

NSWC INITIATION HOCKEY COACHING MANUAL



Introduction

At U7 & U9 the focus for coaches is to provide a positive experience for young hockey players. The initiation program at the Club is designed to provide a quality experiences, including providing a safe environment for the introduction of fundamental skills.

Developing an understanding of basic teamwork through structured activities and game-like situations. Introducing participants to fair and cooperative play. Refining basic motor patterns and building self-confidence. Providing an environment that challenges individuals positively and rewards the participants. Providing opportunities to build a lifestyle of fitness and activity. Although U7 and U9 hockey is designed for athletes to have fun, develop their skills, and make relationships, this is still a very important part of their overall development as a hockey player and athlete. This portion of their skill development should be delivered through a progressive, learn-to-play teaching curriculum Children learn best through practice drills and skill sessions, as well as informal activates like open hockey, freeze tag, or different forms races or obstacle courses.

Key Coaching Points

The skills of skating, puck control, passing and shooting are introduced, but coaches shouldn't feel rushed or obligated to incorporate each of those skills into a practice plan.

Coaches should find 1 – 2 skills or themes for a practice at this age and build out a practice plan where individuals can work on those skills in a comfortable manner and should be pushed as practice goes on to try new things and get out of their comfort zone. Practices

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need to focus on skills that are translatable within the game of hockey i.e. tight turns, stopping and starting, crossovers, passing. Players are still in their FUNdamental stage in hockey and therefore should avoid drills that replicate PEP or complicated patterns but focus more on puck handling in a traditional sense. The goal should have fun and develop their skills, but the early years of hockey should also allow youngsters to experience how to listen and focus to instruction, be competitive, and learn how to play within a team sport. As the season progresses on and depending on players skill and comprehension level, coaches can introduce concepts or system through various drills. Allow each player to try different position on these sorts of drills, as these individuals are not hockey players yet, but just kids who play hockey, and should be introduced to different perspectives. Coaches need to plan practices accordingly to ensure players are not standing in lines or not moving regularly. As well, coaches need to avoid over explaining drills. At this age we want to see those individuals moving as much as they can on the ice and become more comfortable on skates. Skill development can be created through various ways to ensure the kids are having fun and still developing at the same time. Coaches can use obstacle races to work through various skills, while creating a competitive environment for our athletes.

Core 4 Skills

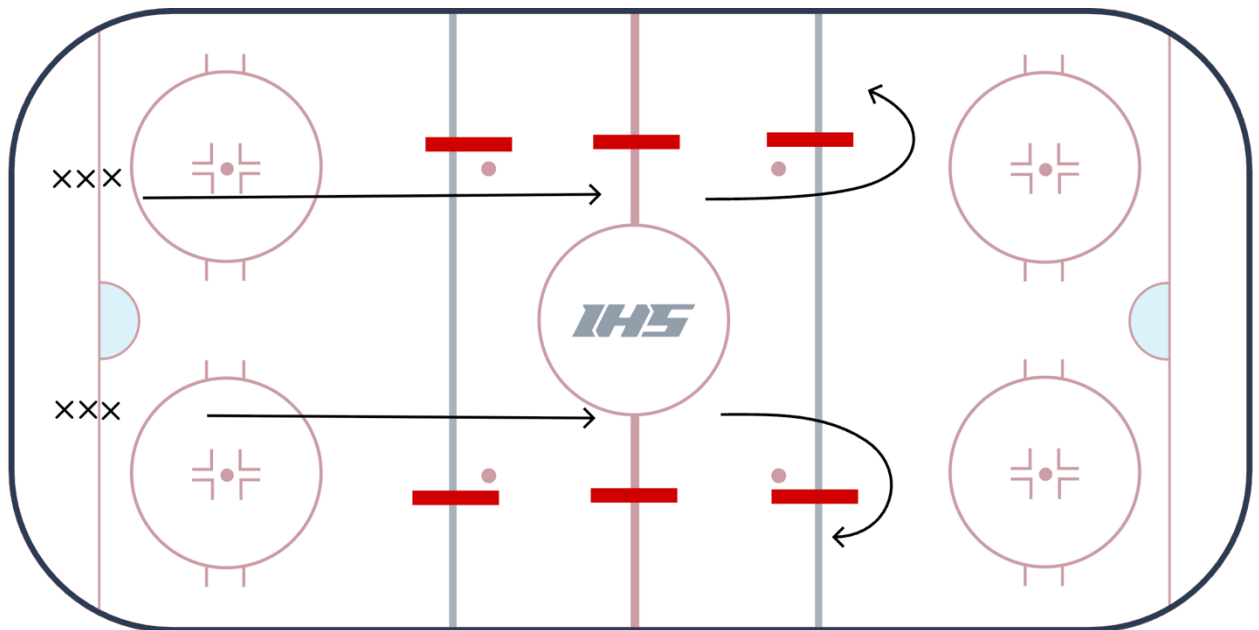
- **Fundamental movement skills: striding, turning, stopping**
- **Puck skills: shooting, passing, puck control**
- **Motor skills: agility, balance, coordination**
- **Mental skills: teamwork, competitiveness, confidence, positivity, focus**

