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BMHA GOALTENDER DEVELOPMENT MANUAL

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Introduction

Hello BMHA coaches! Thank you for participating in the BMHA Goaltender Development Initiative and taking the time to familiarize yourself with this manual; designed to help coaches better understand goaltender development beginning with the fundamentals of the position.

We all know good and bad goaltending when we see it, we know the success that a team can achieve when they have it and the struggles that can follow when they don't. But how do we development consistency in goalies? How do we help a kid stay focused through the ups and downs of a single game; let alone an entire season? How can we pinpoint and correct bad habits while building good ones? What about the mental game that a goaltender goes through? This manual will help you to identify and teach the basic skills that every goalie builds their foundation on as well as offer tips and insight into how to make practice time a positive development experience for goaltenders. Along the way we'll discuss the role of the Head Coach and Goalie Coach in the annual success of your goaltenders; how to handle certain situations, how to help them prepare and keep them on top of their game.

This manual serves as a technical starting point for all coaches and goalie coaches to refer to in an attempt to enhance skills development amongst BMHA teams and goaltenders. Remember, it is not always about teaching goalies something new, but giving them the opportunity to develop, polish and perfect (or as close to it as goalies can get) their skills each and every time on the ice. There is no such thing as a perfect goaltender. The idea is to do the things that give you the best chance to make a save as much as possible. As coaches, it is incumbent upon us to give young goaltenders the best chance to work at their skills, understand the position and be able to make good decisions on their own.

So again coaches, I thank you for taking part in this initiative and having the willingness to learn and be coached right along with your goalies. It is my hope that moving forward through this program, we are able to develop an entire generation of highly skilled athletes playing the most unforgiving position in sport. Your role is crucial and your efforts are greatly appreciated. Good luck!

Matt Parker

BMHA Head Goalie Coach

PKGoaltending

The Goalie Coach

Roles:

- Monitor the progression and development of goaltenders
- Develop and implement specific practice plans
- Build and reinforce the importance of good practice habits
- Ensure goaltenders challenge themselves through the entirety of practice
- Communicate with goaltender and parents on skill identification and progression
- Communicate with Head Coach regarding skills development and progression, practice work ethic and attitudes, playing time/who to start etc.

The team goalie coach does not need to be an expert at the role or have years of experience to back them. The goalie coach simply needs to know how to reinforce the basic skills required of any goaltender and be able to effectively communicate the proper execution and positive repetition of these skills to the goalies. While on the ice, it is important for the goalies while they're participating in goaltender specific development time that they receive quality reps. Drills do not need to be complicated nor extensive, it is more important to have a central focus on a skill or a couple of skills, and repeat clean execution. This will not only build the skill in the goalie, but help to create good practice habits that will translate into game situations.

When creating and implementing drills, be sure to have a purpose. You are working a specific skill because of a certain game situation, a circumstance that occurred in a previous game, or an identification of a weakness. Communicate this purpose with the goaltender as this will help them to understand the importance of why it is being worked on. Especially when working basic skating or positioning, which many goaltenders will consider easy and tend to lose focus on execution. It's easy because of the enormous amount of time practicing, and if the execution is so easy, than be perfect!

When working with young goaltenders, introducing a new skill, or when the goalie is struggling with a certain drill, be sure to begin the drill slowly and isolate the specific skill or position desired. It is important to first understand, be able to control the body properly, smooth out the execution, and then, lastly, be fast! It can also be helpfully to call out the steps or directions during the drill to the goaltender. This can help him/her to focus on one step at a time and not worry about the process of the drill all at once. Sometimes when a goalie gets into the pattern, it is easy for the brain to turn off and they stop thinking. Calling out the steps, movements and positions helps them along, and keeps them on their toes.

The Head Coach

Roles:

- Communicate with goalie coach on the progress, work ethic and readiness of goaltenders
- Build relationship and have direct communication with goalies
- Design a general plan for starts and workload
- Develop a positive practice environment for goaltenders
- Give goaltenders time to prepare
- Confer with goalie coach and communicate to goaltenders the reasons for certain decisions i.e. being pulled.

