



Scoring

The Art of Tips & Deflections

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The world's best hockey players captivate us by making a complicated game seem incredibly simple. When we watch NHL highlights, it strikes a nerve that draws us into the multi-dimensional world of our stick slinging super heroes. For this brief moment, we gladly leave our own world filled with missed shots, bad passes and occasional penalties to skate along side our boundless heroes. We temporarily superimpose ourselves onto a line with Alexander Ovechkin and delicately saucer a pass to him that finds the back of the net (then I usually throw in a hockey hug and hi-five too). This is what dreams are made of.

Let's focus on true goal scores and specifically the art of tips and deflections. Goal scorers

seem to have a "sixth sense", a complete awareness of where their teammates and opponents are on the ice.

Most goalies are in agreement that saving pucks that are tipped and/or redirected are among their most difficult tasks. So, let's dissect this lethal scoring strategy.

Giving the puck "eyes" to find the back of the net is an art that can be practiced both on and off the ice. When a goalie visually tracks the puck, they will "cut down the angle"; positioning themselves between the shooter's puck and the goal. NHL goalies have mastered this skill and often force many of the best goal scores into low percentage shooting angles. However players who keep their heads up when they shoot often anticipate a goalies habits and weigh out available options. One option a goal scorer has is to shoot the puck on net, forcing the goalie to make the save and then to control any rebounds. Approximately 75 percent of all NHL goals are scored on rebounds. If a shooter finds an open teammate in position to redirect the shot, this creates a much higher scoring opportunity. The goalie has to honor both the shooter and the possible redirection. The players away from the puck are the keys to tips.

Any player establishing position on the ice to tip a shot must have an awareness of where they are positioned, where the net is, where the goalie is and where the puck is at all times. This is where understanding "time and space" on the ice (where to go and when to go) becomes critical to being at the right place at the right time, that's "hockey sense" or hockey smarts. You can understand the skills involved with tipping the puck or redirecting the puck, but if you struggle to position yourself, or miss getting to the right position, you may miss your chance to tip the puck or pick up the rebound. Learning from your own missed scoring opportunities and studying professional players in the offensive zone will improve your comprehension of "time and space" as well as your ability to anticipate.

Ultimately, when tipping, deflecting, or redirecting the puck we are swaying the odds in the shooter's favor. Goalies are trained to "cut down the angle" (shrink the net). Goalies who understand angles are difficult to score on, however even the best in the NHL are beat when the puck is tipped or deflected. Work on increasing your scoring opportunities not only by creative positioning on the ice, but also by blocking or screening the goalie's vision of the puck.

How to properly TIP or REDIRECT a shot: First, don't be afraid to stand between the shooter and the goalie. We wear plenty of equipment. Face the shot, or stand off to the side and be ready to anticipate the trajectory of the puck. I mentioned facing the puck mainly to help you understand looking over our shoulder or behind us not only exposes unprotected areas of our body, but forces us to straighten up our hockey stance thus losing valuable stability. You actually are more protected and have a better scoring chance when you face the shooter

Once the puck has been passed or shot toward the goal, it is time to process how and where we want the



puck to end up. If the puck has been shot on the ice, chances are the goalie will drop down, perhaps into a "butterfly" position to make the save. When the goalie goes down, the puck needs to be redirected UP. When the puck is shot and is going wide you want to tip or redirect the back toward the net. This is where your on ice awareness comes into play. Each situation on the ice is unique and dictates the angle we position our stick blade and body on the ice to re-direct the puck.

If a puck moves toward the net at shoulder height? You can not place your stick on a puck that is above 4 feet (cross-bar level).

Tipping the puck with your stick, you can use your forehand (front of the stick blade), backhand (back of your stick blade) or any part of the stick shaft. Remember it is against the rules at any level to intentionally direct the puck into the goal with any part of your body other than your stick (you can't for example kick the puck into the net). The key word here is "intentionally". Goals are often scored when the puck deflects off a shin pad, skate, or any part of your equipment as long as it was not intentionally directed into the goal. Try to position yourself in a way that compromises the goaltenders vantage point and that allows you to both redirect the puck and/or slap home a rebound goal. Goals scored in this fashion are sometimes called "garbage goals" and any true goal scorer is more than happy to collect garbage goals. One of my favorite sayings, "They don't ask how, they ask how many"!

Hockey is a game of speed, not just how fast we skate, or shoot the puck, but how quickly we think on the ice. Wayne Gretzky holds the most NHL records, not because he was the biggest, fastest or had the hardest shot, but because he could anticipate and make decisions on the ice quicker and better than anyone in the history of the game.

This article was written by Steve Strunk, Director of Planet Hockey Skills Training. Planet Hockey teaches Skills Training Camps throughout the United States and Europe, including the Planet Hockey Ranch (resident hockey/outdoor adventure camp) in Colorado and Vermont, TEAM Planet Hockey European Hockey Tours, and also produces instructional training DVDs. For more information call 720-304-3880, Email info@planethockey.com, or visit: www.planethockey.com.