Written by Steve Wallace
Revisions by Gabriel Di Nota

End Zone Position – GTHL Expectations

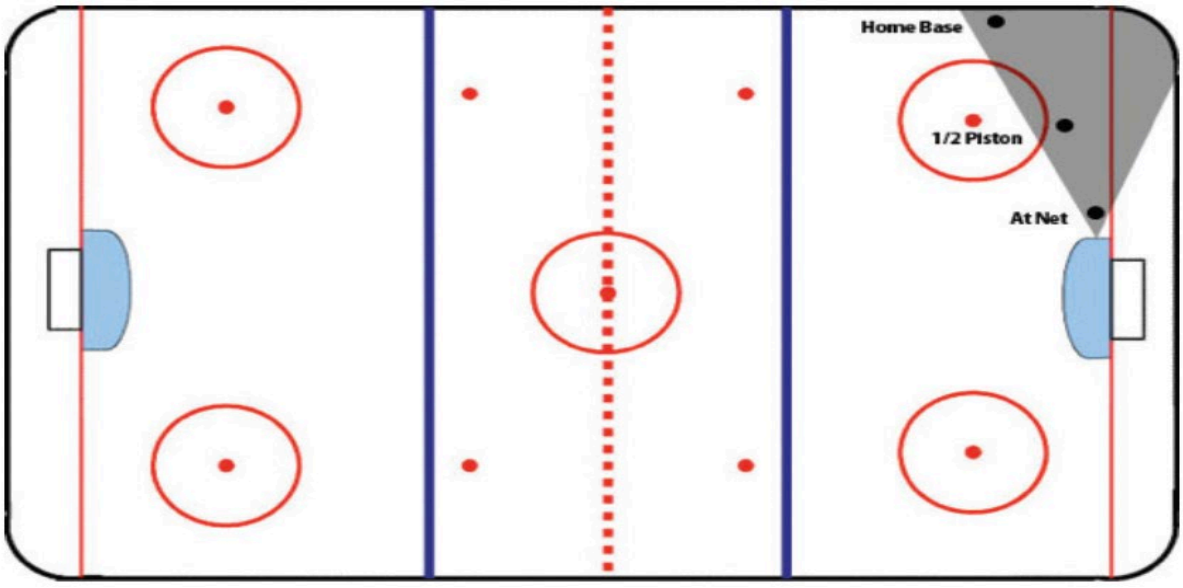
The Greater Toronto Hockey League is committed to using the positioning systems described by the HCOP Officiating Systems for Referee and Linespersons. These systems have withstood the test of time and officials that effectively follow them are always in good position to see the play. The purpose of this article is to clarify the League's expectations about end zone positioning.

End-zone Positioning

The fundamentals of end-zone positioning involve moving within the end zone to get the best possible sight lines on players and the puck.

Benefits of this system for the referee:

- A better overall view of the play.
- Improved view of the goal and goal line.
- Less chance of being caught behind the play on a fast break, thereby reducing unnecessary hard skating.
- Safer positioning from deflections of shots on goal.
- Players are more aware of the presence of the referee, which acts as a deterrent to any unnecessary activity.
- When using the "cone area", allowing the referee to move below the goal line, the official may have better sight lines; keep the play and players in front of them and be in a better position to avoid being involved in the play.



The ***Piston System*** was modified in 2010 to expand the system's manoeuvring boundaries to allow officials to react more appropriately to "cycling" systems now commonly in use. When play is sustained in an end zone, the League expectation is that officials will use the *Piston System,* moving between the piston system landmarks using a piston-like action in response to the location and movement of the play/puck. **The Cone** area allows the official to position themself below the goal line to gain the best sight lines as well as take up a position to avoid being in the play. Although the cone area is below the goal line at certain points, the Referee is encouraged to stay at or above the goal line as much as possible.

The landmarks used in the *Piston System* are: ***Home Base*** (a position 15-20 cm / 6-8 inches from the boards – half way between the goal line and the near hash marks); ***Half Piston*** (a small area half way between *Home Base* and ***At The Net*** - usually in line with the face-off dot), and *At The Net* (a banana shaped area, typically within an arm's reach of the near post, that provides the official an unobstructed view of the goal line between the posts). The *Cone* simply establishes the limits to which an official may ***Bump*** before performing a *Pivot Turn* to return to *Home Base*. The bump limits are the hash marks along the side boards, and the point where the corner and the end boards meet behind the goal line. Officials are expected to bump away from *Home Base* as necessary to avoid interfering with the play and reposition back to *Home Base* using a **Pivot Turn** as soon as the area at *Home Base* is clear. Officials must not "post up" or stand still near the edges of *the Cone*.

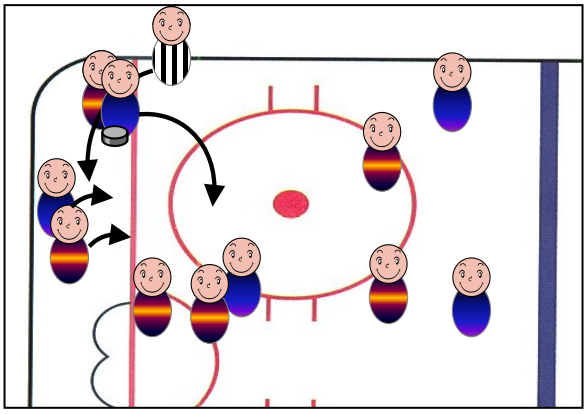
Since there is no provision in the HCOP officiating manual for officials to move to the other side of the rink by crossing behind the net, such practice is, therefore, unacceptable.

