



HOCKEY CANADA DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Developing Skilled Defencemen



2020 - 21



INTRODUCTION



**LEAD, DEVELOP AND PROMOTE POSITIVE
HOCKEY EXPERIENCES**



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VISION: WORLD SPORTS LEADERS



WHAT IS THE DEFENCEMAN PATHWAY?

- ❖ Identifying skills needed to develop skilled defensemen
- ❖ Develop an age appropriate program that coincides with the LTAD model.
- ❖ Providing coaches with practical resources to support them throughout the year
- ❖ Encouraging coaches to create a yearly plan to implement defensemen skills in practices



Age Appropriate Development Model

- No position specific specialization until U13 – ie all kids should play all positions through U11
- Young defensemen: focus is on **physical/motor skills – Technical Skills**
- By mid-teens and beyond emphasis for defensemen needs to also include **perception skills** of anticipation and reaction and the **cognitive aspects** of team play and strategy

WHAT IS THE DEFENCEMAN PATHWAY?

Recommendations

Heavy emphasis on skating fundamentals: defenseman specific into tactical drills

- ❖ Breakouts basics: individual defenseman skills
- ❖ Regroup: basic skills/ support
- ❖ Neutral zone play
- ❖ Defensive zone: 1-1 play
- ❖ Shooting: individual skills



THE OBJECTIVES OF THE DEFENCEMAN PATHWAY

- ❖ Every practice should include some agility skating for defensemen
- ❖ Teach the skating first, introduce the puck and then where possible, add a player/players to interact with
- ❖ Use drills that simulate game situations as much as possible

Defensemen need to be good all-round skaters

- ❖ These are skating skills that benefit all players
- ❖ As players get older, the game tends to become more position specific and focus may shift to practicing these skills



SEASONAL STRUCTURE

SEPTEMBER

-Technical Skills - Introduce

Skating
-Agility
-Balance
-Coordination
Puck Control
-Efficiency
-Smoothness
-Good first pass
Shooting
-Head up
-Getting pucks through
-Finding the lane
-Basic positional play

OCTOBER

-Technical Skills - Develop

Skating
-Agility
-Balance
-Coordination
Puck Control
Passing
Shooting
-Head up
-Getting pucks through
-Finding the lane
D Zone Coverage
-Straight line skating
-Shading
-Basic positional play

NOVEMBER

-Technical Skills - Develop

Skating
-Agility
-Balance
-Coordination
Puck Control
Retrievals
Passing
Partner Support
1 on 1's
Shooting
-Head up
-Getting pucks through
-Finding the lane
D Zone Coverage

DECEMBER

Technical Skills – Refine

Skating
-Agility
-Balance
-Coordination
Puck Control
Retrievals
Passing
1 on 1's
Shooting
-Head up
-Getting pucks through
-Finding the lane
D Zone Coverage
Neutral Zone Play
Offensive Play

JANUARY

Technical Skills – Develop / Refine

Skating
-Agility
-Balance
-Coordination
Puck Control
Retrievals
Passing
1 on 1's
Shooting
-Head up
-Getting pucks through
-Finding the lane
D Zone Coverage
Neutral Zone Play
Offensive Play





SEASONAL STRUCTURE

FEBRUARY

Technical Skills – Develop / Refine

- Skating
 - Agility
 - Balance
 - Coordination

- Puck Control
- Retrievals
- Passing
- 1 on 1's
- Shooting
- D Zone Coverage
- Neutral Zone Play
- Offensive Play
- Special Teams

MARCH / APRIL

Technical Skills – Develop / Refine

- Skating
 - Agility
 - Balance
 - Coordination

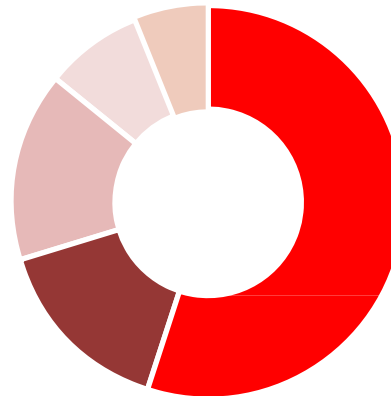
- Puck Control
- Retrievals
- Passing
- 1 on 1's
- Shooting
- D Zone Coverage
- Neutral Zone Play
- Offensive Play

