Goaltending Skills: Built from the ice up

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Goaltenders come in all shapes and sizes, use a variety of styles and approach the game in different ways. Yet, all successful goalies share a constant – they stop all the shots they're supposed to and regularly make the difficult saves look routine. Short or tall, stand-up or V-style, passive or aggressive – it makes no difference – solid fundamentals and determination are at the root of that trait.

And it all begins at ice level, with the foundation being skating. Often overlooked, strong skating skills are the starting point for any goaltender. *Getting in position to make the save* – ***mobility*** – is the key to positioning, moving in the crease, playing the shooting angles and reacting efficiently to the puck.

However, there is more to effective puck stopping than getting to the spot and making the initial save. Rebound control, recovery ability and effective use of all the tools available to keep the puck out of the net are critical. Use of the stick, gloves and pads to keep the puck out of the dangerous scoring area is the next level. How the goalie makes the stop – ***agility*** – defines playing under control, not only denying goals but also limiting second chance scoring opportunities.

Beyond the physical fundamentals, though, there is the matter of desire – the approach to improvement. Sometimes called heart or work ethic, *the effort put forth to refine your game will define your game.* Successful netminders continue to hone their strengths, but most importantly, they concentrate on eliminating weaknesses from their game. There is resolve – ***intensity*** – the best all share in striving to become better netminders. Ultimately, all goaltenders must develop acute on-ice awareness – reading and recognizing situations and reacting accordingly. This includes both the play and the game flow – critical junctures when a save is vital. Mental preparation, then, becomes a major factor in developing these essential ***adaptability*** traits – striving for consistent excellence and performing to maximum effect every time on the ice.

This season, stress the fundamentals in this organized progression: focus on the physical skills of 'getting there' – ***mobility*** – and the 'use of the available tools to make the save' – ***agility***. But, don't forget to address the mental aspects of skills development – ***intensity*** applied to getting better and ***adaptability*** to in-game situations.

We call it the Pyramid of Goaltending.

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