



*“ How many teams have you seen win championships at any level that indiscriminately try to body check the players on the other team at every chance they get? That’s right, not many.”*

## **ALL ZONES - SMART BODY CHECKING**

One of the most effective ways to stop their player from going where he wants to go with the puck is to body check him, preferably while you are in good control and balance so he is stopped or goes down but you don’t, allowing you or one of your teammates to get the puck.

Another benefit of body checking and generally playing very physical but clean is that this style of play makes their players less comfortable with the puck when they carry it or stickhandle, tends to make them make poorer passes and may cause them to lose the puck all on their own.

### **TAKE AWAY THEIR TIME AND SPACE WITH CONTACT**

Keep your legs and skates wide apart, your knees bent, your upper body crouched in a “feel strong” position and your stick gripped firmly for stability.

For a shoulder check when their player is coming towards you and you are skating backwards, turn your body slightly side ways, keep your elbows tucked in to your side, and have your forearms and hitting shoulder down. Use crossover strides to move to him. You can take one hand off your stick, get your hand in front of their player about at his waist and use it together with your momentum to steer him to the boards, but you have to have good position on him to do this or you will be called for holding.

For a hip check while skating backwards, swing your butt sideways into his hip area following through with momentum in the same direction and your shoulder. Your timing is the key because if you miss he is gone.

When you are skating in the same direction as he is and want to shoulder check, get slightly in front of him, locking arms and elbows low and carry your weight through him side ways.

### **NEVER BODY CHECK FROM BEHIND OR MAKE HEAD CONTACT**

#### **In Our Zone**

Defencemen skating backwards **with an even number of our players and their players** should try to take their man out against the boards as he tries to go by wide or if he crosses into the middle. This is done by cross over skating, locking your hand, arm and stick in front of him at his lower chest/stomach area and riding him to the boards or to the side, so he loses the puck. Keep your eyes on the middle of his chest not on the puck. If he stops or turns keep going into him and finish the check.



If they have an odd man rush, that is, a 2 on 1 or 3 on 2, trying to take the body can be very dangerous because all he has to do is pass off or leave the puck for his partner when he gets hit and there is still an odd man rush with one less of us to defend our zone. Play smart positional hockey here and force them to make a good play.

In our corner, if they have the puck, plan and angle the body check so he has to go towards the blue line not behind our net, and finish the check. Our centre should be there to pick up the puck.

If he passes off just before you body check him, finish the check so he cannot get a return pass.

If they get the puck in front of our net, lift their player's stick off the ice and body check him immediately. Playing physically tough in front of our net makes their forwards worry about getting hit, and forces poor shots and passing.

If there is a scramble for the puck in the slot area, don't go for the puck first, lift their stick off the ice and body check their player and then knock the puck out or into our corner to safety.

## **NO POKE, SWEEP, OR SWOOP CHECKING IN OUR ZONE, TAKE THE MAN**

### **In the Neutral Zone**

Prevent them from doing the "give and go". A "give and go" is when one of their players passes to a teammate and after he passes he breaks fast into the open area and gets a return pass. We can prevent this by body checking the player just after he makes the pass so he cannot get the return pass.

Open ice body checking is very difficult to do, so in the neutral zone you have to be very sure their player is lined up and you are 100% sure you can body check him or he will go around you and you will be out of the play.

If it's 3 on 2 in the neutral zone with no forward coming back fast enough, our defenceman should not lunge forward and body check the puck carrier because all that will happen most of the time is they will have a 2 on 1 if the body check was successful and 3 on 1 if it was not.

### **In Their Zone**

The first of our players in their corner body checks their player, the next player of ours takes the puck.

Our defenceman should body check their winger as he gets the puck on a pass up the boards if their player is too high in their zone and close to the blue line, **as long as this stops their player and our defenceman is 100% sure he can stop the puck from advancing up ice**. It does no good to knock their player down and have the puck go by to their centre on a 2 on 1 against us, even if another one of our forwards is trying to come back. Most forwards cannot play defence as



well as most defencemen. If we are losing and need to score a goal, or we are on the power play, we may want to take higher risks at their blue line, but not normally.

### **Getting Position On Them Rather Than Body Checking**

Depending on your skill level (especially skating speed), size and strength, compared with the opposition, one very effective way of playing physical without heavy body checking is to take their players space away while he is carrying the puck by skating in front of him, lifting his stick and taking the puck while making slight contact with the front of his body making him lose his balance for a second.

Some coaches want heavy hitting all the time, some to “intimidate” us, but taking the puck away from them or making them lose the puck is what counts because we won’t be intimidated.