Coaching Expectations

- **Positive & Safe Environment**
- **Positive Energy, Care & Passion**
- **Equal Opportunity**
- **Patient**
- **Correcting Behavior**
- **Competitive & Fun Environment**
- **Prepared**

Drill Templates

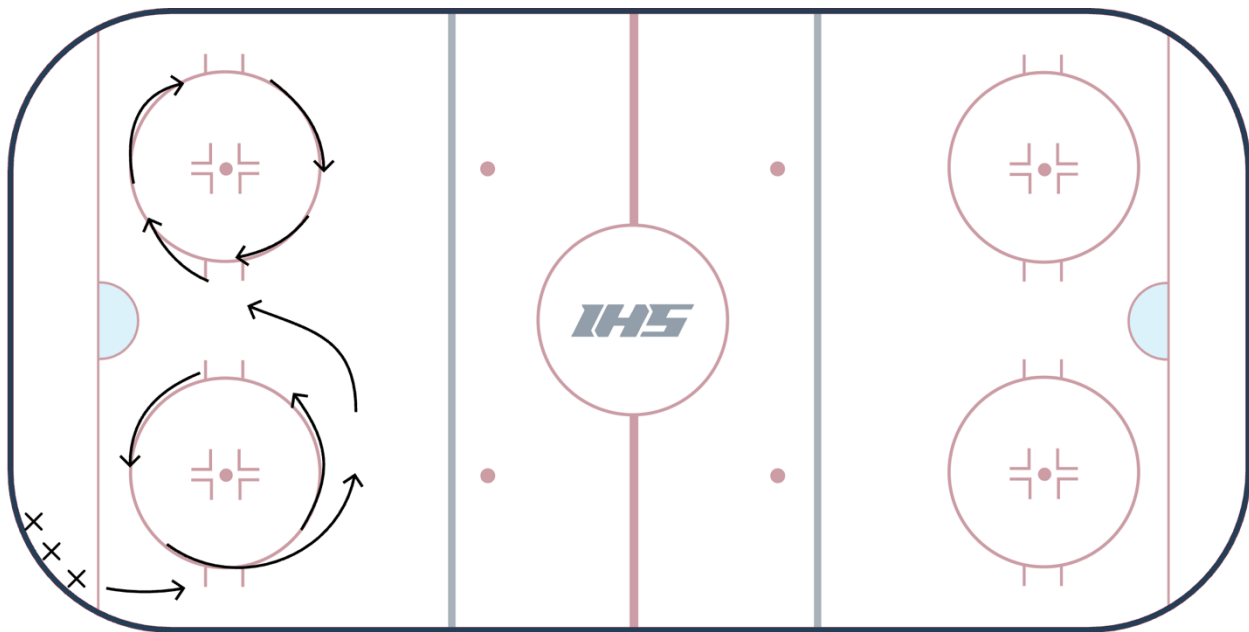
Skating Warmup



This warmup should focus on developing fundamental skating skills through repetition, balance, and edge control. Players will skate forward through the series of pads while performing a designated skating skill between each obstacle. Coaches can vary the skill based on the group's ability level, including single-leg edge holds, inside and outside edge leans, two-foot jumps, stops and starts, quick feet, or balance exercises. Once players reach the final pad, they will execute a turn around the cone and skate back to the starting line. The emphasis should be on proper skating posture, knee bend, balance, and controlled movement rather than speed. Encourage players to maintain good technique

throughout the drill and challenge them to stay balanced and in control while navigating the obstacles. This station is designed to build confidence on their edges and establish strong skating fundamentals. Coaches can shift from skating drills into puck handling using the same set up.

