

## THE HALF ICE PRACTICE CHEF

Courtesy of Calgary Hockey Development

There are 10 Key Ingredients a coach should mix into any half ice practice. Collectively these lead to enjoyment and learning for both players and coaches.

1. Coaches should have a minimum of 50 pucks in their bucket.
2. Players must be on time, all the time. Coaches set the standard and lead by example. Parents must be encouraged to buy in.
3. Don't waste ice time stretching. Stretching should be performed in the dressing room prior to the ice time. A good pre-ice stretching routine appears in this manual.
4. The use of stations in practices leads to a dynamic practice. Stations keep participants active enabling them to achieve high levels of repetitions. Have players spend 3-8 minutes per station before switching. 2-3 stations are recommended.
5. Basic skill development (skating, puck control, passing, shooting) should comprise 90% of your practice time. Remember you can work skills in game-like drills. Skill development should not be considered boring.
6. Positive and Specific Feedback are imperative. Consider the head coach who always stands at centre ice and runs drills. How often during the practice is this coach able to effectively teach? Teaching is done in the trenches (corners, lines).
7. Routines in practice are dangerous. Players will pace themselves and become bored very quickly. Routine practices develop great practice players. Strive to change things up, create an element of surprise, utilize variety, and generate enthusiasm. Players also enjoy time on their own. 2-5 minutes per practice should be sufficient. This enables players to be creative and try new things.
8. "TELL ME AND I'LL FORGET, SHOW ME AND I MIGHT REMEMBER, INVOLVE ME AND I'LL UNDERSTAND"
9. **Practice Execution** by coaches is of principle importance. Great drills that aren't executed properly by coaches are useless. Execution involves using all staff on ice, having pucks spotted in the proper areas, informing players of the whistle sequence (1st whistle begin, 2nd whistle stop, 3rd whistle begins next group) and providing appropriate feedback. To assist in practice execution, name your drills ie. "Killer Bees".
10. Relate what you do in **practices to games** and vice versa. "Players, we are doing this drill because in our last game we were unable to finish around the net." Or "this drill will assist you in keeping your stick and body away from the checker and in effective scoring position."

## HALF ICE / SHARED ICE PHILOSOPHY

### HALF-ICE PRACTICES

The most common complaint heard in discussions concerning minor hockey is "there just isn't enough ice time". This complaint is voiced by administrators, coaches, parents and players alike. It seems, however, that when we compare the number of ice facilities that we have in Canada versus other traditional hockey playing nations it is apparent that this complaint is not necessarily valid. Our challenge is that we have large numbers of users, including those who either are not hockey players or are not under the jurisdiction of the minor hockey association. Obviously we need to become much more innovative in our approach to the whole subject of ice utilization.

The Open Ice Summit discussed several issues that have direct relevance to the subject of practice planning including skill development, practice to game ratio, creativity and thinking skills. In order to not risk opportunities to play the game for our youth, the challenge is to come up with alternatives to the usual practice: game structure that a majority of our minor hockey associations operate with. In order to develop skill our players need to practice more often. In order to do this, can each practice be shorter and still be effective? What can we do off the ice to compliment on-ice activities, including skill development, in order to make the on-ice practice more efficient? Can our coaches learn to be more organized and prepared as well as plan better in order to improve practices? What can we do to change the connotation that practice is boring and a necessary evil? Can practice be less structured and still effective? Can half-ice practices have a positive impact or are they a waste? What about shared or combined practices? The answers to these questions are definitely positive, the next step involves implementation. This module on practice planning will supply a number of answers to the implementation process. The advantages of small aside modified games are several:

- FUN !
- promotes skill development; each player is given ample opportunity to skate, shoot, pass, handle the puck, check etc.
- rule modifications can be made depending on what the coach wants to teach, including individual skills and tactics
- players are forced into situations that build read-react abilities (hockey sense)

- puts players into situations that they cannot handle and creates a real “need to know” mentality amongst them (I need to get better at that, how can I ...). Skill and tactical drills that address deficiencies then become an easy sell – they have relevance for the players and they buy in.

