

## **How to Ruin your goalie in ten easy lessons**

Even though we are fast approaching the 21st century, goalies still are often neglected at virtually all levels of play. Youth hockey teams in particular seem afraid or unwilling to provide some measure of instruction to the goalies so they may develop at the same pace as the forwards and defensemen. Simply because you were never a goalie does not allow you to ignore the netminders. If you never played on the power play, does that mean that you won't teach your team how to run one? Here are some keys to avoid if you expect your goalies to reach their potential.

### **1. DON'T TRY TO COACH THE GOALIE**

A goalie is not like a mushroom which, if you keep it in the dark, it will flourish. You don't need to have been a goalie to teach simple concepts. Use reference materials, go to a seminar, or ask a local goalie coach to learn how to work with a goalie. Once you learn some basic principles of stance, movement, positioning, and save techniques, you can begin to intelligently observe and critique your goaltenders. Ignorance is not bliss.

### **2. IGNORE THE GOALIE DURING SKATING DRILLS**

Too many coaches let the goalies stretch or go through the motions during skating drills. Coaches often don't even look at the goalies during skating and puckhandling drills. The goalies learn to cheat and go half-speed which doesn't help them get ready for the intensity of game situations. If you are doing the over-speed drills, make the goalies move those pads! Make them handle the puck quickly so they can develop the skills to fake out a forechecker. Take a few seconds to observe them to see if they are cheating. Adapt drills so the goalies can see the benefits they will gain from doing the skating or puckhandling correctly. Once the goalies realize they are not an afterthought, they will push themselves harder.

### **3. PLACE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ON AN INEXPERIENCED GOALIE**

Nothing is harder than being saddled with the expectations of Patrick Roy when you are incapable of executing the saves at his level. When you scream and yell at the goalies for mistakes, are you being fair? Is the goalie experienced enough to make the type of saves you are demanding? Be fair and teach them responsibility for plays they can control and wisdom to know what type of scoring situations they aren't yet capable of handling. Unnecessary frustration can be avoided once the goalie learns to accept his or her limitations and focuses on practicing the weak points of their game so they can perform better.

### **4. BLAME THE GOALIE FOR EVERYTHING**

Goalies tend to have broad shoulders when it comes to accepting blame for losses or goals. Don't forget that there were five other mistakes prior to the puck entering the net.

### **5. SET UP STUPID SHOOTING DRILLS**

This is the most common and ridiculous problem for goalies. How many times does the referee blow the whistle and line up players in an arc and let them blast away rapid-fire shots at the goalie? This is what many coaches consider "goalie practice". Would you let a player carry the puck to the slot put his head down and take a slapshot? This is what happens during warm-ups and cooldowns at many practices. Instead of this drill, slow down one-on-ones, two-on-ones, and

three-on-twos so there can be a rebound and so the goalie can play the situation out with full intensity. If you slow down regular drills so the goalie and the rest of the team can play it out like a game, you won't need special goalie practice. If you are doing the shooting drills, make the shooters move their feet, change speeds, and follow up for rebounds. These concepts will improve their scoring ability and make the goalies work harder.

## 6. PLAY MIND GAMES

Goalies need to know what you as a coach think of them. They need to know what they must do to improve their skills to earn more ice time. You will develop "head case" goalies by ignoring them, not telling them who is playing or yanking them from the start for no reason. I never want a goalie to be coddled, but, simply be honest with them as to your expectations and you will have fewer headaches with them.

## 7. KEEP THEM OUT OF SYSTEMS WORK

Goalies are the only players who can see the whole ice surface. They should be totally familiar with the defensive, neutral, and offensive zone systems. They can recognize problems before they happen and can anticipate the saves that will be required based on where the puckcarrier is attacking, where the opponents without the puck are moving, and how the defense is lining up against the rush. Explain to the goalies what their responsibilities are in playing defensive hockey.

## 8. HIRE AN INCOMPETENT GOALIE COACH

If you are going to trust your goalies with their own coach, make sure he or she knows up to date concepts on goaltending. If they last played in the 1960's and try to teach what worked then, the goalies will be frustrated by the outdated advice. Goaltending techniques are constantly being refined and the goalies want up to date information. If the goalies know more than the coach, there will be problems. The goalie coach must also not force goalies to change their styles. If the goalie likes to butterfly, teach them the correct way to do it. Don't try to make them a standup. The goalie coach's job is to refine, not do major overhauls.

## 9. DON'T ALLOW THE GOALIES TO FAIL IN PRACTICE

For a goalie to improve, he or she must feel as though it is okay to try new things, even if they look bad doing so. For goalies to move beyond their comfort zones, they must be encouraged to practice their weaknesses.

## 10. DON'T ALLOW THEM TO LEAVE THE CREASE

Welcome to the 21st century. Goalies must handle the puck as well as the regular players in order to help with breakouts and defensive clears. If you do not teach your goalies the smart way to set the puck, pass it, or clear it, then your team will have plenty of defensive giveaways. Smart puckhandling doesn't mean scoring a goal, it means getting the puck to the defense or out of the zone the quickest, safest way possible.

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