MAY / JUNE / JULY / AUGUST

Off season

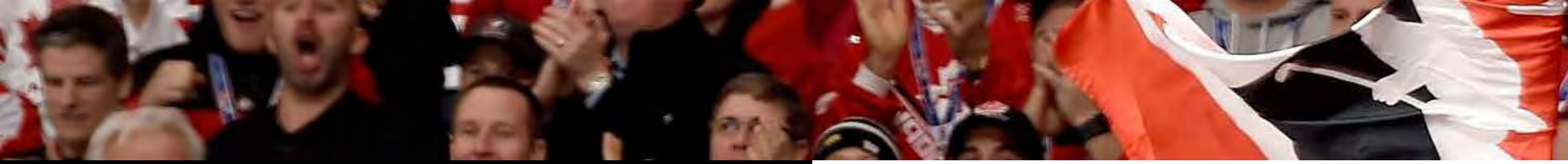
- Multisport Activities
- Technical Skill Instruction

SEASONAL STRUCTURE BREAKDOWN CHART

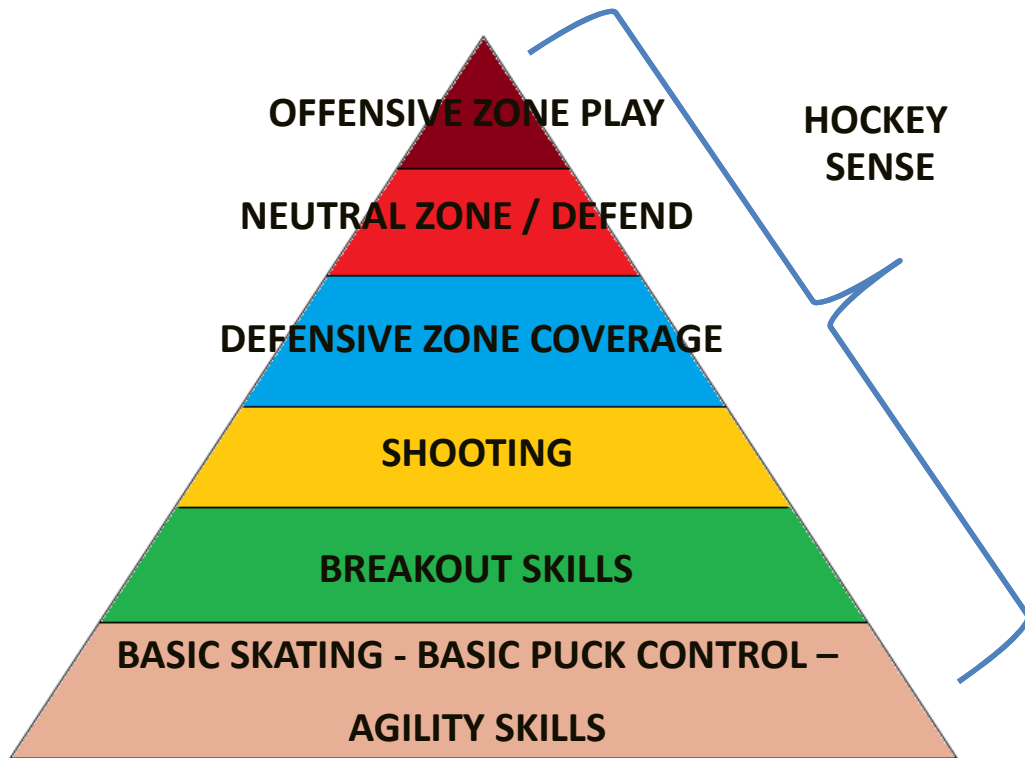


- 40% - Introducing Technical Skills**
- 25% - Developing Technical Skills**
- 20% - Refining Technical Skills**
- 10% - Introducing Individual Tactics**
- 5% - Developing Individual Tactics**