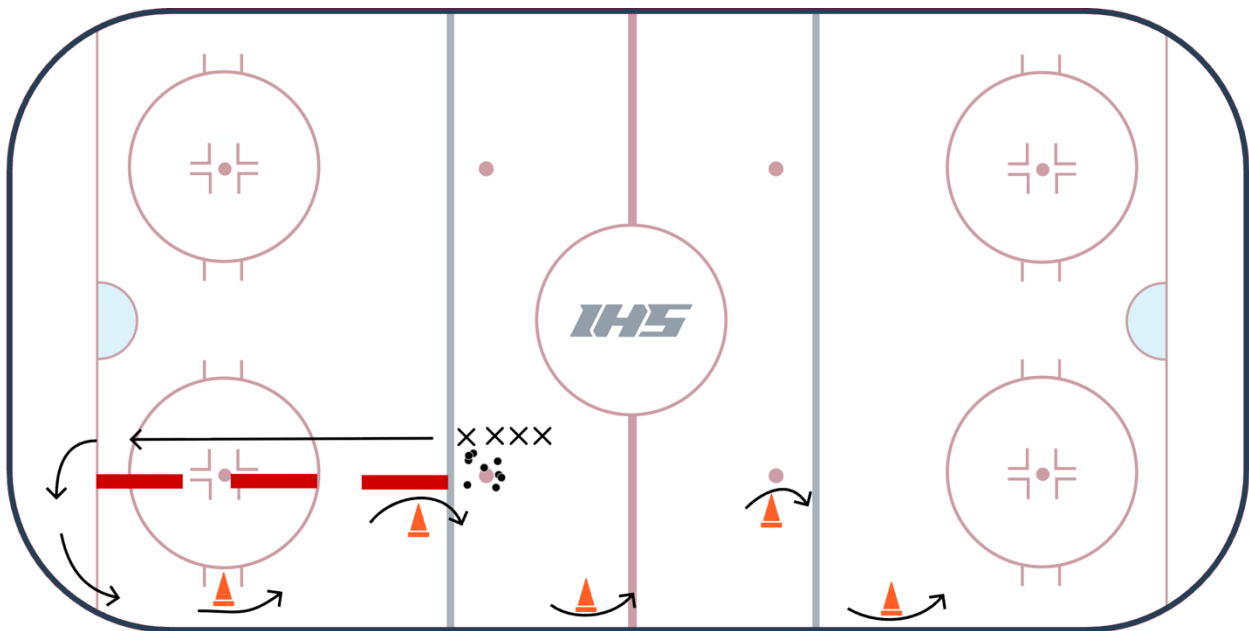
Tops & Bottoms



This drill is designed to develop skating fundamentals by having players continuously skate around the outside of both faceoff circles while focusing on balance, edge control, and proper skating mechanics. Players begin at the bottom circle, complete a full lap around the outside edge, transition to the top circle, complete another lap, and then return to the back of the line. Coaches can adjust the skating skill being performed around each circle based on the age and skill level of the group. For U7 players, the primary focus should be

on inside and outside edge control, forward crossovers, balance, and body positioning through turns. Encourage athletes to maintain a good hockey stance, keep their knees bent, and use powerful pushes while leaning into the circles. As players become more comfortable, coaches can introduce more advanced skills such as backward skating, backward crossovers, mohawks, one-foot edge holds, or transitions. The goal is to build strong skating habits and confidence while maximizing repetitions in a fun and engaging environment. Once comfortable with the skating components, coaches can add pucks to players sticks.

