



MIND THE NET GOALTENDING

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Goaltending Quick Hit #2 – Three Key Faceoff Reads

If a goaltender is managing a game well they are usually getting a high number of whistles in their own zone. Because faceoffs in a goaltender's own zone are not guaranteed to lead to possession of the puck the goaltender must use the following "Three Key Faceoff Reads":

The first thing a goaltender must do is take a quick scan, just prior to getting into a faceoff/shot ready stance, to see the faceoff formation for the other team. Most of the time opposition teams do not try trick plays off a specific faceoff formation, thus the opposition may just set up with the wingers and defense set up in a regular faceoff format; wingers at each hash mark and the two d-men manning the point. In a regular set up the goalie must be ready to move, but there is little chance of a quick shot off the faceoff. Now, if the outside winger or outside d-man swings to the top of the circle in a position for a one-timer the goaltender must be aware of the plan to get that player the puck cleanly to allow for a quick release one-timer directly off the faceoff. In the case of the one-timer set up the goaltender must be immediately ready to move into the new position ASAP. It is important to recognize when the faceoff formation changes and what the opposition might be trying to accomplish with the new formation. Not only must the goaltender recognize the change, but they must be in a shot ready stance to ensure the imminent shot is not a surprise.

Next, while scanning the faceoff formation, as discussed before, take the time to scan the opposition to see which hand each player shoots, and how many shoot right or left handed. The combining of the formation read and the handedness read are considered early reads on what might unfold once the puck is dropped. By checking faceoff formation and recognizing which player shoots which way the goaltender is then able to understand what shooting or passing options are available to each of the position players. A simple example is when the faceoff is to the right of the goalie, but the right d-man is right handed. If this right handed d-man were to get the puck they are not likely to one-time if the puck is won back to them, but they do have the ability to walk to the outside or feed the puck back to another right handed d-man whom is loaded, on the other side for the one-timer. Also, by seeing which hand each opposition player shoots the goaltender is then able to have a pretty good idea as to what hand any open players may be because of the nearly full ice view a goalie has. Some times the puck is in an area where a shot is very possible and the goalie should not take the split second to get their head on a swivel. Early recognition of what hand each player shoots during a faceoff in the goalie's own end allows for stronger anticipation skills.

The final read the goalie must make is to look at how the centre man holds their stick and keep track of when the faceoff is in zone. In lower elite hockey, and down, there are still centres that will flip their bottom hand around, like a Turco grip, in order to gain leverage. Fortunately, a centre that flips over their bottom hand is giving away, very directly, that they intend to win the draw on the backhand. This type of hand grip, essentially, makes a centre man's intentions

predictable. When a strong centre holds their stick normally for faceoffs they are keeping all their options open for which direction they want to win the draw; backhand, forehand, tie up other centre or put the puck directly on net. Often, a smart centre late in a period/game will try to get the puck directly on net as soon as the puck is dropped. If they are holding their stick normally the goaltender must be in stance and ready to fire on all cylinders, not in a relaxed, semi-ready stance that leads to surprises. Poor faceoff reads and poor readiness + surprises = goals against.