As we know the Head Coach has several responsibilities encompassing both on and off ice components of the entire team. This is why we value so much the role and responsibilities of a goalie coach, however the head coach must take some time to understand the development, preparation processes and quality use of the team's goalies.

Having a positive attitude when dealing with goaltenders will have a big impact on performance. A goaltender needs to know mistakes can be made in order to keep his/her focus primarily on stopping the puck. If they are worried about being pulled after a bad goal, they will play more intimidated than confident. If the goalie looks shaky early on, pull them. Reassure them this is their game, to relax and play confidently, we have confidence in you. Then return them to the net. If a goaltender change is needed, be sure to communicate the reasons in as positive a manner as possible, either on the bench or in the dressing room. Never leave a goalie wondering what happened as often they may see things or interpret something differently than the coach did. Sometimes the goalie deserved to be pulled, sometimes it's to light a fire under the skaters, sometimes it's to make sure the goalie is not hung out to dry. No matter the reason and even if the goalie was not prepared or did not perform, be positive. Being pulled is never a good feeling and the goaltender does not want to be made to feel worse about it by the person who's opinion matters the most.

In conjunction with the goalie coach, have a soft framework for how goalies will be used. Be it a 50/50 rotation, hot goalie keeps the net, or a starter and backup role, communicate the plan and expectations to the goaltenders. This framework can change depending on circumstance, but knowing the expectations at the start of the season allows the goalies to be comfortable and prepared for their starts, as well as allow for healthy competition between both goalies. Always let the goalie know who will be starting the next game at least 24 hours in advance whenever possible. Again this allows the goaltender to go through his/her individual preparation routine and show up to the rink ready. Do not keep them guessing, worrying or worse yet, surprise them as they arrive at the rink.

Create a positive practice environment for goaltenders outside of the designated time they'll be working with the goalie coach. Practices are for skaters; they require flow, tempo a work ethic and an understanding. They are to develop systems and philosophies, and every once in a while, to kick some butt. However the importance of creating drills that involve the goalies and at the same time give the goalies a chance to practice the things they need to cannot be overstated. Drills need to be dynamic and game realistic as much as possible. Create traffic in front of the net, play out rebounds and loose pucks, give the goalies some help by way of defensive coverage. This allows the goalie to do things like set up and prepare for the play, control, track and reposition to rebounds, battle through bodies and communicate with their defense. Drills also need to be spaced out properly. Again tempo and flow are a big deal in practice, but there's yet to be a game played at any level where a goalie gets more than one puck fired at them at the same time during play. The goalie needs time to watch out rebounds and finish that puck before moving on to the next shot and should not have to worry about the guy on the other side of the ice who might fire a shot too quickly and catch them with it in the ribs.

Finally, bag skating. Sometimes at practice the team needs a wakeup call, and the goalies are part of the team. However bag skating the goalies should be approached differently than the forwards and defense. It has been stated that goaltenders should never be made to skate lengths or suicides in their full equipment. Two reasons; this can develop bad skating and balance habits, and more importantly could cause injury. If bag skating the team, allow the goalie coach to run the goaltenders through a goalie skating drill that will achieve the same purpose. This way the goalies are still doing what comes natural to them while getting the same treatment as the rest of the team.

The Fundamentals

The Hockey Canada Goaltender Development Model places almost all its emphasis on fundamental skill development when working with young goaltenders. Concepts such as positioning, anticipation, making reads and others can always be taught at the higher level. But if a goaltender can't catch; can't skate; can't watch the puck at the higher level then nothing else matters. It is with this idea in mind that we present the three parts of a goaltender's body to always be focusing on in any drill. These are...

- Eyes
- Hands
- Feet

While not every drill will emphasize all three, these are the most important aspects to consider when incorporating development drills into practice.