Skating Weave

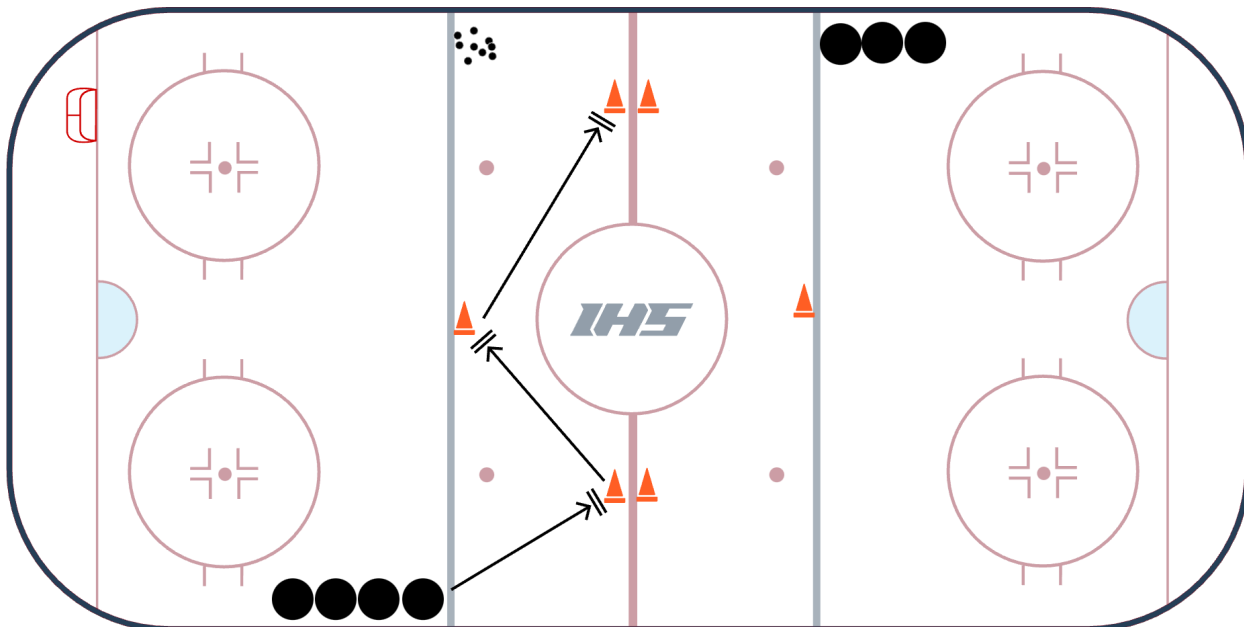


This drill is designed to develop edge control, balance, agility, and skating efficiency through a series of tight turns around cones. Players begin at the starting line and weave through each cone while maintaining speed and control. The focus should be on proper

body lean, knee bend, and using crossovers to generate power coming out of each turn.

Players should stay low, keep their head up, and drive through their edges as they navigate the course. Coaches can easily modify the drill based on age and skill level by adjusting the spacing of the cones or changing the required skating skill at each marker. For younger players, the emphasis should be on tight turns, edge work, and crossover mechanics. As players progress, coaches can incorporate additional skills such as quick hands around the cones, stops and starts, one-foot edge holds, transitions, or puck control. The goal is to maximize repetitions while helping athletes become more comfortable using their edges and maintaining balance through changes of direction.

