



OUTSIDE EDGES

Hockey players spend most of their time skating on the inside edges of the skate blades. Quite simply, this is because most of the time players skate up the ice forward or backward and use the inside edges of their skate blades for “striding”. It should come as no surprise then that most players are much more comfortable on their inside edges than they are on their outside edges.

Improving outside edges can pay big dividends for the players on your team through sharper turning, faster acceleration and quicker changes of direction when stopping and starting.

The key to becoming comfortable on the outside edges is maintaining balance while turning, stopping or crossing over on the outside edge. Balance is affected predominantly by knee bend, ankle bend, upper body positioning and foot positioning.

KNEE BEND

It's common knowledge that players should strive to maintain “as close as possible to a 90 degree knee bend” while skating, for balance and power. This also holds true when stopping, turning and crossing over. The more knee bend, the better a player's balance will be. Many players confuse knee bend with bending at the waist. Make sure your players keep their heads and chests up with their weight on the middle of their skates. If they are bending at the waist, their weight will be on the toes of their skates and they will tend to lose their balance forward.

ANKLE BEND

This is often the hard one for players – to bend their ankles to the outside while maintaining their balance. One way to get them started is to have them do “walking crossovers” sideways making sure that their heads, and toes are facing the same direction, making sure to “roll over the ankle” of the skate on the ice as they bring the other leg over in front. The next step is to have them balance on the outside edge (on one leg) as they are turning.

UPPER BODY POSITIONING

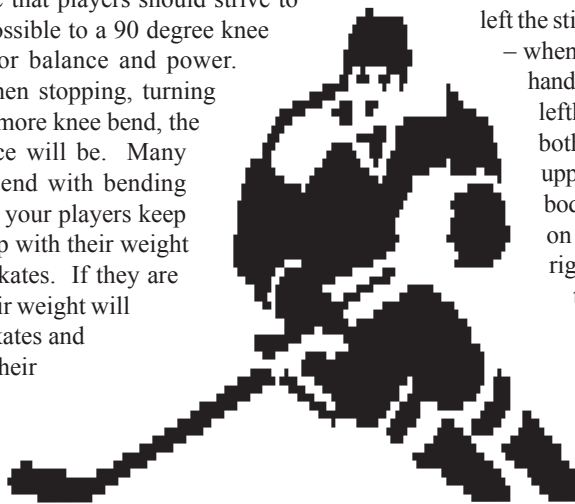
The upper body has a definite affect on the lower body. When turning, crossing over or stopping, the upper body needs to turn first – the head should turn first (to look where they are going) and the shoulders should open

up in the direction of the turn. The stick can be used as a “turn signal” - when turning to the left the stick should be on the left hand side – when turning to the right on the right hand side. A common mistake is when lefthanders turning to the right keep both hands on their stick and their upper body works against their lower body. They should keep the top hand on the stick only and swing it to the right side of the body at the start of the turn opening up the shoulders.

Also, players shouldn't “lean into” the turn or stop. The shoulders should remain parallel with the ice, upper body upright, with the bend at the hips, knees and ankles.

FOOT POSITIONING

Proper alignment of the feet is important. When tight turning or stopping to the left, the left foot should be the lead foot with feet aligned roughly in a toe-heel arrangement – the toe of the right foot should be slightly behind the heel of the left foot. Feet should be about “shoulder width” apart when turning or stopping to maintain stability.



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