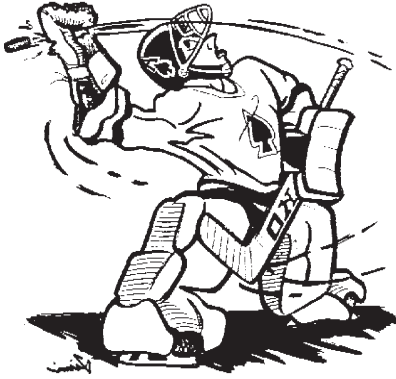


Evaluating and selecting goaltenders



Goaltenders come in many sizes and shapes and play many different styles. Some are tall, some are small, some are stand-up, and some are floppers, some challenge, and some play deep in the net. How do you pick the best one for your team? The following are some points to consider when evaluating goaltenders.

"Makes Great Saves vs. Don't Notice Him"

Why does he have to make great saves? Does he give up rebounds? Is he out of position? Is he making poor decisions, which result in great scoring chances for the opponents?

"Big vs. Small"

Big goalies fill more of the net, but can they move as needed? Small goalies usually need to be sharp on their angles, and quick and agile to make up for their lack of size.

"Stand-up vs. Floppers"

Stand-up goalies usually play their angles well and are always in position – letting the puck hit them and then controlling rebound. Floppers are reactors relying on reflexes and quickness (and many times their defensemen to clear their rebounds).

"Aggressive vs. Passive"

Confident, aggressive goalies have good decision making skills and recognize situations where they can act first to force a shooter or puck carrier to make the wrong play.

"The Bottom Line"

Does he consistently keep the puck out of your net?

Choosing your goaltender might very well be the most important coaching decision that you will make all year long. The goaltender is the one position that has the greatest influence on the outcome of a game. In effect, your goaltender can "make or break" you and your team.

Not only is your goaltender the only player who plays the entire game, he is your last line of defense, the person relied on to atone for mistakes made by your forwards and defensemen.

He has no margin for error, as his mistakes end up in the net, with the red light flashing and the total attention focused on him.

For this reason, your goaltender must not only have the physical skills necessary for the position, but the mental attributes as well. Often times, this is the area you should spend most of your time evaluating when picking goaltenders, as the physical skills are more easily recognized.

Some areas to keep in mind when evaluating goalies are:

PHYSICAL

- Balance & Agility
- Mobility
- Quickness
- Puckhandling Skills
- Rebound control
- Strength
- Flexibility

MENTAL

- Mental Toughness
- Intensity
- Self-Confidence
- Ice Awareness
- Decision-Making
- Work Habits
- Discipline

When planning your evaluation skates and tryouts, be sure to work in some drills where you can get a look at the "mental" side of the goalies. Most shooting drills will give you a good grasp of their physical skills, but it takes "competition" to really get a true feel for the intangibles.

SCRIMMAGE – will give you an idea of their physical skills, in addition to ice awareness, intensity, decision-making and mental toughness.

BREAKAWAYS – look for aggressiveness/self-confidence, decision-making, work habits, competitiveness, mental toughness and discipline.

CONDITIONING DRILLS – have your goaltenders go at the same time to get a look at their work habits, competitiveness, mental toughness and discipline.

The bottom line on goaltenders, "does he consistently stop the puck?" Make sure that you consider the "total package", not just the physical skills when picking your goaltenders.