The first two, eyes and hands, are more intangible skills versus physical skills. It's easy to watch the puck. Open your eyes and look. But "Puck Tracking" is a skill, and like any other skill it must be practiced and developed. No matter the drill you're doing, as a coach you must emphasize to the goaltender "eyes first". If the drill starts on the puck and the puck moves – eyes first. If the drill starts off the puck and then moving to it – eyes first. If there is no puck, wherever the goaltender moves to – eyes first. It cannot be overstated or overworked. Along with "eyes first", the concept of "Head Trajectory" must be ingrained. This implies that the head must take the eyes to the puck when making a save. It is not enough to just see the puck in the peripheral, or to watch the puck out of the corner of your eye. If the puck is coming low to the glove side, the head turns and points the eyes low to the glove side. This goes for any save as much as possible.

Strong use of the hands is another important part to any goaltender's game. The hands not only make saves for the goalie, but help to support positioning, aide in puck tracking and control the play. A goalie's hands help to protect the net from the shooter's eye as well as the puck's eye, and are key in making primary saves. One of the focuses of Hockey Canada's development model is "Active Hands", to have goalie's making more saves with their glove and blocker. This offers a greater chance to control rebounds away from danger areas and for whistles. Active hands goes right along with strong puck tracking skills and it is important at every practice to spend some amount of time working on goaltender's hands.

Finally, the feet and strong skating skills may be most important to the overall success of a goalie. It is said that a goalie must be the best skater on the team. This is mostly true, but more accurately he/she must be the best goalie skater. A goaltender's footwork must be worked on constantly. Not because it is difficult, but because when it needs to be executed perfectly in a game situation to make a save, all the time spent on it will pay off. Edgework and balance are two important concepts to consider when developing a goaltender's skating skills.

Positioning – Net and Physical

A goaltenders positioning can be broken down into two parts:

- Net Positioning: the goaltender's use of position to protect the net from the puck and shooter
- Physical Positioning: the body position of the goalie when preparing for a shot and making a save

Physical Positioning

Stance

The purpose of the goaltender's stance is to be physically ready to move and make a save. This is a balanced, athletic, explosive position that maximizes how much net the goalie is protecting. While no two goalies will have the exact same stance position, there are universal elements that should be present amongst all goaltenders.

Teaching Points:

- Feet around shoulder width apart, balanced on the toes and set on the inside edges of the skates. Feet should be straight across and square to the puck.
- Knees should be bent to create power in the bottom half and allowing for forward balance
- Shoulders and hips line up straight across to face the puck and keep the body square, shoulders leaning forward to create a bigger position and get closer to the release of the shot.
- Hands and stick should be the closest thing to the puck. Glove and blocker level, square and pushed forward out front and outside of hips to aid in balance. Hands should be visible to the goalie as they watch the puck. If the goalie can't see their hands, chances are the hands are positioned too low or too deep.
- Elbows just making contact with ribs, limiting holes. Stick flat on the ice with "trigger finger" hold, blade on a slightly declining angle, placed between skates to cover the five-hole.
- Head should slightly tilt the chin down towards puck, allowing eyes to maintain contact for a good visual of the released shot.



Bad Habits:

- Feet too wide, loss of balance and mobility
- Feet too close together, legs not bent, too straight up and down. Mobility and power suffer
- Balancing on heels, “sitting” position. Limits quick burst movements
- Weak hands, glove too low or too high, blocker resting on pad, double covering body, taking stick away from five-hole
- Body over crouched, feet/shoulders turned. Opens up net to the shooter

Once again the goaltender’s stance position is not universal, there is room for interpretation and to allow for the comfort level and style of every goalie. But as you can see by ensuring some key points are adhered to, the goaltender will be able to take away as much net as possible from the shooter while maintaining an athletic ready position. Make sure during drills, especially when the team works as a whole that the goalie understands the importance of being prepared for the shot; be ready early and do not get caught out of your stance when the puck carrier has an opportunity to shoot. The stance is a goaltender’s ready position for a reason, it’s coverage, it’s athletic, it’s explosive. It’s pretty hard to make a save if you’re not physically ready.

