

Net Front Play



Tuesday, February 11th, 2025

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. These drills and practices can be modified to become more basic or more advanced.

Practice Theme: The drills in this practice are designed to help your players practice and develop net front habits, in particular the art of arriving at the net front on-time for forwards and box-outs or fronting for defensemen.

Offensive Coaching Points:

- **Arrive on Time:** Successful net front play is not staying in front of the net, it's arriving their on time and taking good angles/routes to the net.
- **Give Yourself Space:** Don't be too close to the goalie you want to be a few feet away so your tip/deflection has more movement
 - These drills are a great opportunity to work towards the shooter and work on high tips as well (high slot, not high shots)
- **Give a target for the shooter:** position your stick and body to be in a good spot to make a tip/deflection.
- **Be ready for the rebound -** hunt that puck after the shot is taken and be strong on the puck.

Defensive Coaching Points (boxing out):

- **Body Positioning:** Get between the player you are covering and your goalie while making sure you aren't screening your goalie
- **Clear the shooting lane:** Try to use your strength and body to move the player away from the shooting lane to give your goalie clear view of the puck
- **Awareness:** be ready to clear rebounds after a shot is taken

Some coaches prefer fronting instead of boxing out, which creates quicker transitions and scoring opportunities going the other way. Here is a breakdown of how you can use both depending on the variables at hand.

Fronting vs Boxing out

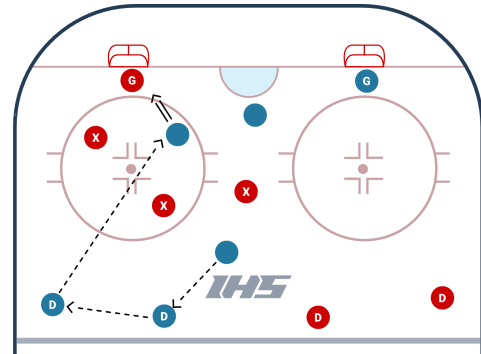
Defend Net Front Progression With 2 Point Players

Details:

Defend Net Front Progression With 2 Point Players is a competitive small area game that works on protecting the net, along with utilizing point players to generate scoring opportunities.

Setup

- Place 2 nets on the goal line as show in the diagram.
- Players play 3 v 3, before they can shoot at their designated net, they must pass to one of their point men.
- The point man must pass to their partner who can shoot or pass but must do so by two touching the puck (one touch stops it, second touch moves it).
- Players who are defending must defend the players at the net front, not the point men.
- Attacking forwards should get to the net for tips and screens.



Coaching Points

- Offensive players without the puck should work hard to get open and find lanes to support their teammates.
- Offensive players with the puck should be aware of their point players, and practice give & gos.
- Defensive players should keep sticks on the ice to block passing lanes and eliminate sticks in front of the net.
- Both sides should work on communication: practicing both verbal and non-verbal communication with your teammates.

Variations

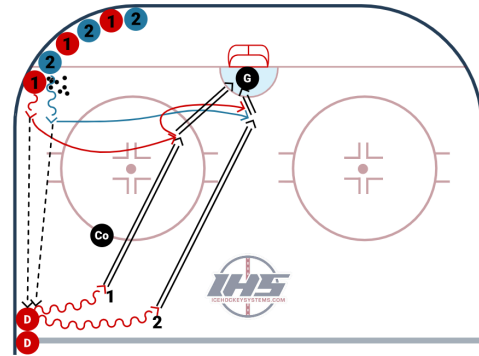
- Coaches can make the game 2 v 2 or 3 v 3.
- Coaches can require point players to hold onto the puck, or do two touch or one touch passing.

2x Shot from Point with Tip & Box Out

Details:

This drill from Ben Eaves is great to work on net-front and high slot tips, deflections and box outs.

