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## Hockey Drill of the Month

The FlexxCOACH Drill of the Month will feature a guest coach along with their favorite drill and accompanying explanation. Our guest coach will also provide insight into their philosophy of youth sports development and coaching.



Our Guest Coach is:  
**Misha Donskov**  
 Lead Instructor, Atlanta Thrashers

Misha Donskov is entering his second year as lead instructor with the Atlanta Thrashers Hockey Development Team. In this capacity, Misha is responsible for leading youth and adult clinics within metro Atlanta, as well as supporting hockey development on special projects and initiatives. Misha researched, created, and designed the recently launched Hockey Development Resource Center (HDRC) located on the local hockey section of [www.atlantathrashers.com](http://www.atlantathrashers.com). This comprehensive site provides content segments in four major areas: Coach Development, Player Development, Development Articles, and Great Hockey Links. Prior to joining the Atlanta Thrashers, Misha spent three years as lead instructor with the Columbus Blue Jackets youth and adult hockey schools. Misha also worked part time with the Columbus Blue Jackets Fan Development staff supporting various community hockey programs including the Columbus Ice Hockey Club, part of the National Hockey League's Diversity Program.

Misha has an extensive instructing background having worked with both youth and adult hockey players in the United States, Canada, and Europe. His vast experience includes over 8 years of teaching at various hockey schools and programs including: Hockey Canada Skills Development Camps, NIKE Skills Development Camps, Alliance Hockey Development Programs, Bob Hartley High Intensity Camps and Coaching Clinics, NHL Diversity, Robby Glantz International Power Skating, Planet Hockey Skills Training, as well as hockey schools and clinics in Norway and Sweden. Misha played two years of junior hockey in the United States and Canada prior to playing college hockey in the U.S. He completed his playing experience in Europe (01/02, Sweden II.Division, 02/03, Norway I.Division). Misha has coached minor hockey in Europe, and has experience coaching at both the travel and house levels. Misha is a member of the Board of Directors – Columbus Ice Hockey Club (NHL Diversity), and holds a USA Hockey Level IV Coaching Certification.

Misha graduated from Miami (Oh) University in 2000 with a degree in Business Administration and Finance. Misha is currently working on his Level V Masters Thesis as part of the final stage in the USA Hockey Coaching Education Program. He is an active participant in the USA Hockey Coaching Education and Player Development Programs as a clinic presenter and instructor. Misha resides in Atlanta, Georgia.

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### Youth Development Philosophy

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Coaching has allowed me to weave my two greatest passions in life: hockey and working with our youth. Coaching is about providing young athletes a positive environment conducive to learning, skills development, and FUN. Coaches must be effective teachers, role models, and communicators. Youth coaches must focus their attention and energy developing technical skills (skating, puck handling, passing and shooting) in their players. Skill development must become the platform in which youth coaches design their seasonal plans and goals. So, what can youth coaches do to influence and encourage player and skill development within their local organization, association, and team?

1. Educate parents and youth hockey players on the importance of the player development pyramid. Technical hockey skills (i.e. skating, puck handling, passing and shooting) are the foundation of every hockey player's success. Without this foundation, it becomes nearly impossible for any hockey player, regardless of age and/or experience, to be a valuable asset to his/her hockey club. Here are some ideas:

- Talk to parents and facilitators and develop a vision that supports and educates quality coaches.
- Be a model – incorporate technical skills and individual tactics into your coaching plan – every practice (regardless of age, experience, and skill level).
- Promote skills development camps, specialty clinics, and power skating classes. There is no replacement for QUALITY ice time.
- Emphasize skill development OVER team performance.
- Be a believer – FUN and FUNDAMENTALS are the key to youth hockey.

2. Skating – The most essential technical hockey skill.

- Stress the importance of skating. Every other technical hockey skill (puck handling, passing, shooting) is in some way related to skating.
- Remind parents and players that skating is a learned skill. Like anything, you must practice religiously

to be great. Consistent, perfect practice -- makes permanent.

3. Encourage (at least) a 3:1 practice to game ratio with youth hockey players. Practice is essential to youth hockey player development. Players, parents, and coaches need to understand the importance of practice. Practice is where development takes place! Running an EFFECTIVE practice is key; all coaches need to effectively utilize the ice. Ice time is valuable, use it wisely!

4. Encourage kids to play a variety of sports. Kids need to get away from the rink and do other things outside of hockey. Hockey players are athletes. To continue to enhance athletic ability, encourage your players to play tennis, lacrosse, basketball, golf, soccer, swim and bike. Coaches will find that not only are these great cross-training sports for hockey, but they also enhance athletic development.

5. Encourage youth hockey coaches to use cross – ice/small area games and practices. In this type of environment, skill development greatly increases due to the following:

- Each player's activity greatly increases.
- All players touch the puck more – improving puck handling skills.
- Tactical skills develop much faster.
- Decisions must be made quicker and in less space.
- Goalies are forced to react quicker and play varying angles.
- Is very effective for the mini-mite through high performance coach.