Butterfly

The butterfly is a save; it is a tool, it is an option. It is NOT a style! The butterfly (ideally) is used when the goalie is balanced and under control, to make a save on a shot going towards the lower half of the net. A well-controlled butterfly position covers up the most net, minimizes holes in the goalie's position and allows for positive rebound control to the corners, away from the danger or for a whistle. But at the end of the day it all comes down to puck tracking and patience. If the puck is going to the top corner, a butterfly, while often used, is not necessary. As always, see where the puck is going, stay patient and make the best decision; the best save you can. That being said, today's game utilizes the butterfly quite often, which makes it an important tool to properly execute.

Teaching Points:

- Both knees drive together and down to the ice in an explosive downward push.
- Feet push out to create maximum coverage along the ice while keeping the knees together and five-hole closed.
- Hands and elbows remain in same area to eliminate holes, until they need to make the save, stick protects five-hole.
- Shoulders and body remain tall and square to the puck, with a slight forward lean.
- Head tilts chin slight down, eyes forward and locked in on the puck.



Bad Habits:

- Weak knee drive, dropping to butterfly instead of being powerful and slamming the door shut. Five-hole goals or pucks that go through the butterfly are usually do to a lack of explosiveness into the save
- Blocking, not keeping hands and stick active, relying on puck to hit the position.
- Lazy arms and hands, Glove and blocker drop and do not go to the puck. Arms do not squeeze tight, puck forces its way through holes
- Low shoulders, playing smaller
- Narrow feet and/or wide knees

The butterfly is a position used when the shot is released; the save still has to be made. Track the puck in and finish the save accordingly. The goaltender should not go into the butterfly position and lock up in hopes that the puck hits them. If the shot is low to the glove, use the butterfly position and make a glove save. If the shot is along the ice, use the butterfly position and make the save with the stick. If the puck is coming into the body, butterfly position and swallow it up with your chest and hands. Goaltenders today use the butterfly on the majority of shots, but it's important to remember the athleticism, reaction time and quick reflex needed to finish the save.

Net Positioning

Angles:

Being on the angle is easy. Essentially, always stay between the puck and the middle of the net. Wherever the puck is on the ice it lines straight up with the centre crossbar, that is the angle of the puck. But being on the angle takes a feel, it's a sense and it's easy to blow it. The goalie gets one chance when positioning to the puck as it enters the zone and if they're off the angle that's usually all that matters. There's no time to go back and check or fix the angle once the puck is shot. Good chance, it's in.

For young goaltenders, being off the angle is something you'll see plenty. Learning takes nothing more than experience, and for most goaltenders it isn't until they've had more than a few years of playing for them to really be able to consistently protect the net from both puck and shooter. But for a goaltender of any age and level, practicing the basics of how to position to the puck and protect the net keeps the execution sharp.

Teaching Points:

- Run drills using a set puck or pucks as one or multiple angles, or use landmarks in the rink such as faceoff dots and the point where the blue line meets the boards.
- Using post, middle of net, or landmark as starting point, to position to new angle, begin with eyes first to the puck
- Goalie pivots, stick and hands lead to puck and control body to be square
- Tpush, shuffle or float to angle, skating in stance position, get set to new angle
- Pivot and move to multiple new angles as well as back to posts
- Be sure and take time to notice when the goaltender is off, by how much and to what side of the angle
- Have goalie stop and look over their shoulders, realize what it feels like to be positioned where they are in the net

Bad Habits:

- Goalie not moving in straight lines
- Setting stance to one side over the other
- Getting to angle and then moving off, not keeping position
- Taking eyes off the puck while moving
- Body and stance turn and do not stay square

Depth Control

Another skill that requires experience and a consistent focus, depth control refers to where to position in the net in relation to the depth of the play and offensive situation against. Most of the time, it revolves around the goaltender positioning too deep in his/her net, versus being more aggressive, challenging the shooter and protecting more of the area behind them. For most young goaltenders, being deeper or drifting back in the net feels safer and comes more naturally. These goalies need to learn quickly what the results will be when they challenge shots with depth control. More pucks hit them, more miss the net. When the goalie is bigger and the net is smaller, the shooter will need to beat the goalie with a great shot, and that won't happen as much as a missed net or a shot off the body when the goalie challenges and stays big to the puck. Once young goalies come to understand this, they believe in it and gain more confidence in challenging.