- The first player in the corner skates towards the D and passes a puck
- The Defenseman skates toward the middle of the ice and shoots a puck for a tip/deflection.
 - The puck should be hard and on the ice.
 - This is a great time to work on high tips (high in the slot, not a high shot).
- After the first shot, the second player in line passes another puck to the D.
 - He/she then works his way towards the net, where the first player will try to box-him or her out.
- The defenseman once again skates towards the middle of the ice and shoots/passes the puck to the second player
- Coach can blow the play dead and the next rep out of the corner starts



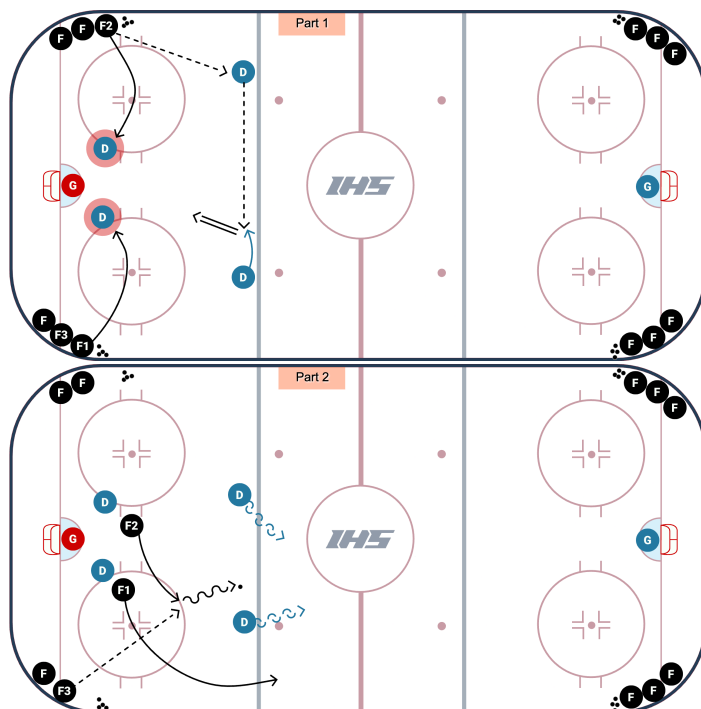
2 on 2 Box Out

Details:

2 on 2 Box Out from Marty Wilford is a two part drill that helps defenders and forwards work on net front battles, and finishes with a 2 on 2 rush.

Setup

- Forwards in all four corners with pucks. 2 defensemen in front of the net and 2 defensemen at the point.
- Part 1 - first whistle:
 - On the first whistle, F2 passes the puck to the point. Both F1 and F2 work to get net front position, while the defensemen at the point go D to D before they take a shot on net.
 - The forwards are trying to score while the defensemen work to box them out and eliminate sticks.
- Part 2 - second whistle:
 - F2 and F1 break up ice and get a pass from one of the second forwards in line, which would be F3 in this diagram. Both F1 and F2 go down the ice 2 on 2 against the two defensemen that were at the point.
- Variation - third whistle:
 - For a potential 3rd variation, coaches can blow a 3rd whistle where the F1 and F2 forwards turn back and regroup with one of the original net front defensemen before they go down the ice on their 2 on 2.



Coaching Points

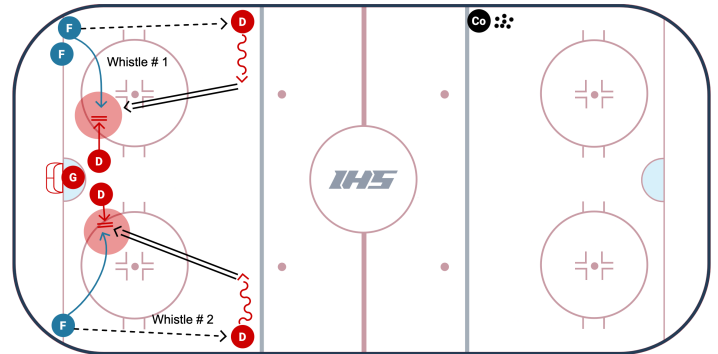
- Defensemen should work to box out the forwards and eliminate their sticks in the net front area.
- Forwards should work together to gain net front position and also look for soft spaces of ice to be open for tips and one timers.
- On the rush forwards should not skate directly at the defenders. They should pass to each other and skate at angles and different speeds to throw off the defensemen.
- On the rush the defenders should work to keep a good gap, sticks on the ice to block the passing lanes and angle the forwards to the outside of the ice.