## REDUCE THE SPACE, INCREASE THE PACE

### BEST PRACTICES

1. Practice two teams together. Treat the players as one big group as in a hockey school, with 30+ kids and 6 – 8 coaches the ice time can be run very efficiently.
2. Invite another team to your full ice practice and vice versa, that way you get more ice time, but no extra cost. Realistically, professional teams run practices with 23 – 25 players everyday, and they area lot bigger and take up more room than minor hockey players.
3. Practice together for half the practice and then utilize half ice after that. It is a great way to get full ice skating drills in if you need.
4. Ice – Max. This system works by having one team come on the ice by themselves for half an hour having full ice. Then a second team comes on the ice for the second half an hour, thus sharing the ice for the second half hour. Then the first team leaves after the half hour of shared, giving the second team full ice for their second half hour. This enable two teams to utilize 1.5 hours instead of the traditional 2 hours, which over the course of a day or evening, more ice is available.
5. Go watch Midget AAA, Junior or Pro teams warm up before a game. The two full teams on the ice are basically doing two half ice practices. You will see lots of good drills and get some good ideas.

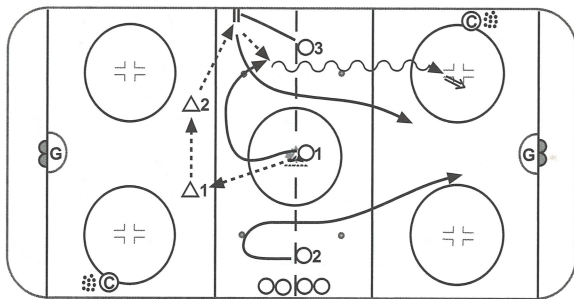
## HOW TO CONVERT FULL ICE TO HALF ICE

From time to time coaches will find themselves in a situation where they have prepared for a full ice practice but find themselves with only a half ice option. Converting a drill from full ice to half ice is a simple task provided that the coach ensures that:

- The objective of the drill is being maintained
- The work to rest ratio (the amount of time the players are active) remains consistent so that the drill maintains the same physical stress
- The key teaching points can be re-enforced by the coach based on the objectives of the drill

Depending upon the above 3 bullets a coach should select which half-ice set-up (as outlined in section 6) is most appropriate for teaching the skills. In certain situations a coach may not have an option on which set-up to use.

The following example is a drill taken from the Pee wee skills manual.

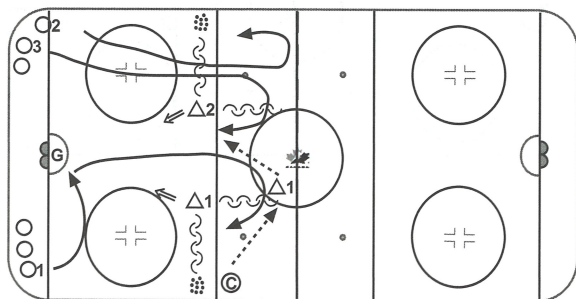


- On coach's whistle, O1 passes to Δ1, Δ1 passes to Δ2 at the far blue line
- O1, O2, O3 regroup with Δ1 and Δ2
- O3 anchors for Δ2, while O1 supports O3 closely and O2 supports through the middle lane
- O1, O2 and O3 attack 3 on 0
- Coach spots the puck and O1, O2, O3 attack Δ1 and Δ2 3 on 2.

### Summary of Drill Objectives:

- Close support of the puck
- Timing to support and present an available target for the pass
- Attack with speed
- Attack options off 3 on 0 and adding defensive resistance with 2nd repetition

Taking these objectives as the basis of drill design the following half ice option has been devised.







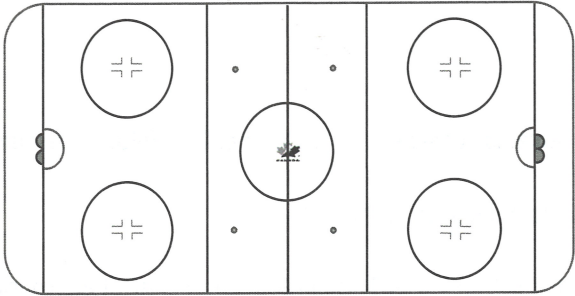
## Half Ice at the Red Line

$\Delta$ 1 drags and shoots – O1 moves from the corner for a tip or deflection.  $\Delta$ 2 drags and shoots – O2 and O3 move from the corner for a tip or deflection. Coach spots a puck in the neutral zone and defensemen move to retrieve the puck and the 3 forwards regroup to attack 3 on 0 off a pass from the  $\Delta$ . If the goalie makes the save he plays the puck to the neutral zone and the 3 forwards retrieve the puck and regroup to attack the original 2 defensemen 3 on 2. If the save is not made by the goalie the coach spots an additional puck to the neutral zone. Play the 3 on 2 until the defensemen clear the puck or a goal is scored.