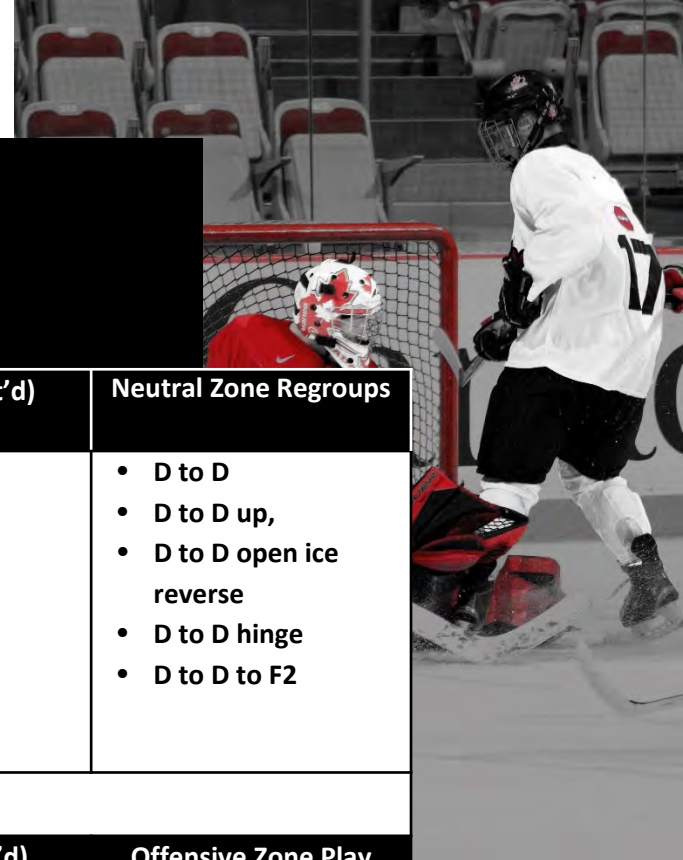


DEFENCEMAN SKILL DEVELOPMENT



1. For beginning defenceman it is recommended that development be built on 75% technical skills and 20% on individual tactics and 5% on team tactics.
2. For the developing defenceman it is recommended that development be built on 50% technical skills, 20% on individual tactics 30% on team tactics.
3. For the high performance defenceman it is recommended that development be built on 35% on technical skills, 10% on individual tactics, 40% on team tactics and transition and 15% on strategy

DEFENCEMAN SKILLS



Skating Skills	Skating Skills(cont'd)	Breakout Skills	Breakouts (cont'd)	Neutral Zone Regroups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backward stride • Backward starts & stops • Transition bwd to fwd • Transition fwd to bwd • Forward stride • Escapes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toe turns • Lateral Skating • Straight line skating • Slide stops • Blue line - sprints, spins, hip turn deception, fakes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skating • Pivots • Retrievals • Passing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick up • Wheel • Overs • Reverse • Rim • Set • Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • D to D • D to D up, • D to D open ice reverse • D to D hinge • D to D to F2
Neutral Zone Regroups (cont'd)	Neutral Zone Defend	Shooting	Shooting (cont'd)	Offensive Zone Play
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stagger • Look Offs • Fake Pass • Rush 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect the ice between dots • Good gap • Stick on Puck • Read the attack • Stride and maintain good balance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrist shot • Slap shot • Fake - push • Fake - pull • Pull - stop back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spin • Head up • Shoot for sticks • Find the lane 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head up • Rims • Pinching • Support • Being an option
Defensive Zone Coverage				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Straight line skating • Shading • Good Stick • Stick on Puck 				

Developing Skilled Defencemen



SKATING

Work on the skating basics defensemen utilize in every game and practice and we need to design drills to teach and reinforce these with repetitions. Mimic the agility skills defense use and make these as game-like as possible progressing from skating, skating with a puck and skating when passing and receiving. Tactical play can then be incorporated such as gap control, angling, reading and reacting.

- ❖ **Backward stride:** Limited crossovers when in stride.
- ❖ **Backward starts and stops:** Limited crossing of the feet and stay square to opponent.
- ❖ **Transition backward to forward:** Mohawk pivots...do not cross your feet.
- ❖ **Transition forward to backward:** Accepting the rush, “heels and hips” and pivot to middle of ice.
- ❖ **Forward stride:** Need to work on forward skating to join the rush
- ❖ **Escapes:** Work on escapes on forehand and backhand. Keep the puck close to your feet, spin tight and come out with speed.



