

Tucker Hockey Initiatives

For the Betterment of the Game

The objective of this Hockey Zones section is to always offer ways to improve our great game. This installment will focus on the following topic.

NHL Scoring Woes Continue

“For the fourth consecutive 82 game season, the NHL has failed to top 6,600 goals scored. More troubling is this year’s total is a whopping 858 goals less than 2005 - 2006, when the NHL revamped its rules to eliminate clutching and grabbing in a bid to open up offence. What’s happened since is coaches have adapted to the new rules by devising ways to clog up the area in front of the net, and teaching defenders to steer puck – carriers toward the boards without drawing interference penalties.”

Source: The Associated Press.

Here is some thinking outside of the box to create more offense in our game especially at the NHL level. The game’s rules and happenings at the NHL level will often filter down to the lower levels of hockey.

Reduce Goalie Gear Size

After a great deal of deliberation, the NHL will finally reduce the size of the goalie equipment for next season. For the last 100 years the size of the nets has not increased but the overall size of the goalies and their equipment has certainly gotten larger. The skill level is so much better at this position now and with the increase in equipment size it’s been very difficult for shooters to score. This initiative should help to some degree with the scoring woes.

All Penalties Served in their Entirety

Back in the 1940’s such was the case. However, the Montreal Canadiens had such a lethal power play the NHL changed their rules. Going back to the old format of teams serving the mandatory full 2 minutes regardless of how many power play goals scored will create more goals and teams will play a cleaner brand of hockey. It will reward teams who have more offensive creativity and effective power play units.

3 Points for a Regulation Win

The International Ice Hockey Federation has used the 3 point system with great success for many years now. 3 points for a regulation win and 2 points for overtime win. With an extra point on the line it should motivate teams to play to win and not play not to lose. This would generate more of a puck pursuit pressure game and less of a defensive posture containment game. More excitement for the fans and increased offensive flare and goal production is the objective.

Ban the Neutral Zone Trap - Team Play Tactic

The New Jersey Devils took the trap to another level in the mid 90’s however it had been around for many years prior. Being passive and playing containment hockey by blocking up the neutral zone produces low scoring and boring hockey. Why not implement rules and penalties to force all teams to pressure the puck, puck pursuit and play a “set the pace” game. If teams do not fore-check aggressively with 3 players below the opponents blue line they will receive a 2 minute penalty each time there’s a violation. Being short handed will force teams to switch from a containment mode to pressure mode style of play. We need more North - South flow in our game. Even though it was a tough loss, it was a joy to watch the USA vs. Canada Women’s WHC Gold medal game in April 2016. Lots of excitement!! Such end to end game action – reminded me of watching one of the NHL classic games from the 1960’s when the games had a greater flow.

Player Changes Only on the Fly

This measure will allow less structure and more flow within the game. Coaches will be less able to match up lines and suppress offensive creativity in the game. Creating a little more “run and gun” and yes – on ice action and excitement! This will prevent coaches from devising ways to clog up the net and slot zone (prime scoring areas), tired players can’t change up and it will allow more breakdowns, scoring opportunities and goals.

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Make the Rinks Bigger

The standard NHL arena is 200 feet in length and 85 feet wide while the international surface is 200 feet in length and 100 feet wide. That is a difference of 3,000 square feet. The extra area should allow the more skilled and faster players to generate more offense. This size increase will only work if the coaching strategies do not include trapping. The 2014 Olympic hockey tournament in Sochi, Russia revealed that the bigger ice does not provide more offensive and entertaining hockey unless the coach's tactics are in line. Hockey lobbyists like Brian Burke and others suggest moving to a hybrid size of 93 feet wide. To make the rinks bigger in the NHL, it's something that should have been done years ago when many of the new rinks were built. To increase the size of the rinks today, this will take millions of capital expenditure dollars by the league and owners as well as result in millions of loss revenue from the hundreds of seats displaced - it will be a very hard sell indeed moving

forward. Especially in the NHL the dollar is king! Remember the size of the NHL rink has not changed in 100 years but the size, and speed of the players has greatly increased. In today's game players are restricted on the same size surface as the pioneers of the game 100 years ago! In today's game, there's very little room available before a puck carrier is checked by an opponent. More time and space for the truly gifted players – will result in more offensive creativity and goals scored but it's a long shot indeed!

In Conclusion:

Keep the dream alive for ways to improve our great game and this certainly starts with more offensive plays, more goals scored and better entertainment value for the fans!

We welcome your opinions and thoughts on the above discussion points, email us at programs@tuckerhockey.com. Tell us what you think! The "best" letter submitted to the editor will receive a hockey prize!