



“Every position on the team is important, but not many teams win championships that don’t have wingers who are strong physically along the boards, in front of their net and in their corners, and/or can really score”

ALL ZONES – RESPONSIBILITIES OF A WINGER

As so many suggestions and instructions are given to players by parents and different coaches over the years, in pieces, I have found it to be useful for learning, reinforcement and feedback from the players, to have the basic 5 on 5 responsibilities of the winger position set out in one place.

Give your wingers an outline like this, let them read it, ask questions about it, modify it, and then go over it on a hockey board with them one-on-one in an interactive way zone by zone separating the discussion around when we have the puck and when we don’t. Then give them feedback in practices, games and off ice video and “talk hockey” meetings. Keep reinforcing the responsibilities over and over with them one-on-one and you will see gradual progress.

Make sure they understand by having them tell you what they would do in various situations and what their other options are.

For people who think playing the wing is easy, read this, think about the speed at which hockey is played and the speed at which decisions have to be made by the players without the benefit of being able to see the whole ice as coaches and parents can from the sidelines.

Power plays, penalty kills, faceoffs and some other specialty plays are dealt with in other TIPS on this site, not in this TIP.

GENERALLY

- A winger needs to turn on high speed with 3 quick first steps in some situations, take almost stationary positioning in others, and sometimes skate at moderate speed timing the offensive or defensive play he will have to make
- He maintains his proper position in each zone for the type of plays that are happening whether we have the puck or not, or rotates with his other linemates when needed for defensive coverages or to get open with speed
- He must be fast enough to backcheck and forecheck effectively
- He checks strongly and fearlessly “Under His Stick- Body – Puck” whenever he can to win the puck, particularly at the ½ boards in our end and in their corners
- He is a good quick snap, ½ slap shot shooter and passer and can find the open player to pass to while accelerating
- He explodes into open areas particularly in the neutral zone
- He plays give and go hockey
- He goes to the net fearlessly and screens their goalie



IN OUR ZONE WHEN THEY HAVE THE PUCK

- Covers their defenceman on his side at the point far enough away from him (about 10 feet) to be able to react to emergencies down low, but close enough to their defenceman to prevent a pass going to him on either of his sides, and if the pass gets to this defenceman forces him to get rid of the puck quickly, preventing a shot on our net
- Blocks or deflects their defenceman's shot by placing his stick out close to the puck when he is shooting
- Finishes the check on their defenceman at the blue line after he has just shot to prevent the full stick follow through taking speed off his shot, and making this defenceman hesitant to take the same shot the next time
- Doesn't worry about down low because that is our defencemen's and centre's responsibilities unless there is an emergency with one of our players caught out of position or fallen down and they are going to get a great chance to score on us

IN OUR ZONE DOWN LOW WHEN WE HAVE OR ARE ABOUT TO GET THE PUCK FOR SURE

- Releases his coverage of their defenceman at the point to go to the ½ boards in our end and curls away from the boards ready to take the pass (stick on the ice giving the target) from our player down low on his side if there is time and space for this play, and then makes another pass up ice to one of our open forwards
- If there is no time for the above to happen because all our player down low can do is pass the puck hard around the boards, our winger must take the pass on the ½ boards stationary or in motion (depending on what their defenceman is doing) facing the blue line and quickly decide either to:
 1. Chip the puck out over the blue line off the boards to our centre in the neutral zone past their defenceman who is at the blue line or who is skating towards our player – usually safe unless their defenceman is hugging the boards and if he is the chip pass will not get through
 2. Pass the puck to our centre just over our blue line in the middle – usually safe and at least the puck is out of our zone
 3. Shoot the puck out hard as no one is open – very safe
 4. Freeze the puck at the boards by putting it between his skates because he can't shoot it out or pass it out safely – very safe



5. Pass or chip the puck to our centre coming up beside and fairly close to him in our zone – very dangerous play if not successful
 6. Pass the puck to our far side winger cutting across the middle in the neutral zone – need time and space but very good if it can work
 7. Carry or stickhandle the puck out himself – very dangerous if checked
 8. Pass the puck back to our player down low – very dangerous most of the time
 9. Skate back down low with the puck – very dangerous most of the time
- If the puck is shot around the boards on our goalie's right hand side to our right winger at the ½ boards, our left winger, if he sees that the pass to our right winger at the ½ boards will work and our right winger will have time and space to receive the pass and then make a pass, our left winger can leave his coverage of their defenceman and immediately cut into the centre over our blue line between their defencemen or up the boards in the neutral zone for a pass
 - If in any of the above plays the puck is kept in, the wingers resume their defensive coverages of the other team's defencemen