6. Skill development MUST take precedence over winning hockey games. Make it clear to all parents that your philosophy is to develop hockey players. The more skilled you are the more FUN the game becomes.

7. Believe in what you do. Have a passion for player development – have a passion for hockey!

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe once said, "If you treat an individual as he is, he will stay on as he is, but if you treat him as if he were what he ought to be and could be, he will become what he ought and could be." As youth hockey coaches, instructors, parents, and facilitators, we have to have a very clear understanding that this game is about the kids. Therefore, our primary responsibility should be to ensure that we provide our young athletes an environment conducive to learning, skills development, and FUN. An environment with the very core of its mission centered around SKILLS DEVELOPMENT.

[Misha Donskov's Drill of the Month](#)

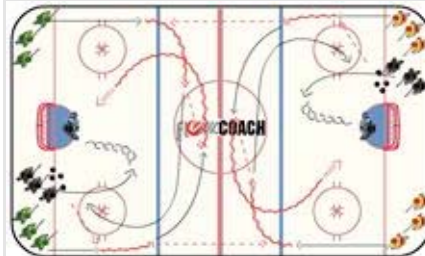
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### Swedish 2 on 1 NZ Regroup



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#### Objective

Simulate a D – Zone breakout and NZ regroup while multitasking with teammates. Drill culminates with a 2 vs. 1.

#### Swedish 2 on 1 NZ Regroup

Forwards are to be divided into 4 equal groups and positioned in all four corners. Defenseman divided into 2 groups (1 group at each end) positioned beside forward lines (with pucks). On coaches whistle, defenseman at both ends initiate breakout in D-Zone with closest forward. Once forwards at both ends have reached the NZ, they make a direct pass to the oncoming forward (that started at the opposite end) skating towards them. The two forwards that initiated the breakout in the same zone will regroup in the NZ and attack 2 vs. 1 against their original defenseman.

#### Key Elements

- Great passing/receiving
- Puck support
- Attack offensively with speed
- Gap control
- Communicate

SHOW GUIDE									SHOW GUIDE
	skating with puck	skating	pass	shooting	skating backwards	Coach	cone	puck	

#### View Related Drills

[Individual Tactics 2 on 1 Regroup](#)

#### Variations

This is a great drill for adding multiple progressions. Add another defenseman on the weak side and now your forwards will attack 2 vs. 2. Another option would be to continue play after the initial attack, having the coach play another puck in high slot area (2 vs. 2). Coaches can then add a third forward generating a 3 vs. 2 attack. Incorporating multiple passes between forwards and defenseman on breakout and offensive attack are other options.

#### Goalie

Goalies involved at both ends. Game like situation -- must be focused on puck carrier, yet be prepared with a response to a quick pass to weak side attacker. Focus on angles during attack and communicate with defensemen providing support. Stop initial shot and control rebound protecting puck from oncoming forward.

[Add this drill to a practice plan](#)  
*(Requires a subscription membership)*



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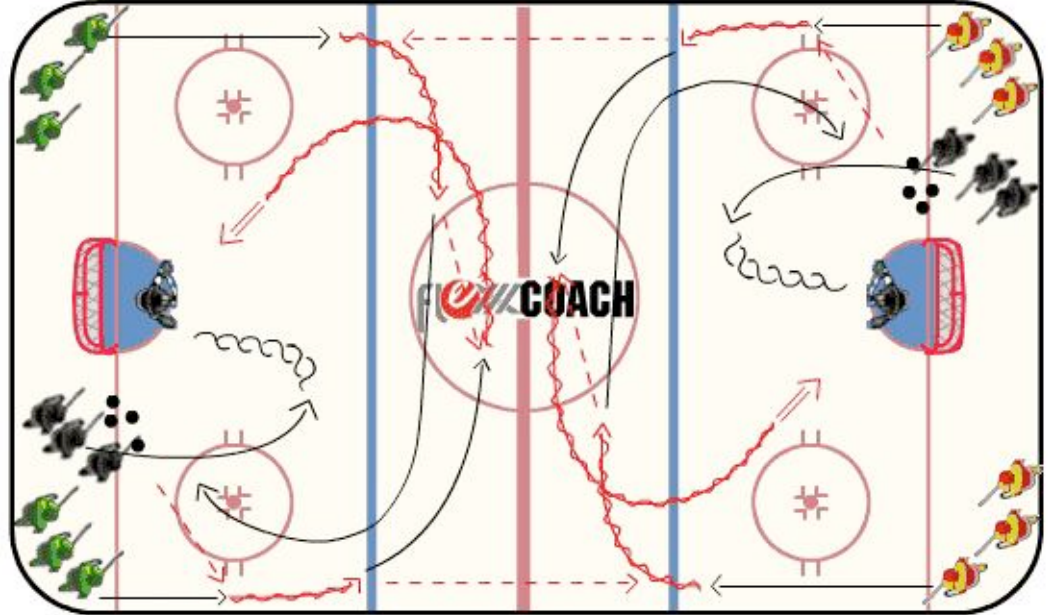
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**Swedish 2 on 1 NZ Regroup**



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