The *Piston System* as presented in the HCOP officiating manual has led many to infer that referees must always follow the straight line that connects the three *Piston System* landmarks while manoeuvring deep in the end zone. Such is <u>not</u> the case. The important thing is that referees use a piston (back and forth) <u>action</u> to reach *At the Net* and *Home Base* in a timely manner. For example, when a goal scoring opportunity arises, referees ("front" official in the two officials system) are expected to move quickly to the *At The Net* position and to arrive there <u>before</u> the puck reaches the goal. It is quite acceptable, therefore, for referees to drop low towards or even below the goal line temporarily if that is what is required to get to *At The Net* in a timely fashion without interfering with the play. Specifically (see Diagrams 1 and 2 on the next page), when an attacking team sets up deep in the end zone on the same side of the ice as the referee and a potential scoring opportunity develops, the referee is permitted to take a curved route from *Home Base* to reach *At The Net* on time. *A* similarly curved route may also be used to retreat to *Home Base* if the direct path is blocked. Notwithstanding this specific manoeuvring tactic, it is not acceptable for referees to anchor themselves on or below the goal line for an extended period of time under the guise of being able to get to the net on time.

Another point requiring clarification about end zone positioning pertains to situations where the defending team has control of the puck in their end zone after a shoot in or after the attacking team has effectively pulled back from their attacking zone. In both situations the referee has the primary responsibility of covering the near goal. In the case of a shoot in (see Diagram 3), it is expected that the referee will continue into the end zone at least as deep as the lead fore-checker (working through traffic if need be) and then transition to the piston system or loop behind the play as the situation dictates (see Diagram 4). This ensures that the near goal is covered if a sudden change of possession and scoring

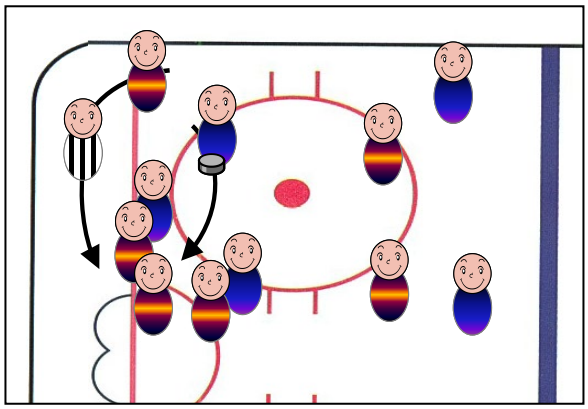
opportunity occurs. Therefore, referees are not to "cheat" by actually stopping in the area between the blue line and the hash marks in anticipation of a breakout. This approach allows the referee to get to the net in a timely fashion if a turnover occurs, and keeps the referee out of the defending team's primary "clearing lane", which effectively minimizes the risk of being struck by the puck during a clearing attempt or interfering with the play during a breakout. This end zone positioning procedure will, no doubt, result in the referee getting caught behind the play if a stretch pass occurs. However, this is acceptable because the front linesman is expected to cover the far net if that becomes necessary.

Diagram 1



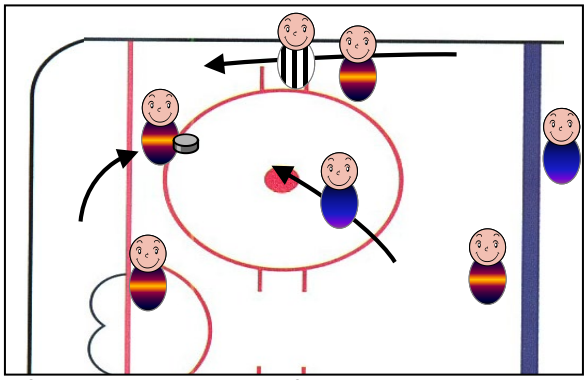
A potential scoring play develops and the direct route to the net is blocked. The referee should react by skating quickly towards the net without delay via a slightly curved route around the play.

Diagram 2



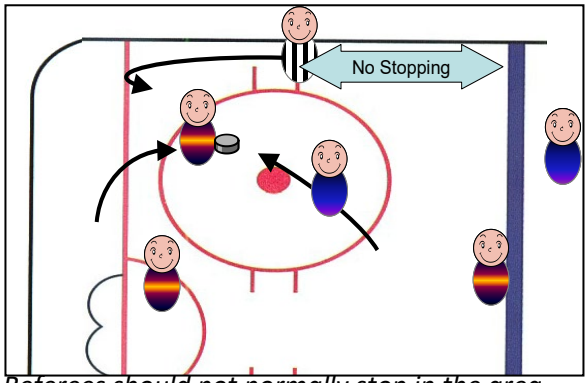
The referee continues to move rapidly to the net around the play and arrives at the net, ideally, just before the puck. A similarly curved route may be used to retreat to Home Base if necessary.

Diagram 3



After a shoot-in, the referee continues towards the goal line (at least as deep as the lead fore-checker) to cover the near net. As play progresses the referee should loop behind the play or transition to the piston system.

Diagram 4



Referees should not normally stop in the area between the blue line and the hash marks (the "clearing lane"). This ensures that they can effectively cover the near net, and minimizes the risk of being struck by the puck during a clearing attempt or interfering with the play during a breakout.