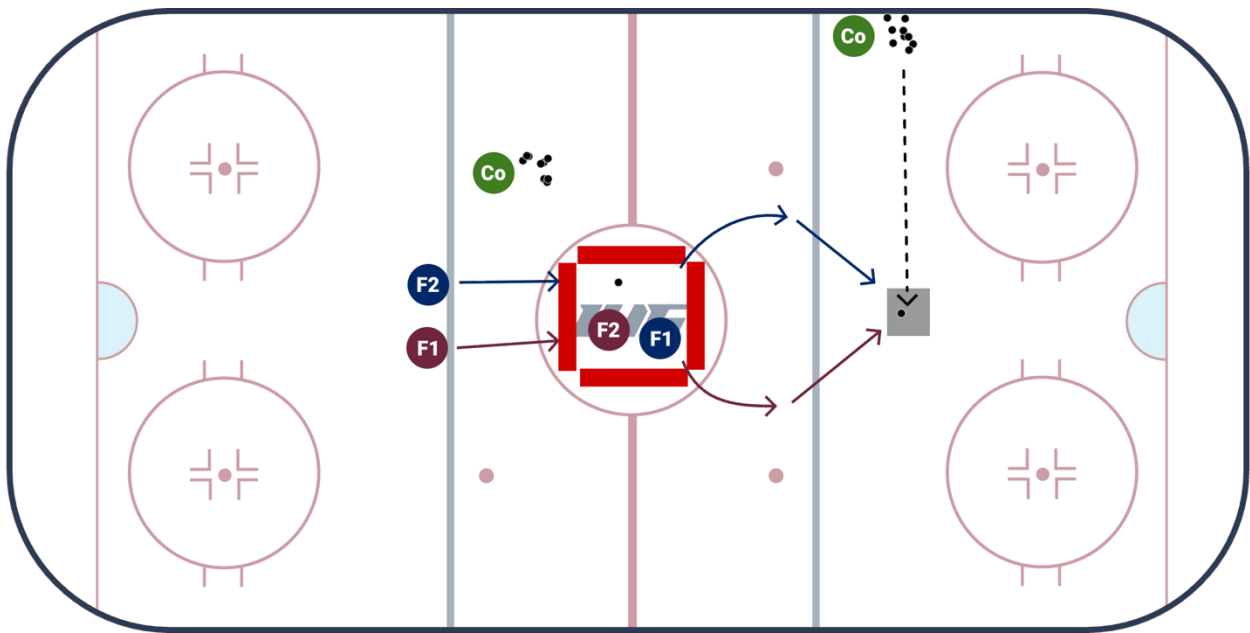
Blue to Red Line Stopping and Starting



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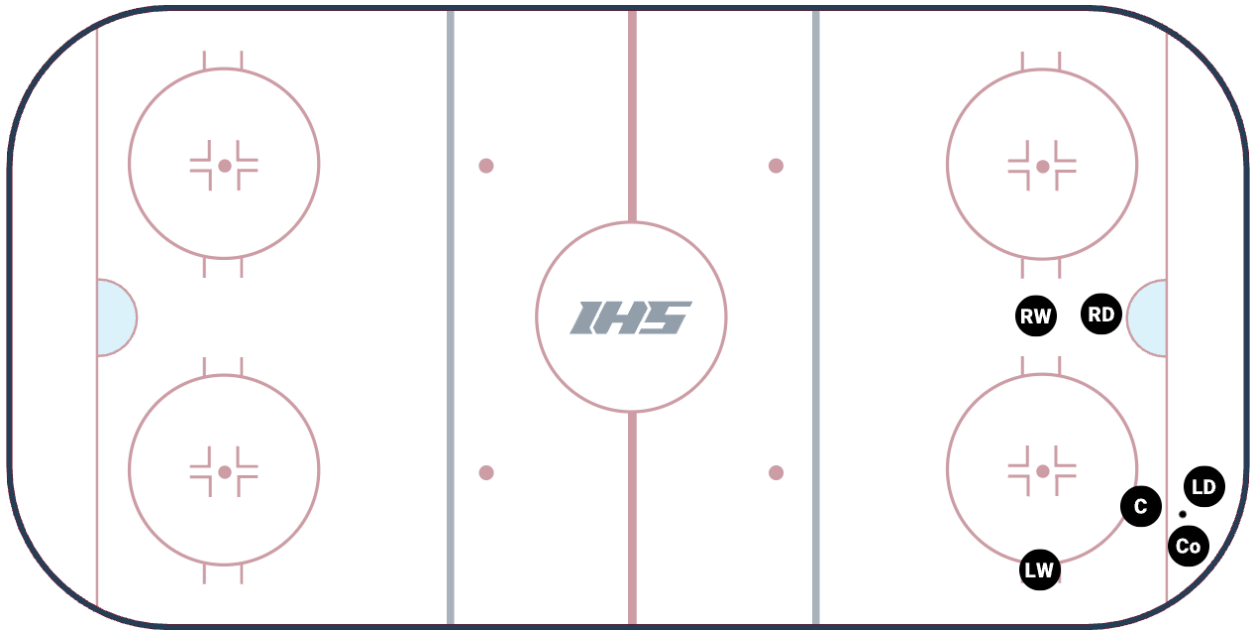
This drill is designed to develop players' ability to execute controlled two-foot stops and tight turns while reinforcing proper skating fundamentals. Throughout the sequence, players will focus on acceleration, deceleration, explosive first three strides, and efficient stop-and-start mechanics. Players begin by skating to each marker and performing either a two-foot stop or a tight turn, ensuring they finish each stop facing the direction of the net they will eventually shoot on. After each stop, players accelerate to the next station. Upon completing the third stop or turn, they pick up a puck and finish with a shot on goal. The drill can be easily adapted based on age and skill level. Younger players may complete the drill without a puck to emphasize skating technique, while more advanced players can carry a puck throughout the drill or receive a pass from the coach before shooting. To increase the challenge, coaches can replace the stops with advanced edge work, such as stopping into a 360-degree turn using the inside edges before accelerating to the next station.

