



WARMING UP YOUR GOALIE





DOES A GOALIE HAVE TO WARM UP? A GOALIE JUST NEEDS TO SKATE AND FEEL THE PUCK BEFORE HIS GAMERIGHT! HOW SHOULD YOU WARM UP YOUR GOALIE? IS THERE A SPECIAL SECRET? CAN IT REALLY AFFECT HIS PERFORMANCE? THESE ARE MANY OF THE QUESTIONS AND REMARKS MADE BY COACHES AND PARENTS EVERY DAY.

Most coaches don't know much when it comes to goaltending. Many coaches are the first to tell you that and when it comes to warming up a goalie they usually know even less. They want the goalie to be ready and they place incredible demands and expectations on the performance of their goalie. We all realize that the goalie has a strong impact on the team's overall success. Then why do we not spend the time to ensure that our goalie is fully prepared going into a game? The answer is probably not what you thought and it is because most goalies either don't know how to fully prepare for the game or don't know what to do during the actual warm-up, even if they were asked what they would like.

While I do agree that you cannot spend all of your warm-up worrying about your goalie and ensuring that he is ready for the game, there has not been enough simple thought put into the strategies behind warming up the team, including the goalie.

A proper warm-up may be critical to both your goalie's and your team's success. Finding the perfect combination for any goalie's warm-up can add much more consistency to his game than you may realize. A goalie's mental state can directly affect his play; a proper warm-up is the finishing stage of his mental preparations. Many times it will sway his performance one way or another.

A warm-up for the goalie is to

prepare him for active play during the game. Most take this as loosening up the goalie and preparing him for game shots. While this is true and does help, there are many different important items in his game being left unattended. Many take for granted the goalie's needs and how to better prepare him for the upcoming game. This is due to a lack of knowledge and a lack of time to properly evaluate what must be accomplished when trying to warm up your goalie.

When the team is getting ready to play an important game or tournament the coach does a number of things in preparation; aside from the practices that he runs in preparation, you can see the diagrams isolating areas of concern.



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Game plans are equally as important to the goalie. Many of my students prepare a game sheet that lets them know what they want to accomplish in a specific game. As an example.... you are playing a very fast offensive team that moves around and can beat your team to the puck. The goalie's game sheet would consist of the following.... lots of talking to the defense, freezing the puck frequently and giving your team time to set up again. You will want to isolate the top line or top players and know what it is they like to do. If it is a slower game, you need to know how to handle what the game may bring so that you don't give up a sleeper, keeping the play ongoing, handling the puck frequently. Again,

know which strategies can take advantage of the situation. There are so many different ways that you may want your goalie to actively play against a specific opponent, just as you would a team strategy. This applies to any level of hockey where you know your opponent and what to expect.

The next step in preparing the goalie for the game is to understand exactly what it is that you want him to do. Preparing for a game is much too broad a term to identify exactly what it is that you want your team, or your goalie, to do. You want to isolate the parts of the game to be ready for. Shots on goal do loosen up the goalie but does this mean that if the goalie is loose he will play well? What about the rest of his game?

What about his angles or positioning? What about his lateral movement or his recovery? What about rebound control? If you want him to handle the puck, do you want the first puck he touches to be during the game?

Now, I know what most of you are thinking. That it's fine if you play junior hockey or higher, but in minor hockey there is only a 5-minute warm-up time to prepare before the game. Let's not waste that valuable 5 minutes. Let's put it to the best possible use and prepare as much as we can for the game.

We are going to construct a 5-minute warm-up because most allow close to that but please feel free to adjust it to suit your needs and to actually practice it during your practices to ensure it is



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being executed properly and is effective.

Much of the pre-game preparation is done just prior to the game; much of the stretching and loosening up can and should be completed prior to getting onto the ice. Now, as the goalie steps onto the ice, he will skate a few quick laps around the ice carrying a puck with him and shooting it off of the boards or into the net thereby getting the feel of the puck on his stick. After a few seconds, to finish off his stretching he is now ready to go to the net.

Now, while the rest of the team is skating, one player will be in the slot area with the pucks taking consecutive wrist shots to the glove, blocker pads, etc. This allows the goalie to loosen up and begin feeling the puck.

Place all of the pucks into both corners and have your players lined up across the blue line. Once the goalie moves off of the post following each puck to the shooter, unknowingly the goalie is sharpening his positioning and angling skills. The shooter has the option of releasing the puck immediately, or skating in a few strides. This allows the goalie to begin reading the player. He may wish to attack prior to the release of the shot. Of course, the goalie will alternate sides, which allows him to work on his recovery, because after

each shot is taken he must recover to the opposite post. Please note: the players in the corners passing the pucks must wait for the goalie to be set on the post before passing the next puck. The passing player also controls the speed of the pass, enabling the goalie to work on his foot speed skills.

Now move all of the players into the corners with all of the pucks. Here a player from each side will leave at the same time. One player will first pass the puck to the back of the net. The goalie will go and get the puck and in turn pass it up to the player as he nears the blue line. The player will exit and re enter the zone on a 2 on 0 break, allowing the goalie to maintain coverage while laterally moving across with the puck. This has the goalie moving out of his net quickly, passing the puck, reading the player and working on lateral movement. You can also include rebounds that are only in front of the net, where they could be considered dangerous.

Now the goalie is fully prepared to start the game. If you're looking to add a little more consistency to your goalie's game he must be consistently prepared for each game. Don't wait until the beginning of the game to see if he is prepared; give him the proper start both he and the team need. This can be the competitive edge that your team needs.

