



“When they have the puck, take the body first, and then get the puck”

## NEUTRAL ZONE – TAKE THE BODY

So many teams give up the neutral zone by playing the puck, trying to stick check instead of body checking their player so that he loses control of the puck. This will allow one of our players to pick up the loose puck. If we do that consistently our players will anticipate this will happen and position themselves to gain puck control.

We want our forwards to be body checking effectively in the neutral zone, not our defencemen most of the time, because if our defenceman misses the check or their forward passes off, an odd man rush or worse may result unless one of our forwards is back checking hard.

If all of our forwards are in the neutral zone the left-winger takes the left side of the ice, the centre man the centre, and the right-winger the right side, bottling them up completely.

If two forwards are in the neutral zone, divide the ice in half.

If one forward only is there, body check their player with the puck wherever he is in the neutral zone.

Their forwards will be trying to move fast, probably in open spaces in the neutral zone, so when our forward lines their player up for a body check, our player’s focus should be on the centre of their player’s chest for the body check – no where else. This will help prevent our player from reacting to shoulder or head fakes, side-to-side puck movements, between our player skates puck movements, or between our players stick and skates puck movements.

Remember, too, to anticipate their passes and take the ice away from them before they move into open areas.

## **DON’T LOOK AT THE PUCK, JUST TAKE THE BODY**

### **TELL YOURSELF HE IS NOT GOING TO GET BY YOU AND DO IT!**

Even if you can’t execute a completely clean body check, make sure you somehow get your stick under his so that he loses control of the puck. Maintain your speed as you go into him, with your skates wide apart for stability so you will not just bounce off or be deflected off by his aggressive bracing action. Finish the check.

You don’t have to hammer him to make this work effectively. You don’t even have to knock him off his skates, just knock him off the puck. In fact, if you do body check him too hard you may hurt yourself more than him or wear yourself down as the game goes along.



This “take the body” tactic will be particularly effective in stopping their short passes in the neutral zone. After doing this for a while to their players, they will start to become very aware that our body check will be coming. They will as they say be on their heels, leaning back anticipating the check. They will be unable to play effective hockey this way. A probable result will be they will start messing up making and receiving passes unless they are very used to the neutral zone “take the body” tactic.

By the way, to beat this tactic when applied against us, win the red line, shoot the puck into their zone and go get it.