



Five Ideas To Improve Your Goaltending

→ Even at the elite level, goalies like Maddie Rooney are constantly working on their skills.

→ By Keith Allain

A goaltender in hockey is the single most important position in all of team sports. Still, many coaches are uncomfortable working with goalies. We have all been to clinics and listened to great discussions regarding the technical aspects of goaltending.

Hopefully this article will give you some concrete practical applications to improve the skills of goaltenders of all ages and skill levels.

Five topics to improve goaltending skills:

- Skating
- Positioning
- Make practices “goalie friendly”
- Help your goalies evaluate their game performances
- Develop a work ethic

Skating

Skating is the single most important skill for playing goal. While you may not log as many miles around the rink as a forward or defenseman, a goaltender’s skating skills are essential between the pipes.

Coaches need to help their goaltenders with their skating skills. That can be done through skating drills, or through exercises that improve movement around the crease.

A goalie must be able to move well while maintaining a good “ready position,” minimizing any holes for a shooter to aim at.

A goalie must be the team leader in setting the work standards for the team by competing hard on every shot.

Positioning

A sliding two-pad save or lunging glove save may look flashier than a shot that is drilled into a goaltender’s midsection, but it’s likely caused by poor positioning.

A well-positioned goalie has a better chance of being hit by a shot. You want your goalie to be centered, square and out on an angle.

Be aware of your goalie’s positioning during games and practices, and create drills that work on staying square to the shooter.

Make Practice “Goalie Friendly”

A proper warm up is important. Start games and practices with drills that help a goaltender get loose and gain confidence. Remember, warm-up drills are meant to warm up the goaltender, not to practice goal scoring. Tell your skaters to get their shots on net.

Make shooting drills as game like as possible. Provide traffic, rebound opportunities and create pressure with options and competition. Your whole team will benefit.

Help Your Goalie Evaluate His/Her Performance

Goals scored against a goaltender offer great lessons. Take advantage of them by talking with goaltenders about what they did right and wrong on the play. A goaltender may have executed all the right moves, put him or herself in the proper position to make the save and then forgot to close the five-hole. It’s important to stress the positives as well as point out the negatives.

Encourage an honest dialogue to get your goalie thinking about and questioning his or her thought process.

Analyze situations that arose in the game. What did the goalie see? What if anything might he or she have done differently?

Develop measurable standards or goals for each game to see where progress is made and the areas that need improvement.

Develop A Work Ethic

Goaltenders’ work ethic is often overlooked. Many times coaches allow their goalies to be lazy. It’s your responsibility to demand consistency in terms of effort.

Your goalie must be the team leader in setting the work standards for the team. By competing hard for every shot, a goalie challenges teammates to be better every day, and also improves his or her own skills. ★

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