

Minnesota Hockey



Goalies should not be shutout from coaching

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Ways youth hockey coaches can help with the development of their goalies



Coach Steve Carroll working with goalies at 2011 Minnesota Hockey Reebok High Performance Goalie Camp in Blaine.

Each hockey season, I speak about goaltending at several USA Hockey coaching clinics and skills workshops. My message to the coaches is always crystal clear.

They need to change to make goalies first – break out of their comfort zone, change the way they do business, so goalie development becomes a priority and not an after thought.

During these presentations, I often wonder why is it that hockey goalies, arguably the most important players on a team, receive the least amount of coaching.

The answer appears to be simple. Many youth hockey coaches know very little about the position or take the time to get up to speed on what they can do to assist in development.

The reasons often given for this are the coach never played the position, they don't understand the latest goalie techniques, they have to worry about the other 15 players or they assume their goalies get all the coaching they need at the goalie clinics or schools they may or may not attend during the summer.

Therefore, adults coach in their comfort zone, spending countless hours on breakouts and powerplays. All the while, basically ignoring the goalies and hoping that somehow they magically improve and become a difference-maker in the big games.

This goes for whenever hockey is being played, winter, spring, summer or fall.

For many youth hockey coaches, figuring out how to coach their goalies can be the most challenging and intimidating aspect of their job. However, it doesn't have to be.

Below are some goalie coaching tips I share during my presentations that youth hockey coaches at all levels should consider:

- Learn as much as you can about the goalie position so you can teach the proper techniques and help ALL the kids on your team.
- If your hockey association holds goalie clinics, make every effort to attend taking notes or helping out on the ice.
- Assign someone to be your team's designated goalie coach.
- When developing practice plans, schedule 15–20 minutes of each practice for individual goalie skill development, make sure you write this down so you don't forget about it.
- Stick to the basics, most kids need to improve fundamental skills.
- Goaltending is all about quality repetition; encourage your goalies to practice their movements over and over again; at first, they will have to think before reacting, eventually, they'll react without thinking.

- Encourage goalies to be leaders and not followers; have them be at the front of the line during team skating drills, not at the end of the lines because they skate slower than others.
- Teach the goalies to treat every shot in practice like it means something, and to be accountable for their effort and performance.
- Control the flow of the drills so goalies have a chance to play the rebounds.
- Encourage goalies to work on their own individual skills while your team is doing other drills. You want goalies to make the most each practice, so they improve every time.
- Pay attention to your goalie; make them feel like an important member of the team.
- Goalies are not shooting targets for players or coaches; they should be treated with respect; coaches need to stop reliving their glory days as a player by blasting shots past their goalies to show everyone who is watching that "they still have it."
- Talk to your players about not shooting pucks at your goalies' head or when they are not looking; this rule should be enforced from the beginning of the year; nothing destroys a goalies' confidence more than shots aimed at their head, this can also cause serious injuries.
- Do not allow your players to take slap shots from inside the top of the face-off circles; again, it's all about building up your goalie's confidence.
- Goalies should be among the best skaters on the team; having them participate in the team skating drills is fine, but they also need time to work on their goalie specific skating skills and movements.
- Teach goalies the three "R's" of goaltending – **READY** for the shot, **REACT** to the shot, **RESPOND** to the puck.
- Encourage your goalies to work on their puckhandling and shooting skills.
- Teach your goalie to talk it up and give instructions to their teammates.
- Try not to criticize the play of your goalies in front of their teammates, there are usually 3–5 other players on the ice at the same time who share the responsibility of preventing a goal; if you choose to discuss performance issues, it's best to do it on an individual basis and before the next ice time, when emotions are not part of the mix and they can give full attention to correcting mistakes.
- Think carefully about removing your goalie during a game for poor play, when possible make the change between periods.
- Make sure your goalies always get a good pre-game warm-up with plenty of quality stoppable shots.
- Goaltending is about confidence, build their confidence, improve their play, improve their play, improve your team.
- More information including drills are available at www.usahockeygoaltending.com.
- Be good to your goalies, and chances are, your goalies will be good to you.

Good luck coaching your goalies, the most important players on your team!

For more information, contact Steve at scarroll@minnesotahockey.org.

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