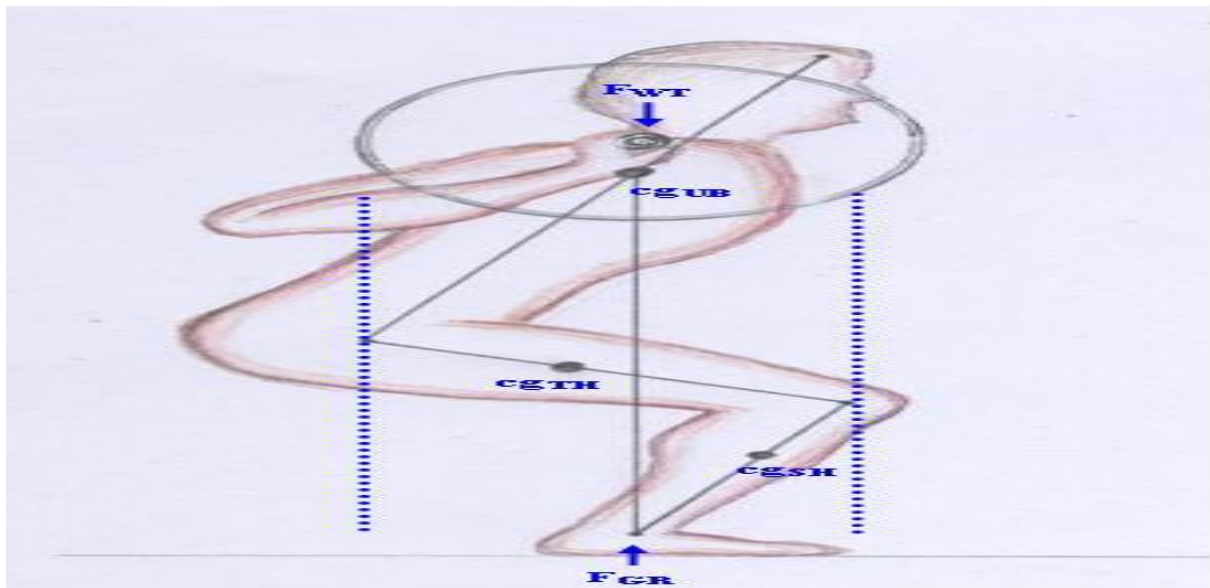


EPHA Coaching Tip for the Season

The top eyelet on skates is made to hold the last loop of a lace coming together to form the top knot. This top eyelet is there for a reason, it's there for support. At the younger levels this eyelet is very important for the athlete's Lateral Stability. Lateral Stability is the athlete's ability to hold the skate upright on both edges ("Called Flat Edges") in a proper hockey foundation or stance. This allows the athlete to move in all four directions and in multiple planes. In the Athletic Stance or in Triple Flexion (Ankle, Knee, And Hip flexion) the knees are over the toes, the hips are behind the ankles and the shoulders are over the ankles for balance.



A front view with Lateral Stability would show the shoulders, knees and toes in alignment.

This means that the feet are about shoulder width apart and having knees in line with the toes puts the athlete on the "flat edges". Without Lateral Stability the natural way for the knees to track is inside the toes or a caved in look, with knees close together and feet apart. This forces the athlete onto the inside edges and makes it very difficult for the athlete to move in all four directions and in different planes. The top eyelet on the skate can add to Lateral Stability and help the athlete get onto the "flat edges" during the glide portion of the stride. Being able to

*Diagram shows Triple Flexion in the down or negative phase of one repetition of a squat

articulate the edges on the skates makes it easier to stop, start, turn and transition in the different directions and different planes. Without Lateral Stability the athlete is predominantly on the inside edges which will shorten the stride in the recovery phase of the stride. The recovery is hindered because the knees come together first and the levers below the knees are left far apart unable to come together. Ankle strength is something that is built over a long period of time, however at a young age if an athlete is trying to build ankle strength by wearing loose skates or by not tying the skates all the way to the top, the athlete will be developing a different set of Neuromuscular Patterns that are very difficult to undo. The younger athletes have a greater adaptation window and these patterns are acquired quickly and if these patterns are not corrected immediately the movement patterns will not be easily removed later into maturity. Practice does not make perfect, it makes permanent. Practicing things the wrong way over and over will create bad habits and poor movement patterns, especially at the younger ages, quality repetitions mean much more than the quantity of repetitions. Tie the skates snug and tie the skates all the way through the top eyelet and avoid developing poor skating mechanics. To build ankle strength the athlete should concentrate on off ice activities and other athlete movements.