Developing Skilled Defencemen



SKATING

- ❖ **“Toe turns”**: deception move where you turn toes
- ❖ **Lateral Skating**: both with and without the puck
- ❖ **Straight line skating** in defensive zone when playing 1-1.
- ❖ **Slide stops**: both forward and backward. Keep feet moving and avoid stopping unless behind the net. Keep the puck moving “Head up, move your feet, get it loaded.”
- ❖ **Blue line**: sprints, spins, hip turn deception, fakes.

Developing Skilled Defencemen



BREAKOUTS

Breakouts are the essence of attacking. Puck recovery is key and making a good first choice/pass is imperative. D must support each other and communicate (as does the goalie and F's). Often the simplest play is the best.

Practice puck retrieval and breakout options every practice so it becomes second nature. Stress the importance of passing and receiving every practice.

- ❖ **Retrievals:** Picking up the puck: shoulder check, angle, and deception. Explode to the puck to give yourself time to make a play. Toes up ice pick up if time and space. Learn to “circle the puck.” Pickup and make plays on forehand when possible
- ❖ **Support:** Look for both support and pressure and make a decision. Good first play. Practice look offs and deception
- ❖ **Passing:** Pass the puck hard, flat and accurately. Practice your angles on indirect passes. Know what you are going to do before you touch the puck
- ❖ **Strategy:** to take a hit and protect the puck. Deception, roll off, contact with opponent before check



Developing Skilled Defencemen



BREAKOUTS

- ❖ Know breakout options and establish a communication vocabulary with partners and goalie: quick up, wheel, overs, reverse, rim, set, move it, flip, glass...whatever you as a group decide.
- ❖ Read puck possession quality when supporting your D partner. Good decision from net front to creating an open passing lane.
- ❖ Be prepared to be the second wave of the offensive attack. Jump up into the play and chase the puck up ice.
- ❖ Don't give your problem to someone else, eat it or get it out

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Neutral Zone Regroups

- ❖ Transition can be the turning point in games. Making plays before the defensive team gets set up can lead to a dangerous attack. Positioning, support, skating skills, passing skills and reading plays are key components.
- ❖ First option is a quick up to the forwards whenever possible. Use your partner to spread the fore check with D-D pass. Receiving D present a target on the fore hand.
- ❖ On a lateral pass to D partner, support underneath...when you pass the puck forward....jump up ice
- ❖ Know your regroup options: D-D up, D-D open ice reverse, D-D hinge, D-D F2
- ❖ Look off F1: draw him? Pass around him?
- ❖ “Pass when you should not when you have to.” Don’t overhandle the puck: “no dust.”
- ❖ Read support and pressure like a quarterback

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Neutral Zone Regroups

- ❖ When possible pick up puck and get toes up ice, feet moving, head up, and get the puck loaded ready to move it.
- ❖ Chase the puck up ice and get down to circle tops on rush. If you beat F3 at red line then attack; second wave option. Know the game situation
- ❖ Stagger D, one will support the rush. One must stay back
- ❖ Learn to carry the puck backward and create space...also be able to pass while moving laterally or backwards
- ❖ All dumps and rims go to an area where goalies cannot play the puck.
- ❖ Be the second wave of offensive attack. If D beats F3 to red...drive in OZ. Base your decision on quality of puck possession.
- ❖ Risk depends on game situation: “manage the puck”

Developing Skilled Defencemen



The better D are in the neutral zone the less time spent in their zone. Positioning, good gaps and strong backpressure are key components in a solid neutral zone strategy. Controlling teams entries will help initiate breakout.

Neutral Zone Defend

- ❖ Protect the ice between dots; pivot to the middle. Don't attack the rush; receive it.
- ❖ Good gap... "stay up, don't step up". Get up ice with the play.
- ❖ Read the attack: look through the puck carrier...where is the opponent and where is your support
- ❖ Stride and maintain good balance: limit crossovers while striding

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Neutral Zone Defend

- ❖ **Angle and steer the attack wide:** be on the inside of the rush. Know the different situations 1-1,2-1 etc.
- ❖ Stick on ice and deny lanes.
- ❖ **Depending on your system:** challenge the in the neutral zone: redline? blueline? Reduce their speed on entry.
- ❖ Learn to hold the offensive blueline when there is support

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Shooting

Defensemen are key to offensive production and getting pucks to the net leads to most goals scored at the professional level. Practicing the basics on a daily basis helps defense make this routine. Getting pucks to mid-ice is important especially on the Power Play.

