

Point Shot Pointers

Teeing one up from just inside the blue line and blasting it over the goaltender's glove hand into the top corner of the net is the dream of virtually every defenseman who has ever patrolled the blue line. In reality, the chances of it occurring are pretty slim, even at the higher levels of hockey where the players actually have the physical skills to shoot the puck quickly and accurately. There are just too many things that can go wrong. There is never enough time to get the shot off. The shot misses the net. The shot is blocked. The chances of scoring from the point are minimal at best and the risks outweigh the rewards. We are not saying that players shouldn't attempt to score from the point – but only in the right situation. The goal of all defensemen should be to get the puck deep in the zone. If a shot on net or a goal is scored as a result of getting the puck deep – then that is a bonus for your team. Some pointers to ponder in working with your defensemen on shots from the point are as follows:

Handle the puck on the forehand as much as possible

Everybody handles the puck, passes and shoots better on their forehand than on their backhand. It makes sense then that defensemen should handle the puck on the forehand as much as possible at the blue line in the offensive zone. Their mission is to keep the puck inside the line and hopefully make a play with it, either a pass to their partner or a forward down low, a shot at the net, or at the very least just dumping the puck down deep in the zone. When handling the puck on the backhand, they severely limit their ability to make a play with the puck, putting them at risk of turning the puck over to the opposition in a very dangerous area of the ice. Defensemen need to work on moving laterally across the blue line both backward and forward while controlling the puck on their forehand.

Keep your head up – be sure you have time

The game is played with heads up. Whenever a defenseman gets the puck at the point, he/she should evaluate the situation and make sure he/she has enough time to make a play. As soon as the head is buried to shoot the puck, defenders move in to block the shot.

Improve the shooting angle – move to the middle

If time and space permits, players should try to move the puck to the middle of the ice (always on the forehand) to improve the angle of the shot and improve their chances of hitting the net. Also, if a shot from the boards misses the net, there is a chance that it can go up the boards and out of the zone on the other side of the ice before a defensive partner can get to it.

Wait for traffic and screens

Again, if time and space permits, wait until forwards and/or opposition defensemen move in front of the net to provide a screen or the chance for a deflection and/or rebound. In most cases, if a goaltender can see the shot, they will make the first save. Also, the movement in front of or to the side of the net often causes distractions for goaltenders and makes it harder for them to focus on the puck.

Shoot for deflections

The most difficult save for a goaltender to make is on the deflection. There are set in a position or moving to make a save, focused on the puck – then boom – it changes direction and they are totally off guard. Even if they get luck and the puck hits them, nine times out of ten there will be a rebound. Teach your players to shoot for a teammate's stick (in an area where they will be able to get a stick on the puck to redirect it).

Make sure the shot isn't blocked

One of the worst possible scenarios that can occur is five players in the offensive zone working hard for a scoring chance and a defenseman's shot hits someone's shin pad and bounces out to the neutral zone for a breakaways for the opposition. If there is any risk of a blocked shot, the puck should just be dumped deep in the corner or behind the net. It's better to put the puck up for grabs below the other team's goal line than at center ice.

Shoot low

Shots along the ice or within a foot off the ice have the best chance of getting through to the net. The higher a shot goes the wider the players are and the more chance it has of hitting something and stopping. If all it needs to navigate through is skate blades, sticks and legs, it has the best chance of getting to the net – and even better with a slight redirection from hitting one of these objects. Also, if the puck is shot low, forwards will be more willing to stand in front of the net to screen, tip and rebound.

Use the backboards

Some goaltenders play their angles extremely aggressively, coming way out of their crease to face shots from the points. The chances of beating them on a shot that they can see are virtually nonexistent. Sometimes its best to shoot to intentionally miss the net (on the short side), so that a teammate can play the carom off the backboards for a shot at a more-than-likely empty net.

At the very least – get it deep

Recognize situations when there is no time and no space to make a play. Rather than risk a turnover – get the puck down deep.