Older goaltenders need to be reminded to stay aggressive as well, but also to make good decisions on when to challenge and when to stay deeper, based on anticipating the play in front of them. For these goalies it comes down to making smart decisions in game.

Teaching Points:

- Focus on awareness, the goalie needs to realize when they are drifting or staying deep. Often they won't notice it themselves
- Challenge at the top of the crease, getting toes of skates into the white ice
- Encourage a young goalie challenging is about being intimidating to the shooter, base the drill around moving to the puck quickly and making a big save late in the game
- Delay the shot, make the goalie wait for the release instead of getting a quick shot right away, force them to stay patient
- To emphasize the result, have the goalie face 10 shots standing on the goal line and then at the top of the crease, where do they make more saves?

Bad Habits:

- Not moving quickly, not getting out far enough or in time
- Getting to top of crease, then letting themselves drift backwards
- Not moving in stance or getting into stance position in time

Skating Skills

A goaltender's ability to skate with quickness, balance and control is key in being able to properly position to a shot and increase the likelihood of making a save. Goaltenders use three types of footwork through the course of the game based on the play in front of them.

Shuffle

- Used to move short lateral distances and keep stance position square to the puck as it is on an opposing player's stick
- Skates point forward, feet stay square as goaltender balances on toes
- Goaltender's weight is transferred from push leg to lead leg in direction of shuffle, off the inside edge of skate
- Lead leg controls balance, square position and direction of travel

Bad Habits:

- Not staying in stance, balancing on heels weak shuffle with no power
- Weight transferred too early to lead leg, inside edge resists shuffle and goalie gets stuck or stumbles
- Bad travel line, lead or push skate is not square, taking the goalie to the wrong angle or spot in the net
- Shuffling behind or ahead of puck, losing the angle

Tpush

- Used when a loose puck or pass has puck moving quickly ahead of the goalie, side to side and forward/back
- Explosive movement, allows goaltender to travel in stance rather than go down to butterfly position early
- Pivot with puck as it changes angle, staying in stance position
- The pivot and rotation generates power which transfer into the push leg
- Lead skate opens and allows the goalie to ride the edge across to new angle as push leg explosively releases the power
- Lead skate sets stance once in position, stopping movement

Bad Habits:

- Popping up out of stance in pivot
- Transferring weight to lead leg instead of push leg
- Moving in a “rainbow” line instead of straight line
- Setting stance with both feet instead of lead skate
- Over/under rotating, turning hands and body too much or not enough when changing angles

C-cut

- Skating in stance position, forwards and backwards
- Not often used, and not much movement when it is used, keeps goaltender square to puck in challenge and retreat situations, breakaways
- In stance and on inside edges, weight transfers inside to out as skate cuts the ice in a “C” pattern
- 2-3 cuts max used to quickly gain momentum and move forward or back

Bad Habits:

- Not powerful enough, moving too slow
- Weight transfers to heels, lose balance and explosiveness
- Skates drift apart at same time

Post Save Recovery

Once the goaltender makes the initial save on a scoring chance, the real work begins. In addition to tracking the puck in and out of the save, the goalie is responsible to control the rebound out of the middle of the ice and away from any opposing players. Sometimes however this can be completely out of the goalie's control and a second and third save will rely on the goalie's ability to recover properly. Even when the rebound is controlled well, the goaltender must execute proper recovery as often as possible to make sure he/she is not late or out of position for the next play.

Recovery to Stance

The best position for a goaltender to be in is on their feet in his/her stance. Not sitting low to the ice puck watching, not staying low moving side to side. Whenever time allows in a game or a drill, the goaltender's first objective is to recover to their feet, giving them more opportunity to react to the next play.