- ❖ **Know your options:** Wrist, slap, fake push, fake pull, pull stop back, spin, hip shuffle, D-D,D-D back middle, drag/pull and shot stick length, turn corner, one timers, backdoor, wide for rebound.
- ❖ Shoot off the ice, short side/middle; rebounds out front
- ❖ Hit the net or shoot for active puck board rebounds
- ❖ Get shots through...miss their F. Be able to slide and shoot. Work on fake push, fake pull with movement to avoid F1 in shooting lane
- ❖ **Walk the line:** quickly get puck to middle

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Shooting

- ❖ Head up on all shots except one-timers.
- ❖ Watch for goalie looking around a screen and shoot appropriately
- ❖ Learn to turn corner and shoot to avoid F1 high “wide outs”
- ❖ Shoot for sticks at times...may have to wait for screen/tip
- ❖ Handle “dirty passes”, off glass and rims
- ❖ Scoring options: rotate with F behind net, back door and cycle down plays
- ❖ Support your partner and be staggered in the OZ
- ❖ PRACTICE DIFFERENT OPTIONS: One Timers: wide, to mid ice, mid ice to lower triangle

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Offensive Zone Play

Defensemen need to be part of the offensive attack. On rushes they need to be the second wave (or first wave if they beat F3 up ice) and in the OZ they need to be active. Try to decide this at the redline. Smart decisions can make this work...not a high risk gamble.

- ❖ Pinch “leap down” decisions within your system. If support from F2 maintain gap and holding OZ blueline
- ❖ Offensively: when F slides behind net, cycle down, back door
- ❖ When F in possession behind net....Weak Side D down in slot, Strong Side D across blue

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Offensive Zone Play

- ❖ Rim down if lanes blocked
- ❖ Head up and see ice from point
- ❖ Weak Side D be an option
- ❖ If one D attacks net, the other slide to mid-ice
- ❖ Play the zone on your forehand
- ❖ One touch passing especially on PP

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Playing in the DZ is hard work. It means knowing assignments and responsibilities but this needs basic skills to perform. Communications is key and individual tactics need to be clear and practiced continually. Key is to “limit time and space” as much as possible. Pressure and contain in a responsible

Defensive Zone Coverage

- ❖ D side positioning
- ❖ Keep your stick on the ice
- ❖ Body protect path to net, stick in passing lane
- ❖ Stick on puck, body on body ; shoulders square, move feet, no lunging
- ❖ Build from individual tactics: 1-1, 2-1, 3-1, 3-2, 2-2 3-3 off rush
- ❖ Contain and pressure situations: limit time and space
- ❖ Pressure: you can control speed, angle, stick, body, D side and recovery
- ❖ Down low 1-1, 2-1 2-2 , 3-3 etc. Individual tactics
- ❖ Step up on delays into the zone
- ❖ Playing crossing forwards: strategy....hold or cross

Developing Skilled Defencemen



Defensive Zone Coverage

- ❖ Straight line skating: stops and starts vs. loops
- ❖ Beat them to net front after check
- ❖ 1-1 low “take your stick with you” when containing
- ❖ Pin and hold briefly ; release on stay on D side
- ❖ Net front: box out, face the puck, control sticks, toes up ice, front shots, control F rebounds. Do not get tied up with F. Let goalie see puck, no double screens. Head on swivel
- ❖ “Front” the puck or to the side. Let goalie see the puck.
- ❖ Shade on F3 ½ way
- ❖ Control sticks and jump rebounds.
- ❖ Defend cycle and ride them off
- ❖ Turn inside to post if beaten wide
- ❖ Get in shooting lanes for blocks



Small Area Games



What Are Small Area Games?



- ❖ Competitive hockey drills done in a smaller than normal playing area
- ❖ This can be cross ice, neutral zone, corners - depending on what coaches are trying to teach
- ❖ Usually less players participating but with a higher and consistent intensity. Lots of puck touches.
- ❖ Designed to simulate possible game-like situations that players can experience and learn from

Skills in SAG's

“Hockey sense” is basically a learned trait based on experience.

