

# The Mark of a Good Team

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There are two ways to win a hockey game – taking advantage of mistakes and taking what is given to you, or imposing your will and dictating the outcome. Both ways work and both are effective, but to be a successful team you have to be able to do both. Beating average or below-average teams requires you to be able to take advantage of mistakes. A good team will make you have to fight for every inch of ice and make you work to impose your will.

Often, you can play a sound structural game, make good decisions and score a few goals – this is a general philosophy for winning hockey games. If you capitalize on your opportunities and have fewer unforced errors than the other team, you will generally win the game.

Against high-end teams, this isn't enough. Making good decisions and playing sound structurally isn't good enough to win a game. You have to compete for every inch of ice and look to impose your will on the other team.

What does this look like? Body position. All over the ice you have to fight for positioning – competing for the space that you need to make plays and generate offence. You have to know when to try to make plays and when to live to fight another day. You have to possess the puck and value the times when you do have it. Above all else, you have to own the ice in front of the blue paint.

Against good teams, it isn't enough to simply clear the puck, you need to put it in a place where you can go forecheck it. You need to make sound decisions when you have the puck so you can maintain possession. You need to set yourself up for success on the next shift and the shift after.

Good teams will create battles where every shift, every inch of ice is valued. Every opportunity for possession is one that must be taken advantage of. They make you work for every opportunity you have. Execution in critical moments is even more important, as those moments are much fewer in quantity.

Want to be a good team? Make simple plays. Possess the puck. Own the ice in front of the crease. Make your opponent work for and earn everything they get – don't give them anything. Teams that do that are hard to play against and force their opponents to play a near perfect game to leave with two points.