Recovery – a matter of perspective

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The goaltender's job is to make the first save, which of course is obvious — what happens next makes all the difference in the world. The ability to control rebounds and make recovery saves separates the great goalies from the merely good.

Making the first save is the goalie's business. Making the first stop the only necessary save by controlling the rebound is the best business practice of all. Yet, one and done is not always possible. So, separation between the great goaltenders and the merely good often comes from the ability to recover and repel the put-back as well.

What do we mean by recovery, though? Back to the stance position? Back to a full-V? Shoulders square to the puck? Or, will anything do, as long as the save is made? Well, the answer includes a little of each alternative. The best case scenario would be a complete positional reset to the stance position. Usually, though, that takes the most time and rebounds usually generate chances in tight, where the goaltender has to be at his quickest. Likewise, a full-V might leave the netminder with little option or ability to move laterally. Getting the shoulders squared to the puck is always important, but without control of the lower body, is incomplete. Finally, stopping the puck at all cost is the ultimate responsibility of the 'tender and there will always be times when ad-libbing is the only alternative. Still, recovery fundamentals are important – as with all fundamentals – as a base from which to work and improve, giving the goaltender the best odds of success.

Recovery then, has to do with the leg reaction in conjunction with squaring up. The key is to take away the bottom of net first, get set and get square. Getting to the spot can involve 'scooting' with a quick toe push, while still down on the ice. In addition, any lateral push might involve a 'paddle down' move, depending on how tight to the net the puck is. The goalies upper body will 'square up' naturally if the positioning mechanics are performed under control. The point here is that long rebounds afford more time for repositioning, where a full recovery might be possible. Below the hash marks, however, especially with congestion in and around the crease, leg recovery is the priority. Taking away the high percentage scoring area first — which is the bottom of the net – is vital to consistently stopping rebounds.

Sure, giving up rebounds is hardly desirable, but controlling the initial shot isn't always possible. Either way, calm, under control repositioning – thinking legs first — will cut down on those second chances becoming goals.

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