Game like conditions

Stops and starts

Develop Hockey Sense

Hockey often turns into a 1-1 battle;

Lateral Movement

Tight turns

Confidence



**Body Contact /
Contact Confidence**

Puts players in a situation where they need to “read and react”; make a decision

Transition skating

Angling / Steering

Skills In SAG's

Decrease the Space! Increase the Pace!



These individual skills and tactics need to be built into practices and then combined with the team tactical play concepts. But, “you can’t play in the orchestra until you have mastered your instrument”. It is essential that we develop fundamentals in practice so they become automatic in games. Combined with the skills is the need for “read and react” situations so D “think the game” in practice as well as games.

Coaches need a yearly plan to prioritise these skills and to make sure they are taught. Certainly practices need to be built from game lessons but let’s not lose sight of the overall development needed to teach fundamentals to our young defensemen.

Resources



www.hockeycanadanetwork.com

 **BY THE NUMBERS**

 **800** TEAM CANADA GAME CLIPS

 **3,200** ARTICLES

 **300** PRACTICE PLANS

 **1,500** DRILLS

900  VIDEOS


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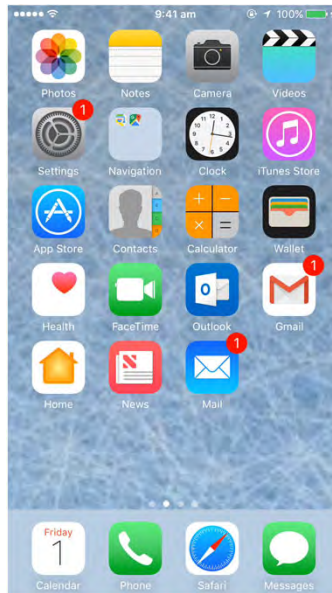


Resources

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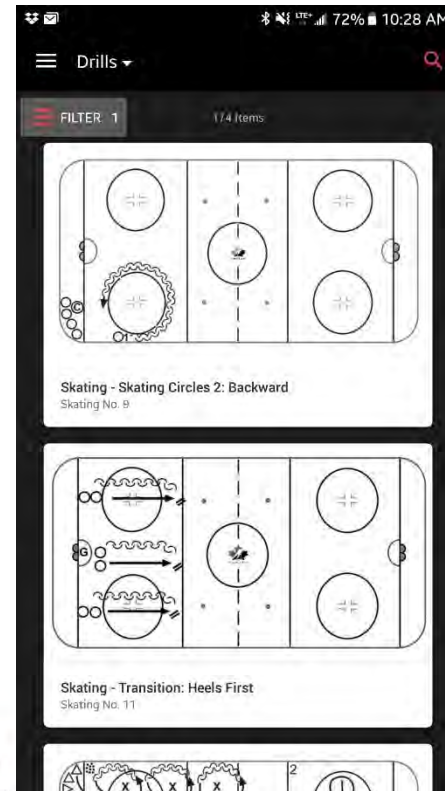
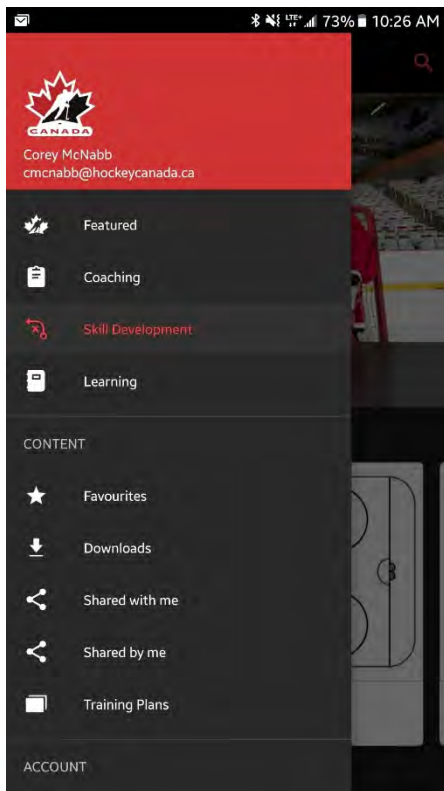
Join our Email list for the latest news and updates about the new Hockey Canada Network App. bcnsmf@gmail.com



Resources



- Skill Development – Filter Defence – 174 drills – Diagram / Video / Game Clip



Skating - Transition: Heels First
Skating No. 11