Box Battle Drill



This drill develops puck protection, body positioning, and compete level in a confined space before transitioning to a race for possession. Two players begin outside the battle box, on the whistle race into the box to locate the puck. Focusing on competing for body position and puck control. On the coach's whistle, a puck is spotted outside the box, and both players immediately explode out to race for possession. The player who wins the puck attacks the net to score, while the other player applies pressure and competes to regain possession. Encourage players to keep their feet moving, use strong body positioning, and transition quickly from battling to attacking. This drill builds competitiveness, acceleration, and game-like decision-making in a high-tempo environment.

Defensive Zone Coverage



For U7–U9 players, it's best to keep defensive zone positioning simple. Rather than teaching a complex zone defense, focus on protecting the middle of the ice, staying between your player and the net, and supporting teammates.

Basic Defensive Zone Positioning

Centre (C) Plays low in the defensive zone and supports both defencemen. Covers the slot and helps in front of the net. Picks up the opposing centre or any player entering the middle of the ice. Be the first forward back to support the defence.

Left Defence (LD) Protects the front of the net and the left side of the defensive zone.

Battles for pucks in the left corner when they are on their side. Keeps opposing forwards away from the crease. Makes the first pass after gaining possession.

Right Defence (RD) Mirrors the left defenceman on the opposite side. Protects the right corner and the front of the net. Maintains net-front positioning and supports breakouts.

Left Wing (LW) Covers the opposing defenceman at the left point. Stays high enough to prevent point shots while being ready for a breakout pass. Supports the puck when it moves up the boards.