Teaching Points:

- Proper recovery begins with solid execution from the stance to the save
- Emphasize puck tracking, watching where the puck goes after the save is made
- Most rebounds force the goalie to move to a new angle, few shots rebound back straight out in front of the goalie
- When on feet or in butterfly, track puck out of save with eyes first. If puck moves to a new angle, pivot and use appropriate footwork to reposition.
- If butterfly or low save is made, recovering quickly requires using the proper leg to move in the direction to puck. Proper leg refers to using the opposite leg to the direction of the puck. Puck moves glove side, use blocker leg to get up and push, vice versa to blocker side.

Bad Habits:

- Poor puck tracking, can't find the rebound right away therefore can't move right away
- Wrong leg recovery, using glove leg to move glove side, slows the goalie down
- Weak pivot, not getting the hands and the body to turn enough to face the new angle
- Choppy process, goalie pause or hesitates in between steps. The recovery process is smooth and one step must come right after the other
- Goalie gets caught puck watching, waiting to see where the rebound goes and what happens next before recovering

Recovery to Powerpush

When there is not enough time for a goalie to recover to their stance, the situation calls for a Powerpush. This involves the goaltender using his/her push leg to drive their position over to the new angle to make a secondary save. The urgency is ramped up in this spot as the goalie normally has very little time to recover, so when practicing it is important to understand the mechanics and be able to execute properly before being fast.

Teaching Points:

- Powerpush recovery from a butterfly or low save position begins with eyes first
- Puck has moved to a new angle and another good scoring chance is coming so goaltender needs to react immediately
- Hands and body pivot to new angle as the proper recovery leg brings the skate up to contact the ice
- Weight is transferred from lead leg to push leg, goaltender explodes across or back into next save
- Finish back in butterfly position when possible, or reacting to where the puck is shot to make the save

Bad Habits:

- Weight transfer is not enough and the skate edge slips, or too much and takes too long to push off
- Weak pivot, hands and body swing rather than stay under control and causes a poor travel line to the new angle or forces goaltender out of physical position
- Choppy process, goaltender pauses or hesitates between steps
- Puck watching, goalie waits to see what happens next before recovering, and when a powerpush is required now it's too late

Development Breakdown

The Hockey Canada Model for goaltender development emphasizes the teaching of skills to all goaltenders beginning from a young age, and adding a focus on position and tactics as goalies improve and become more experienced through the years. Novice and Atom aged goaltenders need to learn the fundamentals; what they are and how to execute, and have those skills reinforced time and again on the ice during practices. At the Pee wee and Bantam ages, goaltenders are growing and getting stronger, so having them better understand the positions they want to be in during certain situations allows them to make better decisions while executing the fundamental skills. At the Midget age and older, being a smart goaltender, being aware of the circumstances and anticipating what comes next separates the good from the great. But these abilities all relate back to the fundamental skills!

Novice/Atom

- Development time should focus 75% on skating skills and physical position, 20% on net position, 5% on tactics and decision making
- Every drill should include one or more fundamental skating skill as well as a focus on puck tracking
- Reinforce the importance of controlling physical position, stance and butterfly, being ready early, proper leg recovery.
- Spend some time on awareness of depth control, net position and save selection – making the best save possible on a shot
- Put an emphasis on the little things – covering the puck in multiple ways, with strength and conviction. Stopping and setting up loose pucks behind the net, communicating with defensemen
- Whenever time allows, spend some on puck handling – manipulating the stick with the gloves, short accurate passes, shooting with power, recovering from a shooting position back to the stance position

The skills that goalies learn at the Novice/Atom ages are the skills they will use their entire career as a goaltender. It may seem simplistic and they have their whole lives to learn these skills. Really, they have their whole lives to perfect these skills, but habits are ingrained at the young ages and what coaches teach and instill in goaltenders at this level will show up as they get older.

Peewee/Bantam

This is the age group where most goaltenders develop the style and habits that they rely on for their minor hockey career. But because there can be such a difference in physical stature, athleticism and attitude from the Minor Peewee to Major Bantam ages, fundamental skills and reinforcing good habits is of huge importance.

