycle plays and whenever your team carries the puck behind the net.
- Only one D moves offensively at a time - the other supports back
- The score of the game, the time of the period and the coaching strategy may change these rules



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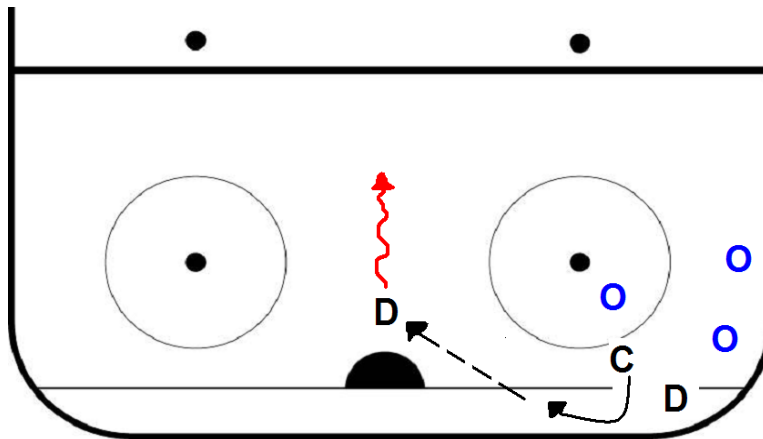
Breakout – Changing Sides

- Using the defense to change sides vs. pressure
- D1 – D2 quick out play
- Backside defense releases on puck possession or anticipated possession
- Most teams overload one side on the forecheck and this will relieve pressure
- Backside winger must move quickly to support



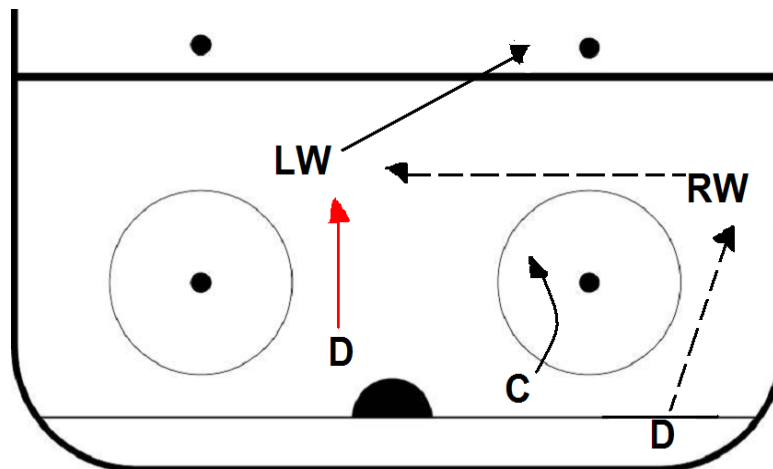
Breakout – Play to the Net

- Use the D in front of the net to pass to when you are in low puck battles with three of their players on one side of the ice
- Net D must protect the front and call for the puck
- This is a great escape option – not a dangerous play



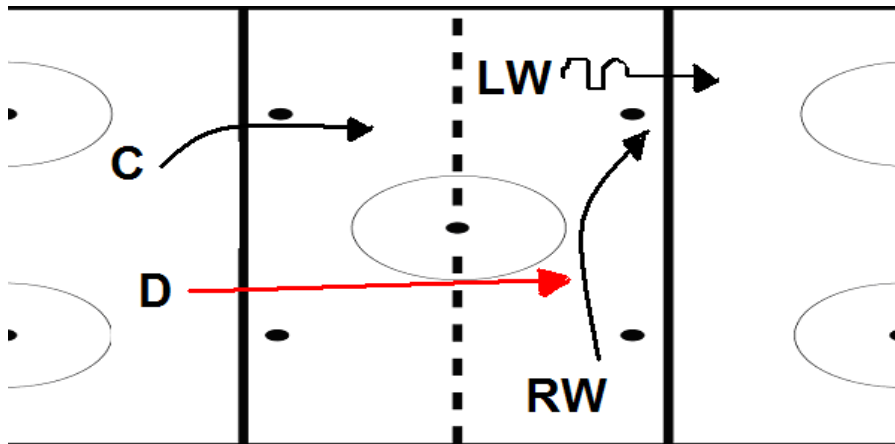
Breakout – Using the backside D

- Once the puck is moved up and under control - fill in the middle or wide lane
- D's should move up under the backside winger as he comes across in support
- This seam is often opens up against pinching teams



Neutral Zone

- One D active and in the rush
- Read as you jump and look to make a decision by the red line
- When entering the offensive zone - make quick decisions on how far to go
- If ahead of the 3rd forward - become the drive or backside player



