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Adjusting to Life with Extra Thighrise

Among many changes in goaltender equipment functionality and style a recent trend was having goalies becoming more reliant on pads that have extra thighrise (the area above the knee of the pad). The extra thighrise is usually an extra inch or two (or four!) added to the top of the pad to better cover the goaltender's five hole. While many goaltenders (this blogger included) have benefitted from extra height on the thigh rise there is often an uneasy getting-used-to period for goalies, young or old, moving from a traditional pad thighrise into a +1, +2, +3 inches, etc. Often the extra length in the thigh of the pad will cause a goaltender to change how they play in order to accommodate to a new, more awkward, very expensive set of pads. Basically, goaltender's often feel the need to change their game to accommodate the pads; stepping away from their natural/automatic game.

There are two very common issues goalies have when they move into a higher thighrise on a set of pads:

Common Problems Adjusting Extra Thighrise

1. Negative Adjustment of Basic Stance

When a goaltender moves into a set of pads with extra thighrise they often feel awkward when the top corners of the pads touch. Because the goaltender is not used to this feeling of having their pads touching they opt for a wider and lower stance. A wide, low stance can be problematic if it hinders the goaltender from performing movements forward or backwards (sculls) or can hinder a goaltender's lateral movement because there is very little coil left in the legs to propel the goaltender with a smooth, powerful movement.



The example above, is actually a professional goalie, but goalies adjusting to taller thighrises will try to stand like this without paying attention to the possible negative ramifications of their adjustment.

2. Only Closing Tops of Pads in Butterfly

With a taller thighrise a goaltender will often feel that they now can widen their butterfly by opening the thighs of the pants and just have the tops of the pads touching (or not even touching), rather than through proper hip and lower lumbar flexibility. There are a few problem with leaving the thighs open and only having the tops of the thighrise touching. First, the hole between the thighs is usually large enough for a puck to fit through if the puck is elevated over the pads while in the butterfly. Next, if there is a hard enough shot the puck could hit the tops of the thighrises and still power through into the net. The other issue stems from the idea that the puck, on most models of pads, will still go in if shot flat on the ice in the middle of the five hole (in those moments of poor stick discipline) if the knee blocks/risers are not jammed tightly together. The goalie with tall thighrises that does not seal their thighs, as well as the pads, will continue to have five hole issues despite the new pads designed to stop more shots to the five hole.



Although this is an imperfect example, due to the trajectory of the puck, readers should note the spacing of the thighrise and thighs in this picture is a common problem when goalies move into a taller thighrise pad and then use their butterfly.

As usual, when looking at a problem, we need to examine some solutions in order to make the transition to a taller thighrise smoother:

Adjusting to a Taller Thighrise

1. Get used to pads overlapping, in stance

When goalies adjust their basic stance to accommodate a taller thighrise bad things usually happen. The best way to adjust to the new thighrise is to get used to the inside corners of the tops of the thighrises to overlap. Now, we are not saying the goalie should lock their knees, Felix Potvin style, just that the pads can overlap with little hindrance to the goaltender's overall mobility. Just make sure not to have the pads overlap so much that they are resting on the knee of the opposite leg.



2. Overlapping the thighrises in the butterfly

In order to gain the full benefit of the thighrise, in a butterfly, the goaltender must keep the thighs and knees tight while in the butterfly. Once the knees and thighs are tight the thighrise of the pads will overlap, creating an impenetrable wall. Now, the pads will only overlap on a goaltender with a strong flare in their butterfly, whereas a goalie with a narrow butterfly may not have the tops of the pads touching at all. Remember, it is a good thing to overlap the thighrise of the pads to ensure proper seal of the butterfly.



The two previous pictures show a butterfly executed with overlapping thighrises(an impenetrable wall).

Hopefully, this helps those goalies that are trying to adjust to life with extra thighrise.