- Peewee/Bantam goaltenders should spend 50% of their practice time on skating and physical skills, 30% on net position and 20% on tactics and decision making
- Every drill should include one or more fundamental skating skills, a focus on puck tracking and repositioning from a save or from the stance to a new angle or net position
- Reinforce the importance of physical stance and save position, skating in stance to be ready early, trusting their position as they move and make saves
- Introduce more advanced depth control, when to step out and challenge shooter versus when to be deeper and control distance to the puck
- Reinforce good save selection; practice making more saves with the glove and blocker and less with the pads. Emphasize rebound control with the stick and smothering pucks into the body. Get more whistles with your rebound control!
- Work on awareness and adjustments, where the puck is versus where it could go, what the danger areas are. How to set up to a potential cross crease or back door pass.
- Emphasize more puck handling, recognizing when to get out and make a simple play; setting up puck behind the net or making a short pass. Continue to develop stick handling skills and communication with defense when making a play

Peewee/Bantam ages are where goalies learn to play the position as well as perfect the fundamental skills. Keep a strong focus on the little things as goalies who excel have an easy time forgetting how important they are. Emphasize the importance of decision making and save selection on shots. It's no longer enough to make the save, the best save needs to be made. The rebound must be controlled and goalies need to get a whistle as much as possible. Puck handling becomes more important to learn at these ages as once goalies reach the Midget level, these skills are expected of them. Shooting the puck usually comes with age and strength, but being accurate with passes and recognizing when they can and when they need to go make a play is a necessity once they get older so becoming comfortable and confident with it now is a must.

Midget

These are the years where working on all those fundamental skills pays off for a goaltender. Novice-Bantam are development years, Midget are the performance years. Continue to reinforce the importance of perfect execution while at the same time, allow the goaltender freedom to play his/her style, what comes natural and what gives them the best chance.

- Development time should include 35% on skating skills and physical position, emphasizing quick burst movements, being explosive and under control, 35% on net positioning and 30% on tactics and decision making
- Emphasize to the goaltender the need to come up with the big save at the big time, create a mentality of confidence
- Reiterate depth control, being aware of the play in front of them as well as the danger around them
- Make goalies battle, incorporate traffic and redirections in drills, make goalies have a tough time seeing the puck through bodies
- Every drill should incorporate one or more fundamental skating skill, a focus on pack tracking and repositioning at a high tempo and more physically demanding situational movement
- Reinforce save selection, communication and awareness. The goalie can't be too smart
- Continue to develop puck handling and puck playing skills. Communicate the in game expectations of the goalies when they are to make plays with the puck. Have them recognize situations where they can make safe outlet passes up the ice, and opportunities to clear the puck and even clear the zone in situations such as the penalty kill.

At the Midget level, goalies know how to stop the puck. At this age it's about keeping a focus on what got you here and respecting the process that has created your style and game smarts. Now it's about showing off the intangibles, making big saves at big times during the game, making smart puck handling decisions, communicating with teammates and shutting down scoring chances with quality rebound control and effective net and physical positioning. Rightly or wrongly, goalies and skaters work their minor hockey careers for the midget seasons. It is important for coaches to not let them forget the skills and processes that got them to this point and keep them humble; knowing the game is not figured out and the work is just beginning.

Conclusion

There is very little black and white when it comes to goaltending. A goaltender can execute the fundamentals perfectly, be in great net and physical position, essentially do everything right – and get scored on. The flip side is that he/she can also have poor execution and position, be scrambling and flopping around off the angle, doing things wrong – and make a save. That's the beauty of the position. Goaltenders need to do the little things that give them the best chance to make a save, control the rebound and reposition effectively. It's incumbent upon you as coaches to reinforce not only the proper execution of the little things, but the importance of focus, intensity and keeping a positive work ethic during practice time. If a goaltender can get a little bit better at one thing each time out, pretty soon they're at the top of their game.

Goaltending styles vary, no two athletes are the same and many will prefer certain ways of positioning or executing over. The issue arises when coaches either insist on something being done a certain way; not working to the ability of the individual, or letting a goaltender get away with sloppy mistakes or poor execution only because that's the way the goalie wants to do it. Be aware of the individual skills of your goaltenders and work within that, while at the same time making sure they understand why what they are doing either works or doesn't work and what adjustments may be required.