IN THE NEUTRAL ZONE WHEN THEY HAVE THE PUCK

- If the player with the puck is on your side, aggressively attack using the Under His Stick-Body-Puck tactic, and win the puck battle – don't wait for someone else to do it
- If the player with the puck is on the other side of the ice from your wing, stay back a little bit and don't cross the centre of the ice normally to help win the puck because that will expose the whole of your side of the ice for a pass to their winger on that side if they win the puck. By staying back a bit, if they win the puck we will have 3 players back
- Be aware of where the winger playing opposite of you is so you can cover him if he skates quickly into an open space for a pass
- If they pass D to D and you are the closest to the puck carrier on your side, challenge their D quickly to intercept a pass or make him make a bad pass
- If they start a neutral zone regroup, stay on your side and pick up one player going up ice coming onto your side in the regroup and stay with him

IN THE NEUTRAL ZONE WHEN WE HAVE THE PUCK

- If you win the puck on your side of the ice, you have a number of options depending on the situation:
 1. Immediately take 3 quick steps forward into an open space separating yourself from any opposition with your head up looking to make a pass or continue to



carry the puck – do this every time if there is time and space – all options are then open

2. If no time or space and if you are over the red line shoot the puck in on net or into one of their corners depending on where your other teammate forwards are
 3. If no time or space or if our wide side winger is open cutting in or hugging the wide side boards, immediately pass to our wide side winger and join the rush
 4. If no time or space or if our centre is open cutting into an open space immediately pass to our centre and join the rush
 5. If no time or space, and particularly when you win the puck facing your own net, pass back to our defenceman to start a neutral zone regroup see **NEUTRAL ZONE – THE REGROUP**
- If we win the puck on the other side of the ice from where you are, you have a number of options depending on the situation:
 1. curl towards the weak side boards away from the puck and the player traffic, and position yourself wide almost against the boards on the other side skating hard up ice anticipating a pass to you with your stick on the ice as a target – many times you will be wide open
 2. cut up ice from where you are into an open space anticipating a pass to you or a shoot in so you will hit their blue line at full speed
 3. receive a pass immediately and carry the puck or play give and go

IN THE OFFENSIVE ZONE WHEN WE HAVE THE PUCK

- Shoot from everywhere thinking in advance where you want the puck to go, and go to the net for your own rebound
- When you see one of your teammates is going to shoot, go to the net hard for the rebound and stay in front trying to score until the puck is cleared, not a one stab “fly by”
- If you have the puck coming over their blue line at high speed beat their D wide and go to the net yourself, shoot or pass back to the deep slot to your centre, other winger or D coming late before or after going around their net – see 3 on 2’s, 2 on 1’s and other **OFFENSIVE ZONE** plays on this web site
- If no room or pass available shoot the puck in and go get it
- If the outside is blocked off cut into the middle and try to set up a drop pass or just shoot



- With puck possession down low, set up the offensive triangle with your centre and other winger using behind the net as well, give and goes and cycling until one player is in a good scoring position in the slot or for a wrap around and crash the net

IN THE OFFENSIVE ZONE WHEN THEY HAVE THE PUCK

- Forecheck – see the various forechecking systems on this web site
- On the 2 – 1 – 2 forecheck:
 - If you are first player in on your side maintain high speed and the angle you want so you can influence that the way their D will go is up the same side boards where all the traffic is. Use the Under His Stick - Body – Puck tactic to strip him of the puck – finish the check - our second player in will pick up the puck if you don't. If you can't get close enough to him to do that place your stick in his expected passing lane to try to deflect the possible pass and make sure you don't go for any fakes so he can beat you one on one
 - If you are second player in watch for any D to D behind the net play and cover their open D immediately or win the puck after our first player has bodychecked their D
 - If you are second player in and can see our first player in will not get to their player in the corner in time to stop a same side pass to their winger at the half boards and no D to D is set up intercept the pass up the same side boards
 - If you are 3rd player in you are the back up high you can choose what side they are likely going to go to and go there when they do or anticipate their play
 - If our D pinches at or below their blue line and you are our high player on the forecheck then you must get back fast and play D
 - If they start to try to skate or stickhandle out of their zone in front of their net on your side you stop him even if you just run into him – no sweep checks hoping to make contact – make contact!

MAKE SOMETHING HAPPEN – NO HESITATION