Sens Regroup

Details:

The Sens Regroup Drill from Coach TJ Manastersky works on offensive zone concepts and neutral zone transition.

TJ Manastersky shared this game with the IHS Community while he was an Assistant Coach at Union College. TJ is the Current Head Coach at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario.



Setup

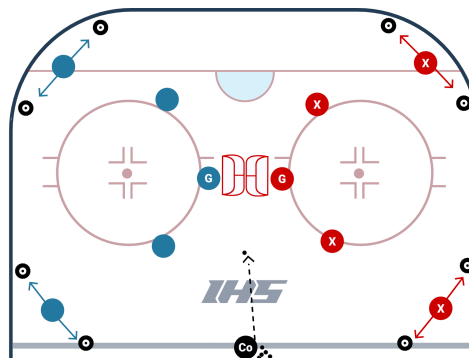
- There are forwards in the corners, two defensemen at the point and two defensemen in front of the net
- On whistle # 1, the forward in the corner passes to the defenseman at the point and begins a net front battle. The defenseman walks the blue line and tries to hit the forwards stick for the deflection.
- On whistle # 2, the same forward to defenseman low to high pass happens, but this time there is a 2 v 2 in front of the net. The defenseman walks the blue line and takes a shot on net.
- On whistle # 3, another forward out of the corner passes low to high to the defenseman at the point, who walks the blue line and takes a shot on net into the 3 v 2 in front of the net.
- On whistle # 4, the coach on the far blue line will spot a puck around the blue line. The defenseman that was at the point jumps back to retrieve the puck while the other defenseman jumps in the hole as support.
- The 3 forwards that were battling in front of the net join the defensemen in the neutral zone, while the two defensemen that were in front of the net gap up. This begins a high tempo 3 v 2 rush.

4 Corner Possession Game - Offensive Advantage

Details:

The 4 Corner Possession Game (with Offensive Advantage) is a fun small area game that encourages players to use their teammates in the corners for support. The setup of this game allows for a lot of creativity.

Offensive players should focus on give & goes, using their point players, and net front presence to create tips, deflections, and react to rebounds. The defending team should focus on boxing out in front, keeping their sticks on the ice to block passing lanes, and react quickly to clear rebounds.



Setup

- Two nets back to back in the center of the zone (as shown in the diagram)
- 2 v 2 and each team has 2 extra support players in their offensive end
- The support players must stay in their boundary (can be cones or tires)
- Coach dumps puck in to start
- Change players every 30 - 45 seconds - the 2 v 2 players can rotate to become support players, then rotate out
- The defensive point players can only go d to d once then they must shoot or pass to a forward (they can not keep passing d to do over and over)
- The defensive point players can only hold onto the puck for 3 seconds (or less).
- Keep score!

Coaching Points

- Goalies - be aware of the puck at all times, especially with the reversed nets! Practice following the puck when it is in the other zone and be aware of where all of the players are.
- Defense - keep sticks on the ice, and use good angles to block passing lanes & opportunities. Box out the forwards in front of the net. React quickly to clear rebounds.
- Forwards - use your support players and work on give & goes. Utilize the nets in the middle of the ice as areas you can hide behind and then jump to space. Use your point players and crash the net to create tips, deflections, and react quickly to rebounds.
- Everyone - communicate! This is a fast pace game, so make sure to communicate with your teammates.

VARIATIONS

- Can set up to be 2 v 2 (as shown above) or 3 v 3
- Can set up Defensive Advantage - see video here - (place the support players on the defensive side of their zone)
- Can set up Cross-Ice Advantage (place one support player on the defensive side and one support player on the offensive side, but have them on the same side of the ice so they can make cross-ice passes)
- Can set up Cross-Ice Advantage Mixed (place one support player on the defensive side and one support player on the offensive side, but place them on opposite corners of the ice so they can NOT make cross-ice passes)