

Goalies should not be shut out from coaching

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Why is it that hockey goalies, arguably the most important players on a team, receive the least amount of coaching during the season?

The answer is 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.

Therefore they coach in their comfort zone, spending countless hours on break-outs, forechecks and powerplays. All the while, basically ignoring the goalies.

Imagine the outrage if a head coach spent 95 percent of their practice time working with just their goalies. During the same time, forwards and defensemen could horse around in the middle of the ice, working on whatever they felt like and be available for the end of the practice breakaway contest.

Sounds silly, but that is reality in reverse when it comes to goalie development.

Here is a common scenario that takes place far too often during practice. Coaches decide their goalies need to see a lot of pucks to get ready for their next big game. They design a practice that includes all types of shooting drills and of course, finishes with a 15-minute shootout/breakaway contest. The staff feels good because their goalies did

indeed see a lot of shots during the hour and must be warmed-up and “in the zone” for the game.

Yes, the goalie saw a lot of shots, but they will probably continue to see shots in their head during the car ride home, in their sleep and at the next day at school. When it comes time for the game, the last thing they may be interested in is seeing another shot.

Contrary to what many coaches think, it takes more than just facing a “zillion” shots for goalies to improve. Goalies also need quality time to work on individual skill development.

Look at it this way. If a team only practiced the shooting portion of a powerplay, how successful would that unit be? It’s the same with goaltending. Shots are an important part of development process but not the only ingredient.

I have had many coaches from high school to squirts, tell me that they never played goalie and don’t have a clue on what to do with them.

To be honest, you do not have to be a former goalie to help the goalies on your team. In fact, some ex-netminders are not good goalie coaches because they’re not able to breakdown the position and communicate in a language that makes sense to youngsters.

What good youth hockey coaches need is a desire to learn, and a willingness to expand their knowledge of the game. If they do, they will



Coach Carroll working with a goalie during his goalie school.

become a more well-rounded coach, their goalies will improve throughout the season, and chances are their team will be more successful. I challenge you to make this the year, you do something to help the goalies on your team.

Goalies, along with the other players have such a small window of opportunity for development. No one can afford to let a season slip by without improving.

While your team is doing full ice skating drills, one coach should spend 10-15 minutes of every practice working with the goalies on specific drills designed for fundamental skill

development. You will be amazed at what a positive impact that time will have on your goalie’s development. Many goalie movement drills can be done on a small portion of the ice sheet so not to interfere with what is being taught to the forwards and defensemen.

Coaches should establish development goals for goalies so they improve on some aspect of their game every time they take the ice.

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