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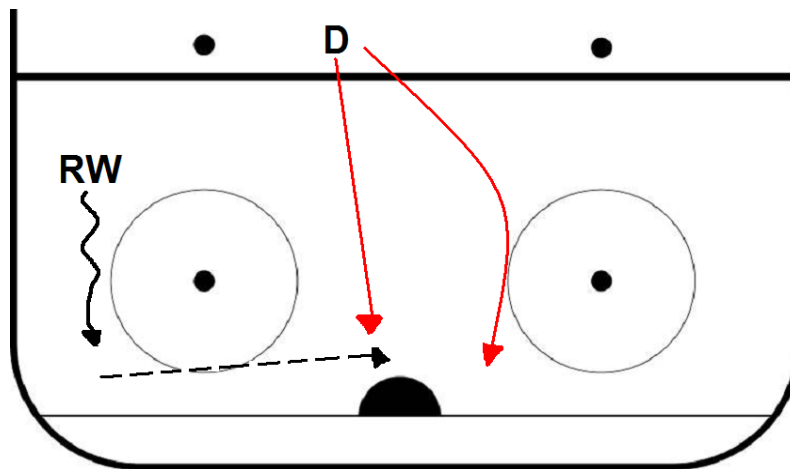
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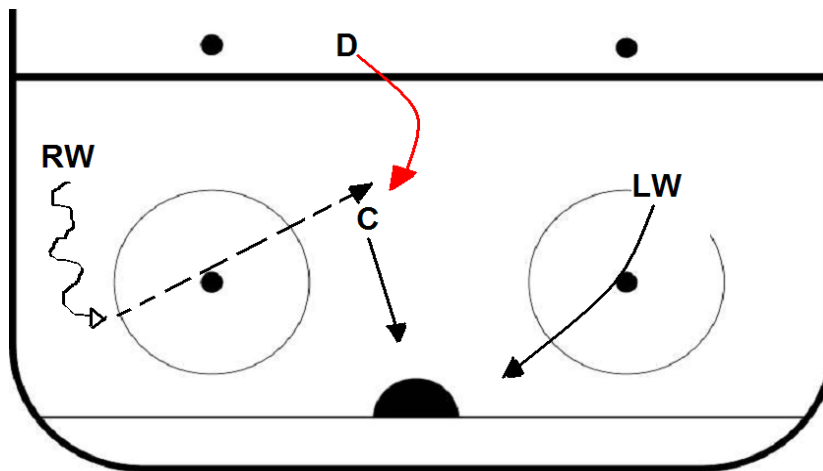
Entering the Offensive Zone:

1. Replace the 3rd forward and become the drive or backside player
Drive the mid seam to create confusion on the rush



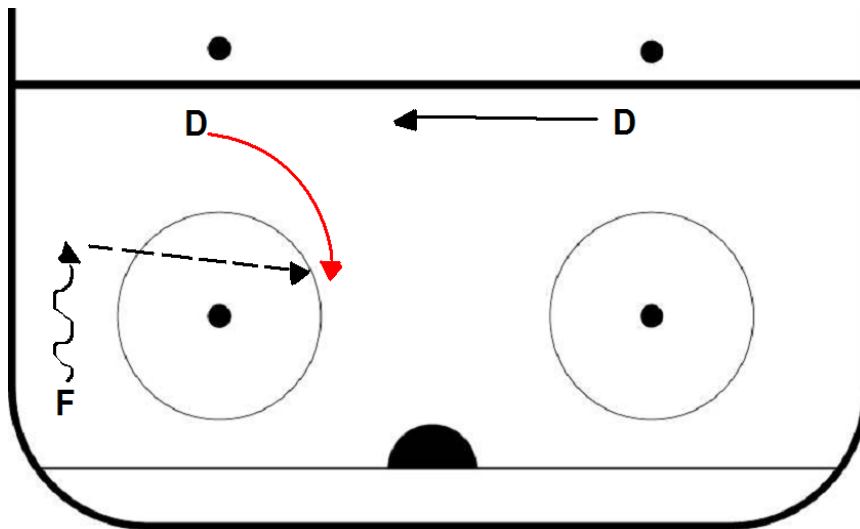
The High Slot

2. Fill the high slot area as the 4th man in the attack
 - Time it to move into the space cleared by the two driving forwards