There is no such thing as a perfect goaltender; they cannot make every save every game all season long. This is the reason why it is so important for goalies of all ages to work at and revisit the fundamentals on a continuous basis, and it is important for goalie coaches to keep their goalies grounded and focused. If the goalie was the star of the game, let them know but don't forget to point out situations where they could have made an adjustment or better decision. If the goalie had a poor game, let them know but make sure to identify areas they excelled at. The goaltender gives up a bad goal – doesn't matter now there's another shot coming. The goaltender made an incredible save – doesn't matter now there's another shot coming. Keep them focused, confident and in the moment - the most important shot is always the next one!

So coaches, there you have it. The fundamental skills, positions and philosophies to begin working with your goaltenders and helping them achieve levels of success that few will reach without your efforts. By creating a positive practice environment for goaltenders and allowing them the time to focus on and execute the skills required in game, you will play an important part in the overall success of the team. Remember, goaltending is a process and the skills cannot be learned all at once, perfected quickly or even at all. Small improvements and an honest work ethic every time on the ice is all that is required of you and your goaltender and the results will come. On behalf of myself and the BMHA, thank you for your interest and taking the time to educate yourself on goaltending. I hope you've found this manual in depth and informative and that it will aid you in coaching for seasons to come.

Glossary

“Puck tracking” – watching the puck as the play develops and in and out of saves, never taking your eye off the puck

“Head trajectory” – the head takes the eyes to the puck, creates the proper angle for optimal vision, do not use corner of eye or peripheral vision to track the puck

“Shooter’s eye” – what the shooter sees when looking at the net

“Pucks eye” – what the puck sees when looking at the net

“Trigger finger” - blocker hand hold stick where the shaft meets the paddle, the index finger is placed over the paddle to stabilize and control stick

“Five hole” – the area between the goalies legs

“Landmarks” – spots on the ice rink useful to help a goalies angles and net positioning. This can include face of dots, hash marks, blue and red lines, doors to the bench and board advertisements

“Float” – forward or backward skating where the goalie rides his/her edges with no movement in stance position

“Pivot” – the process of changing angles and following the puck; 3 parts include eyes, hands and feet. Look first, turn the hands and body to follow and then skate/push to move with the play

“Travel line” – the direction the goalie moves in, dictated by wear the shoulders and feet line up with skating

“Proper Leg Recovery” – opposite leg to direction of travel, glove leg moves goaltender to the blocker side, blocker leg moves goaltender to the glove side

“Puck Watching” – watching the puck without moving or repositioning. Waiting to see what happens before reacting

“Powerpush” – low recovery technique, used to reposition to a quick rebound chance or loose puck when the goalie does not have time to recover to their feet

“Stance” – the goalie’s set/ready position in preparation for a shot or moving with the play

“Butterfly” – most widely used save position, optimal for low shots, controlling rebounds and to close holes in the net

“Shuffle” – basic footwork, small movements over short distances used to follow puck carrier

“Tpush” – basic footwork, explosive movement over a longer distance to catch up to moving puck as it changes angles

“C-cut” – basic footwork, used to gain ground forwards or backwards while staying in square stance position

“Angle of the Puck” – wherever the puck is on the ice it lines up with the middle of the net. Being on the angle is the goalie positioning between the puck and middle of the net

“Depth Control” – understanding where to position in relation to the play. Usually refers to the goalies ability to challenge the shooter at the top of the crease versus being too deep and exposing more net

“Square” - a goalies physical position facing the puck. Hips and shoulders line up straight across and keep goalie in optimal position.

“Save Selection” – making the best decision based on where the shot is going to stop the puck and control the rebound

“Active Hands” – having the hands in a strong ready position, prepared to make a save control the movement of and position of the body and help to track the puck out front of them

“Push Leg/Skate” – the leg that generates and releases the power to move the goalie

“Lead Leg/Skate” – the leg that is closest to the direction of movement, aides in balance and square body position

“Rainbow Travel Line” – skating from spot to spot in arc or rainbow shape, slow and harder to locate the angle