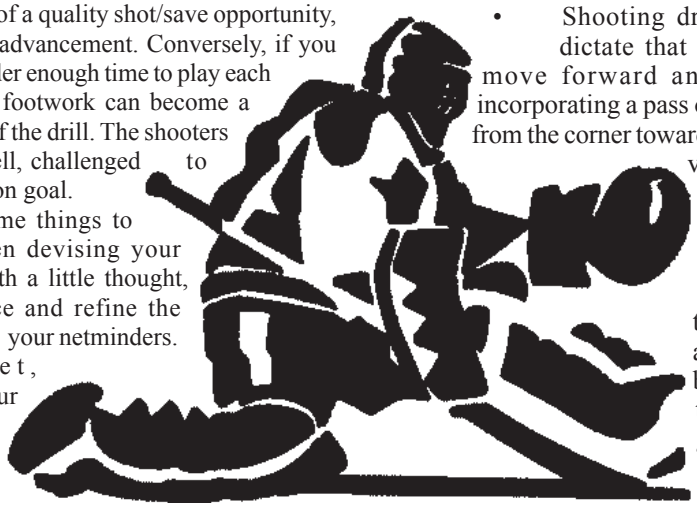
Tending to Goalies

MAKING FOOTWORK A PART OF EVERY DRILL

Last issue we talked about integrating the goalies into all of your practice drills to ensure that they are getting enough work in practice. We discussed developing this discipline as a coach from a team philosophy standpoint and a practical point of view. This time around we will look inside the drills, putting the onus on the goaltenders to get the most out of each drill. Our focus will primarily be on footwork and mobility.

First, for these suggestions to work best, you may have to lose any affinity you may have for rapid fire drills. Better to design shooting drills in which the shooter and the goaltender can finish the play fully before the next shooter gets into the mix. Allow enough spacing between shooters for your goaltender to get set up for every oncoming attacker. If the shooters arrive too rapidly, goaltenders simply take a stationary position, cutting down the angle, reacting to the puck, but not moving their feet. It robs both players of a quality shot/save opportunity, diminishing skill advancement. Conversely, if you give your goaltender enough time to play each shooter honestly, footwork can become a required portion of the drill. The shooters will benefit as well, challenged to make better bids on goal.

Here are some things to think about when devising your practice plan. With a little thought, you can reinforce and refine the footwork skills of your netminders. Don't forget, though, to let your goaltenders know that you expect them to work in their crease to get in position to make the save every drill, on each shot. Don't stand for them standing stationary fielding the shots.



CREASEWORK

- In every drill, require your goaltenders to move in their stance, following the puck even when the drill is developing in the neutral zone.
- By doing so, your goaltenders will develop a proper crouch, strengthening their upper leg muscles, which is essential as the main power source in explosive mobility.
- Finally, by working at all times in a proper stance, your young netminders will strengthen their inside edge skating techniques, which is the foundation of footwork fundamentals.

MOBILITY

- Shooting drills on the rush, force your goaltenders to move laterally by incorporating a pass or path that moves across the zone.
- Make sure your goaltenders start each time from where the shooter begins, not just setting up on the angle from which the shot will eventually come.
- Constantly monitor that your goaltenders are moving laterally by either shuffling or 'T-Pushing' and maintaining a proper stance throughout.
- Shooting drills in the zone, dictate that your goaltenders move forward and backward by incorporating a pass or path that moves from the corner towards the blueline and vice versa.
- Make sure your goaltenders follow the puck accordingly in the zone, again not allowing them to become stationary targets.
- Demand that your netminders work in their stance, moving both forward and backward using their inside edges to work on their 'C-Cuts' and continuously improving their footwork.

RECAP

- Replace rapid fire with pace and space in your shooting drills, opting instead for completion and follow up by both shooter and goaltender.
- With a little planning, footwork can be a required element of every drill for your goaltenders.
- Let your goaltenders know your expectations regarding mobility: In every practice situation taking an angle and remaining stationary is unacceptable -- it doesn't help anyone, including the shooters.
- Monitor your goaltenders' diligence in working in their stance at all times, their mechanics in moving laterally, forward and backward.

By working at all times in a proper stance, your young netminders will strengthen their insided edge skating techniques, which is the foundation of footwork fundamentals.