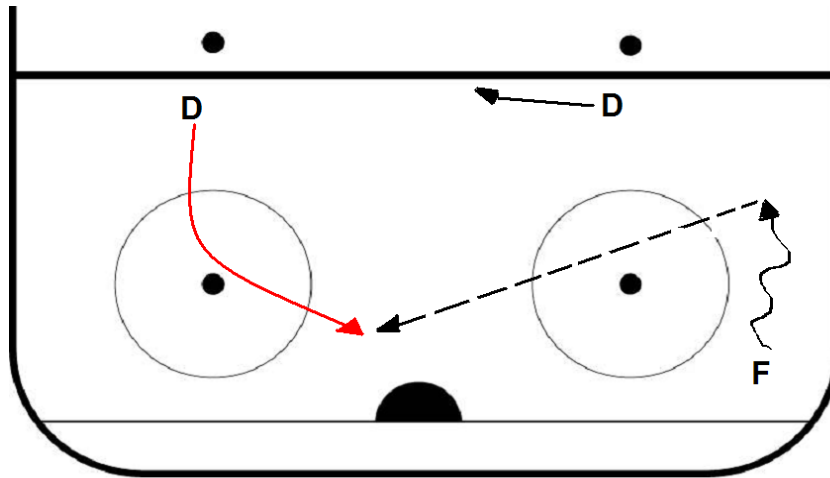
Offensive Zone – Jump to the Slot

- Strong side D slides into the slot and the backside D slides over
- Time it to jump in when the forward begins to cycle out high



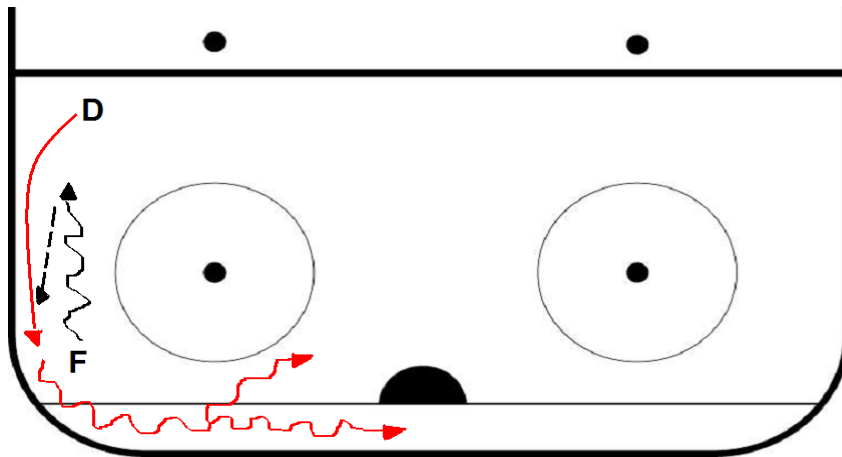
Offensive Zone – Backside Play

- Slide in outside the vision of their coverage or when you see their backside winger looking away



Offensive Zone – Strongside Slide

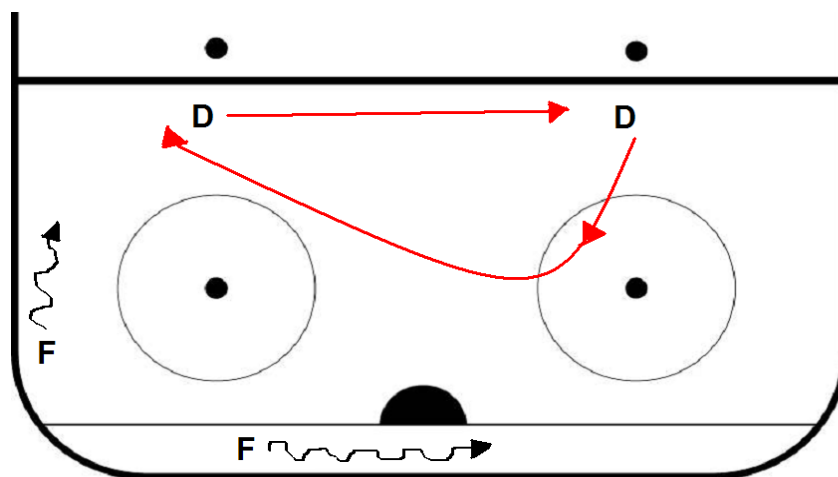
- Defense slides down the inside as the forward moves up the boards
- Carry the puck to the net – behind the net or pass out quick



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Offensive Zone

- Stay active on the line – “dance”
- Cycle with your partner
- Automatically slide in whenever the puck is carried behind the net



Handling Defense in Practice and Game Situations:

- Work on their skills in practice through repetition of habits; treat the defense like goaltenders are treated by their coaches
- Realize they will make mistakes and not unlike a goaltender you cannot in the heat of the action correct everything
- Ask “what did you see” before correcting
- Arm them with information on the opponent and options available especially in regards to the other teams’ forecheck
- Balance your pairs and make sure partners read off each other so that two D’s are not moving in offensively at the same time
- Allow them to “play” the game and not freeze like a golfer with too many thoughts in their head
- Regulate the “green light” with rules according to your coaching philosophy



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Thank you!

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