



MIND THE NET GOALTENDING

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Is a Wide Butterfly Really Required?

As a goaltender advances with their butterfly development from first being able to perform a proper butterfly to learning when to use a butterfly their comes a point where elite goaltenders discuss the idea of developing a wide butterfly. When looking at the width of a goaltender's butterfly there are some points to ponder.

First, there must be an example of a narrow butterfly and a wide butterfly. Below left is a narrow butterfly from the top of the crease. Below right is a wide butterfly from the top of the crease.



In both cases the picture is taken from the puck's perspective in the mid slot region of the defensive zone. Notice with the wide butterfly that space outside of the net is covered whereas the goaltender with the narrow butterfly may only have to move an inch or two. Let's take a look, as usual, at the pros and cons of each type of butterfly.

WIDE BUTTERFLY

Pros

- Provides wider coverage on low shots especially when dealing with a screen or deflection situation.
- If the goaltender's angles are off the extra coverage may come in handy. Although losing angle is less than ideal it happens from time to time.
- If pads are tight or overlapping there should be no room for the puck to go through the tops of the pads.
- Requires extra flexibility. If a goaltender has the hip, knee and lower back flexibility to perform a wide butterfly the extra flexibility may come in handy in a desperate situation.

- The extra flexibility will help with the use of the VH/one knee down position.

Cons

- The goaltender is covering space that does not need to be covered.
- The pads are more flat meaning that rebounds are more likely to go towards the front of the net rather than to the corners or controlled at the body.
- A goaltender with excessive width may find themselves off balance due to the legs being more to the sides than behind.
- Some goalies use a wide butterfly that only closes the tops of the pads but still leaves space between the thighs of the goal pants. ****If the thighs are open, in a wide butterfly the goaltender must overlap the thighrise of the pads.****
- Requires extra flexibility. There is a lot more pressure placed on the hips of the goaltender.
- Some goaltenders rely on their wide butterfly too much due to poor skating ability and positional play.
- A shot that hits the top of the boot of the pad is less likely to be controlled at the body and may send the rebound in an unexpected direction.

NARROW BUTTERFLY

Pros

- If the goaltender is in position a narrow butterfly will cover the space low.
- Goaltenders with a narrow butterfly are very compact with their butterfly execution. ****The butterfly is useless if there are holes through the body.****
- Balance is improved. The goaltender has the legs more behind the body allowing goaltenders to avoid falling onto their rear.
- Rebounds are controlled more to the corners and the body. With the pads angled further back rebounds are more likely to go to the corners. Many goaltenders will control rebounds, in the butterfly, with the boot of the pad. A rebound off the boot of the pad has more time for the goaltender to pull in the rebound or the shot will die upon impact for the easy cover.
- May require very little movement. Even a very narrow butterfly may require less than four inches to cover the entire lower portion of the net.
- Quicker to execute.
- Requires less flexibility. Hip and knee strain is diminished with a narrow butterfly.

Cons

- May require the goaltender to flutter to make the save. ****Flutter refers to the need to push the toes of the pads towards the corner of the net.****
- The tops of the pads may not be completely touching or overlapping. A goaltender with a narrow butterfly is more at risk for shots off the knees. If the goaltender has poor stick position the puck is more likely to go in five hole.
- May require extra movement. If the play is in tight to the net the goaltender may not have the time required to flutter to make the save.
- Less low coverage for deflections and screen shots. If the goaltender must go down blindly there may be more space low for the shot to go in.
- Requires less flexibility. A goaltender should strive to be as flexible as they can. ****The flexibility of a goaltender may be hindered by body type and age. The older the goaltender the less flexible they become.****

Like everything else with goaltending it is up to the goaltender to take in different information to find what works best for them. As a conclusion, MTN feels that a wide butterfly is over emphasized. While a wide butterfly is not a requirement to good goaltending the flexibility gained from attempting to gain a wide butterfly has benefits in many different areas of modern goaltending. By improving flexibility the use of a wide butterfly can be used selectively for different situations. If a goaltender has the ability to use a wide butterfly they should know when to use it and when they do not need to stretch.

Another application of the flexibility required for a wide butterfly is when a goaltender uses a VH/one knee down position on plays around the posts of the net. A strong VH position requires the leg that is flat on the ice to be parallel with the goalline. If the goaltender does not have the hip flexibility to spread the down leg across the goalline then many of the benefits of the knee down position is lost. As usual, the skating and positional abilities trump the need for a wide butterfly and should be worked on more regularly than acquiring a wide butterfly. Fundamentals first, then work to improve the butterfly.