

STOPPING



One of the most difficult areas for skaters to master is the ability to stop. Unfortunately, it is also one of the most difficult areas for coaches to teach. The increased popularity of roller blading has compounded the problem as many players crossing over from that sport bring bad habits with them which are difficult to break.

The ability to stop requires that you position your skates in a manner that they “shave” the ice to slow you down, while at the same time maintain your balance. That is a major problem, but teaching proper body positioning and control can rectify it. Once that is established, players can begin to work on the difficult task of getting the “feel” of shaving the ice.

FOOT POSITIONING

Feet should be positioned about “shoulder width” apart for the best balance and stability when stopping. Players should be stopping with feet aligned “heel-to-toe” meaning the toe of the lead skate should be lined up about at the heel of the trailing skate. Ankle bend is necessary to get on the inside edge of the lead skate and outside edge of the trailing skate.

BODY POSITIONING

The upper body should remain upright – shoulders parallel to the ice with head and chest up – keeping the weight over top of the skates. Two very common problems are players bending forward at the waist putting their weight too far out over their toes or leaning into the stop. Both problems cause players to be off balance and make it difficult to stand up and to get their weight on the

proper part of the skate blade to use it to stop. **Knee bend is critical.** The more knee bend a player has the better balance and control he will have.

STICK POSITIONING

The stick should be on the ice directly in front of the skater at all times, when skating and when stopping. As a player turns his feet in the direction of the stop, he needs to rotate his shoulders and stick in that direction as well, keeping his stick on the ice. This will keep his

upper body in control, with the shoulders “square” in the direction he is stopping. Less experienced players who have trouble maintaining balance can initially use the stick to lean on slightly to help with balance.

WEIGHT DISTRIBUTION

The weight should be on the about the middle of the blade of the skate. Only about 2-3” of the blade are on the ice while stopping and it is important that it is the correct 2-3”. By maintaining proper upper body, foot and stick positioning, the weight should be automatically over the middle of the blade. As most players have a far better command of their inside edges, they will use mostly the inside edge of the lead skate to stop. It is important that they use the outside edge of the trailing skate as well so that when they stop they are in a good position to quickly move either direction.

STATIONARY ICE SHAVING

Players stand with upper body upright, two hands on the stick, stick on the ice in front of them, knees bent and feet together. Very gradually, they slide one skate out to the side as far as they can – shifting the weight onto that skate. They then return it and do it again and again. It is important that they have good balance with the weight over the middle of their skate blade – otherwise they will have trouble shaving the ice. Do about

10-15 with each foot – very slowly and under control.

SIDE TO SIDE SHAVING

Players can now begin some controlled movement. Body positioning should remain the same except feet are now about a “shoulder’s width” apart. It is important that their toes remain straight ahead and that they not turn their feet at all. They begin to push from one side to the other, much like a goaltender does as he “roughs up” his crease at the beginning of a period. He will be shifting his weight in a very controlled manner from one foot to the other – push and slide, push and slide. Do about 10-15 in each direction.

ONE FOOT STOPPING

Players now start with their feet in a “t” position and push off the back foot, moving slowly on the foot pointed to

the side. Now they are required to actually turn their foot or “position” it to shave the ice to stop them. This is a critical point and many players revert to the roller blade stop of “cutting into the ice” in an arc rather than shaving the ice. It is important that they move slowly and work on maintaining balance as they position their foot to shave the ice to stop.

OUTSIDE EDGE STOPPING

Outside edges are the areas that players of all levels need the most work – but make sure that your players have a good command of the inside edges before working on the outside edges. Again, you need to have them move very slowly in a very confined area. Feet should be positioned in a “t” position again, pushing off of the back foot and gliding with the weight on the front foot. The back foot or “top of the t” then must be positioned to stop the player with the outside edge. The player needs to “roll the ankle outward” to get on the outside edge and gradually shifts the weight from the front skate to the back to stop.

Developing the ability to stop can be one of the most time-consuming and frustrating things to learn and to teach. It is not a skill that can be mastered in one or two times on the ice and must be worked on over time. Even after players have gained a command of their edges, they still need to work on proper body control and mechanics to make sure they have good balance and can quickly get started from that position to go in either direction. It is also important to be able to stop in both directions

(as well as turn) so that a player never has to turn his back to the puck in a game situation.

Coaches really should stress requiring players to work on stopping to their “weak side” in practices because in games we all know we revert back to what we do best.

- •
- **TEACHING TIPS** •
- • You have to crawl before you can walk, and walk •
- before you can run. Start out slowly. Many players •
- get discouraged because they try to go fast and slam •
- on the brakes – completely out of control – and end •
- up falling down. •
- • Teaching proper body mechanics first is very •
- important. •
- • It is also important to work on “shaving” the ice while •
- standing still to get a feel for how the foot should be •
- positioned and how much weight you can put on the •
- skate. Once that is accomplished you can begin •
- some confined movement and begin to move a little •
- faster so that more weight is required to be shifted •
- onto the skate blades to stop. •
- •