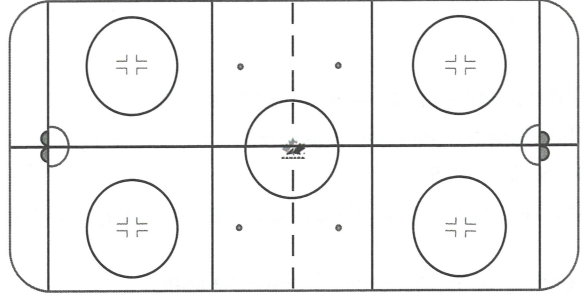


# HALF ICE / SHARED ICE SET UPS

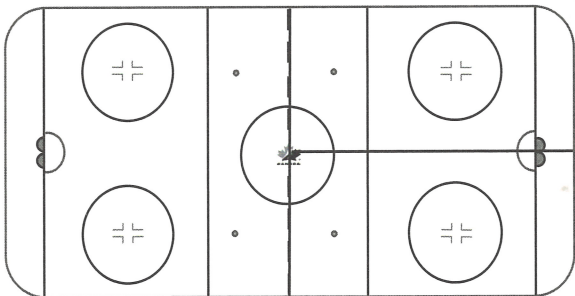
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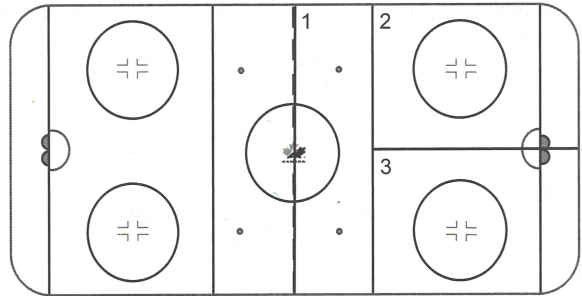
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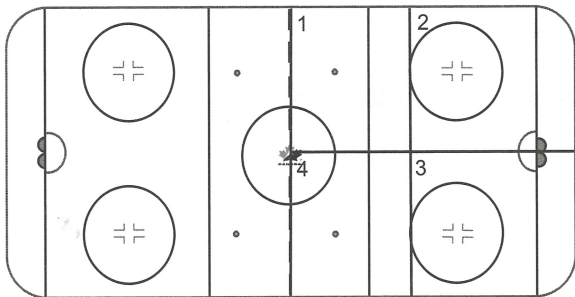
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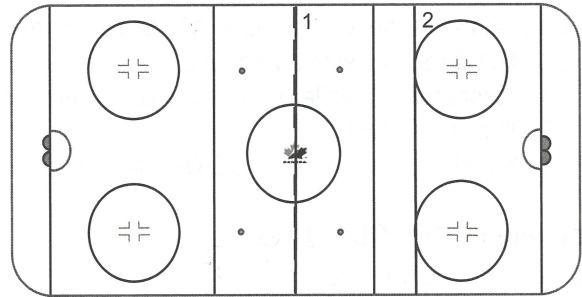
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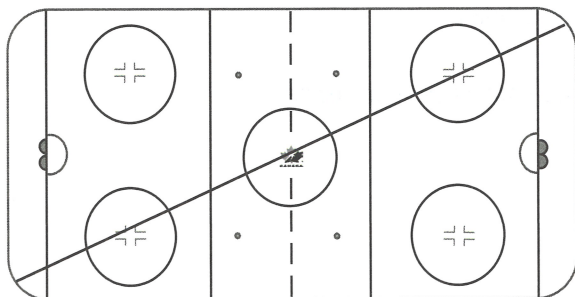
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