



MIND THE NET GOALTENDING
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Blocking vs. Reacting and Body Activation

It has always been interesting to read and listen to discussion about reaction versus blocking saves and so it is important to discuss this issue further. As MTN recalls a lot of the debate revolves around goalies becoming robotic and highly predictable in their goaltending arsenal. Often the distinction is made between blocking saves and reacting saves. As we understand the distinction, reaction saves often incorporate saves with extended limbs as opposed to blocking where the goalie tries to get as much of the compact body unit in front of the puck on as many pucks as possible. Often we see a negative connotation associated with blocking goaltenders (Giguere, Price) as opposed to the more common reacting goalies (Brodeur, Turco).

MTN would like to pose the question; aren't all goalies blocking/reaction goalies?

It makes sense that all goalies should have and use both elements as game situations demand. We would argue that all goalies should strive to be blocking goalies, just in the definition of trying to get as much of the body in front of the puck as possible on all shots. This is where the connection to body shifting/activation comes in. If a goaltender strives to get as much surface area in front of the puck as possible on all shots including deflections it seems there is less likelihood of something going wrong. It is also important to remember that there is a reaction element to getting into position to make a blocking save. Goaltending is all about reacting to a situation and a blocking style save is still a reaction to what the puck is doing based on a combination of visual inputs and anticipation skills. Just to clarify the body activation can be done while standing but more often than not will be used with a butterfly slide type of movement.

In previous discussions we have read descriptions of the need for reaction saves on shots from further out without a risk of deflection. Why should goalies not strive to use as much body as possible on those outside shots? Rarely do we have shots in a game that are clear, from outside with no risk of other players being involved. If a goalie is in the habit of using extended limb saves on outside shots what kind of habits are they getting into for shots that have more traffic?

Extended limb saves are very much still required and are often used because the goalie does not have time to move into a shot with the body, this is usually the case with a player blasting down the wing and taking a giant slapper. Of course, rarely do we see this type of play in a game.



An example of a reaction/extension save selection

MTN believes that a center shift is a very strong save selection to be used whenever possible. Now a center shift does not always have to be a full blocking style of butterfly slide, goalies can center shift and use a sort of half extension save (i.e. a half butterfly save with the pad sealed on the ice and strong stick placement or even with the knee up if the puck is off the ice). The use of the center shift is still a reaction save, like all other saves, it just doesn't involve full extension, which can open holes and leave a piece of equipment with less support. Less support in an extension save can lead to bad rebounds or bad goals or both.



An example of a blocking save or center shift

What makes the center shift hard to do is the fact that it requires excellent shot reading and tracking skills, patience, power/explosiveness and compactness through the body unit with strong stick discipline. For those in doubt, try pushing yourself in practice to center shift into as many pucks as possible, staying compact and in control, and the game will become easier.

To finish, we would argue that all goalies strive to be blocking goalies (it is the nature of the

position) but they should still be able to use an extended reaction save when a situation is called for. So, is there really such thing as blocking or reaction goalies or don't all goaltenders need to be both?