



The Key to Success in the “2 and 1” System—The Lone Linesman

Transitional Zone Play Positioning

A strong-skating linesman who has the ability to read the transition from an end zone, through the neutral zone and to the opposing end zone is vital to the success of the 2 Referee/1 Linesman system. Reading plays in advance of fast-moving plays up ice to the far blue line or turnovers that result in a near blue line call can make or break the entire crew.

Quality linesmen will continually read the skill levels, tactics and positioning of both teams throughout the game to aid in the anticipation of potential calling responsibilities at the blue lines. A linesman that can cover responsibilities at both end of the neutral zone effectively frees up the referees to remain focused on potential infractions both within and behind the play.

The factors a linesman should consider when making a decision to hold position or transition to the opposite blue line are:

- 1) The amount of end zone pressure by the fore-checking team - if pressure is low, the team in possession may be able to break out of their own zone.
- 2) Neutral zone positioning of fore-checking team - awareness of potential neutral zone trap formations and the gap between opposing players.
- 3) The skill level of the team or player in possession of the puck

Proper positioning for off-side decisions is just inside the blue line and ahead of the oncoming play. A linesman that is even with or behind an attack should defer the calling responsibility at the blue line to the lead referee. If the lead referee assumes a position

at the blue line for the attacking off-side decision, the linesman should be prepared to take responsibility for the any decisions at the opposite blue line should a turnover occur.

If the linesman is able to read a developing play from the defensive or neutral zone moving into the offensive zone, and skates in advance of the play, the trail referee should be alert to the potential for a turnover to become a breakaway in the other direction. If this occurs, the trail referee will then have calling responsibilities for any attack that challenges the blue line going the other way.

On occasions where the play stalls in the neutral zone, or misplays keep the puck in the neutral zone, the linesman should immediately move to the blue line of his choice by using his best instinct of a potential developing play. The referees will then read their crewmate to determine which will assume the calling responsibility of the opposite line - that is, the referee closest to the opposite line where the linesman is positioned.

A linesman's position in the “no-man's land” of the neutral zone is both dangerous and serves no purpose. Indecisiveness in this decision by the linesman also leads to confusion and can lead to missed blue line calls or the distraction of referee from seeing a potential infraction they normally would get. For the safety of the players, the credibility of the crew and the accuracy of decisions, be the linesman that reads and reacts to developing plays and makes the “2 and 1” system work smoothly.

Something to Consider: A1 plays the puck with his stick while the puck is well over the cross bar of the net. With the puck still in the air, B1 slaps it out towards the neutral zone where A2 is the first to play the puck with his stick. Ruling?

Mechanics: When a close call occurs at the blue line, the official making the call may choose to verbalize the call in order to “sell” the decision and alert players and crewmates of the decision. If a close play is on-side, the official may use “good!” or “no!” while giving the washout signal. For delayed off-side call, the official may verbalize “off!” while making his signal. The use of verbalizations for blue line calls should only be used on close decisions to enhance the an approved signal, not replace it.