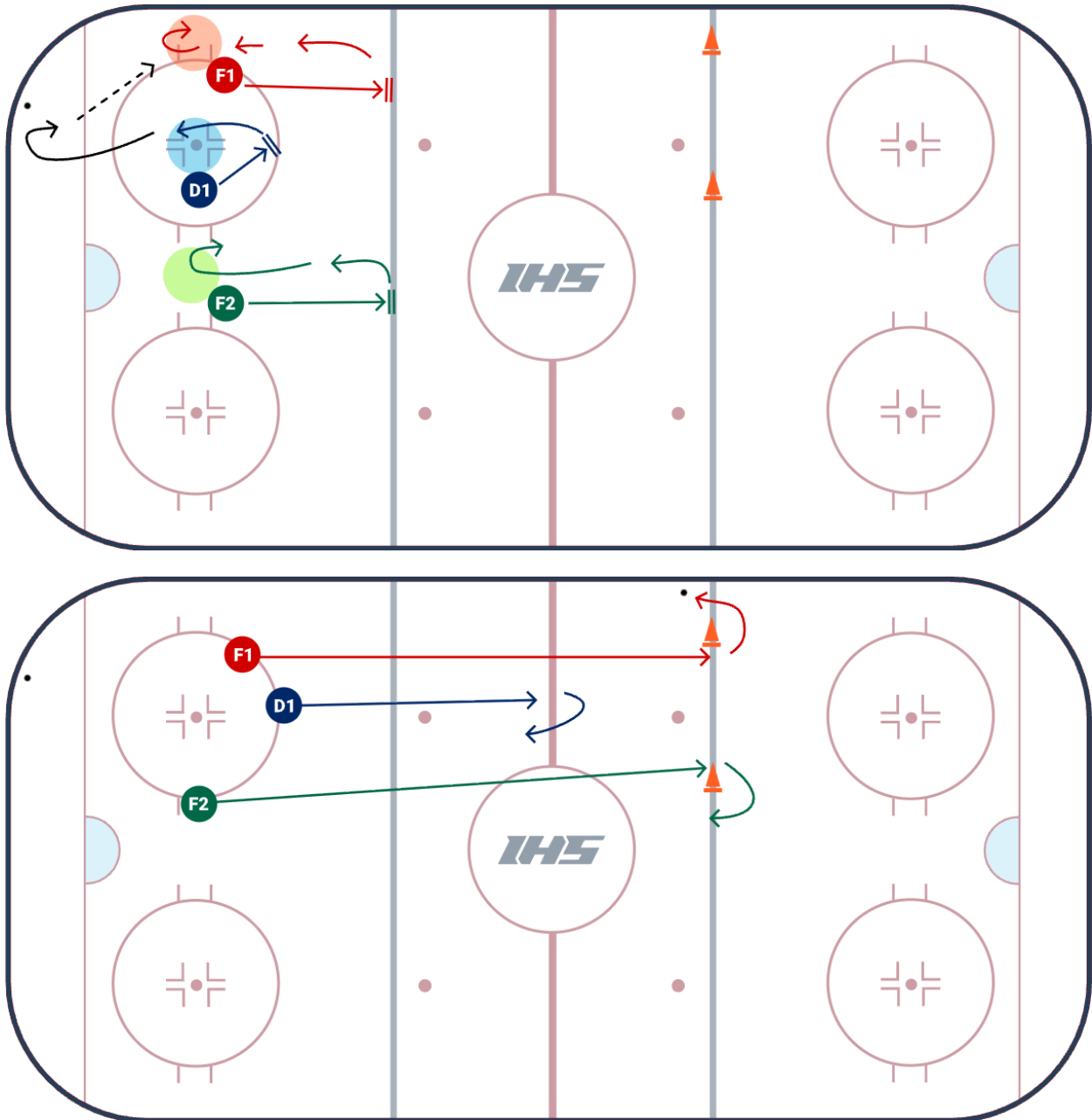
Right Wing (RW) Covers the opposing defenceman at the right point. Helps along the boards when the puck is on their side. Becomes an outlet option once possession is won.

Team Concepts

- Protect the middle first. The slot is the most dangerous area.
- Stay between your player and the net.
- Support the puck. The closest player pressures while teammates provide support.
- Communicate. Let teammates know when they have time or pressure.

Quick transition. Once possession is won, move the puck to open teammates and exit the zone.

2 on 1 Drill



To teach defensemen quick puck movement into the breakout, then immediate gap control for defending a 2-on-1. Forwards work on timing, support, and creating quality scoring chances off the rush.

Setup:

1. Position two forwards (F1 and F2) on the outside side of the circle
2. Place one defenseman D1 on face off dot

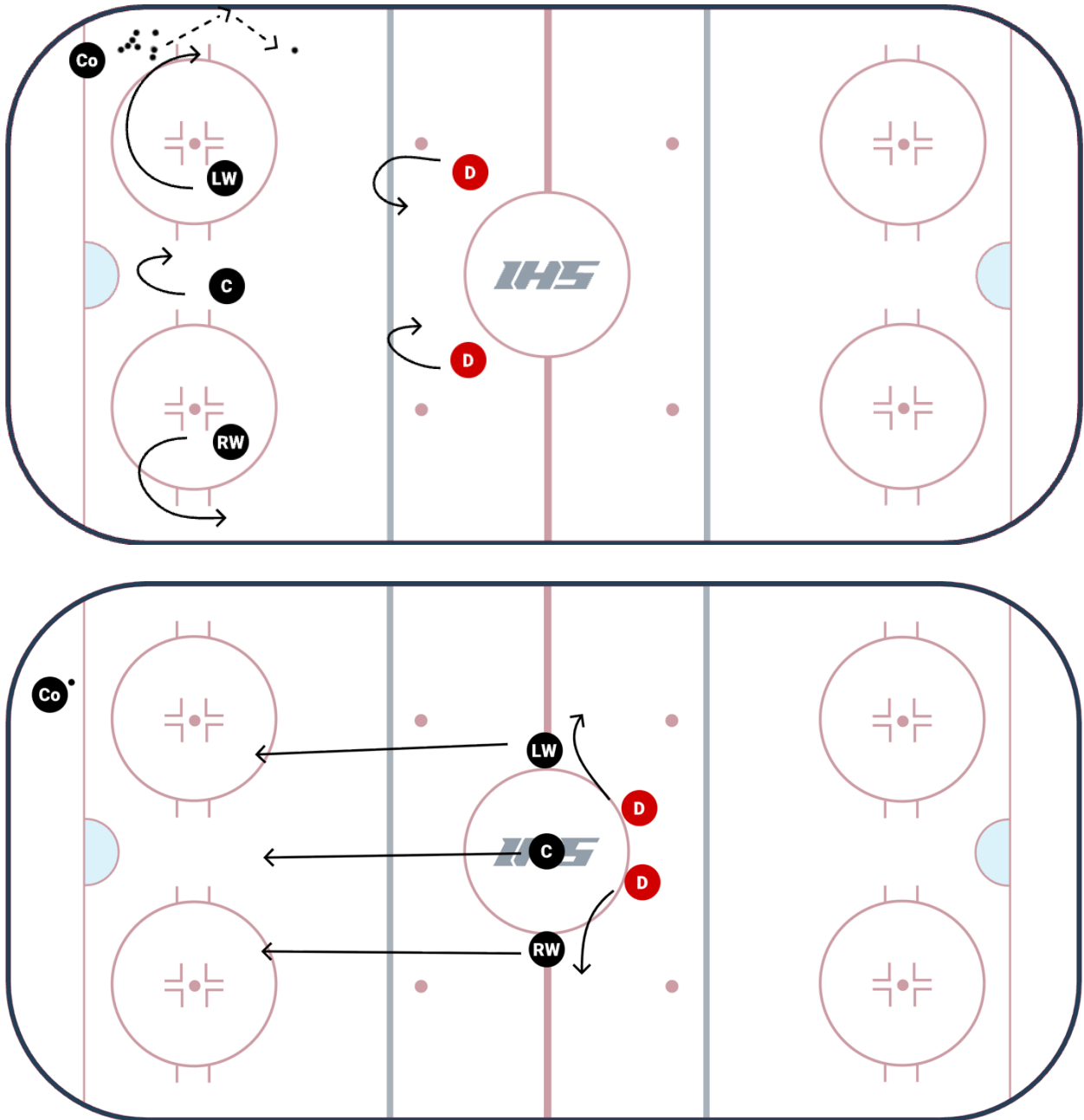
Execution:

- On the whistle, F1 or F2 skate to the blue line and stop, D1 skates to the top of the circle to retrieve the puck
- Both forwards turn back and F1 acts as the winger anchoring and opening up, while F2 fills in the middle lane as the centremen
- D1 goes back to retrieve, gets on their front foot, and makes a breakout pass to either F1 or F2.
- After receiving the pass, F1 or F2 skates towards far blue line
- D1 skates up to the red line to close their gap, preparing to defend the upcoming 2-on-1.

Coaching Points:

- Forwards: Attack with speed, make quick reads, and support each other's lanes.
- Defense: Maintain tight gap, stick in passing lanes, take away the middle lane, and force the shot from the outside

3 – 0 + 3 on 2 Transition



This drill begins with three forwards attacking 3-on-0, with the objective of moving the puck quickly and ensuring all three players touch the puck before crossing the blue line. Once each player has made a pass, the coach spots or bumps a second puck into the play, creating a live 3-on-2 rush against two defenders. Forwards should focus on puck

movement, supporting the puck carrier, and reading and reacting to the developing play. Encourage players to create passing lanes, communicate, and time their routes to make themselves available for passes rather than skating into covered areas.

The two defencemen transition into the rush, learning how to establish an effective gap while defending a numerical disadvantage. Defenders should pivot early, stay inside the dots, and protect the middle of the ice. Rather than chasing the puck carrier, they should remain patient, work together to take away passing lanes, and gradually eliminate the forwards' time and space. The goal is to force the attack to the outside and limit high-quality scoring opportunities while maintaining strong defensive positioning.