

Stick Placement is Essential to YOUNG GOALTENDERS

BY CARL HOWELL

There is a school of thought from goaltending instructors that a goalie's stick should be placed on the ice 2 or more feet out from the toes of the skates. I see 9 or 10-year-old kids struggling to move because their stick is so far out that all their weight is on the toes of the skates and they are bent so far forward the top of the net is available to shooters. I have also seen pucks ramped right up the stick blade, over the shoulder and into the net. Not good.

Stick placement is not a one-size-fits-all application. It depends on your size and skill. You have to be able to move your stick in an arcing manner on the ice in order to steer pucks to the corners. And, especially for younger goalies, the blade must be far enough ahead of the toes so that they don't land on the stick as they butterfly. Young goalies have a tendency to hold the stick immediately in front of their toes, and the mind tells them, "you have to move your stick when you butterfly or you will land on the blade," so as they go down, away goes the stick. But for a 10-year-old to have the stick two feet out is ridiculous. If you are 6-foot-2, maybe you can play with the stick that far out. I teach holding the stick about eight to ten inches in front of the toes for smaller, younger goalies, to 15-20 inches for bigger, more experienced goalies. The key is

to make sure the stick blade lies flat on the ice centered between the toes while in your stance and as you move with shuffle steps. Paddle length also determines where the stick can be placed. If the paddle is too long, you will not be able to keep the blade centered. Ken Dryden, who I played against in college, was an exceptionally tall goalie - well over six feet - but he used a 24-inch paddle that forced him to crouch low to keep the blade centered and flat. Many young goalies use paddles that are too

long, making stick placement an issue and widening the six-hole gap under the arm.

Very few goalies can play effectively with the blade held two or more feet out in front of their toes. I have been told that the far placement will allow the goalie to ramp straight on shots into the body. Maybe, but it is also possible, especially for less experienced goalies, to ramp the puck over the shoulder. If you learn to deaden the puck with the blocker hand, you are better off, or arc the stick to direct the puck to the corners. I have seen a few - very few - NHL goalies hold the stick well out in front of their toes, in the two-foot range. But they are big guys, and as the skater closes in, the stick is pulled in closer to the toes. Especially for younger and smaller goalies, I believe the stick should not be that far out from the toes.



Photo by Andy Grossman/Michigan Hockey



FUTURE PRO

GOALIE SCHOOL



3

TEAM &
PRIVATE
LESSONS

2 WINTER
& SPRING
CLINICS

3 SUMMER
CAMPS

TRAINING
OPTIONS



THE MOST POPULAR CERTIFIED GOALTENDING TRAINING IN NORTH AMERICA



www.futurepro.com
follow us on







