



MIND THE NET GOALTENDING

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Preparing for Tryouts and Training Camps

Many times throughout an elite hockey career a goaltender will have to go through tryouts and training camps. Many times goalies are unsure of the approach they must take to prepare for and perform well during those fall hockey experiences. Despite the stresses and possible failures MTN has some tips on how to prepare for tryouts and training camps so you can, at least, perform your best.

What is the difference between tryouts and training camps?

The difference between tryouts and training camps depends on your perspective/situation. Tryouts are for goalies who are trying to make a new team. During tryouts there are some things that usually occur. First, there is usually a registration fee to be paid to the hockey club. Many times there is a preliminary rookie camp in which only prospective players attend. Once some rookies have shown they are worthy of a better look they are invited to play a few exhibition games as well as practicing with the team on a daily basis. During a tryout you will need to show that you are ready to make the next step in your hockey career. You are there to take a spot on the team. You are there to compete with the veterans.

Training camps are still similar to tryouts only, this time, you are a returning goalie to your team. You will not have to attend a rookie camp, but are expected to show proper leadership skills around the rookies. The first thing to keep in mind is that someone is always trying to steal your spot and elite teams will replace you if you do not perform up to standard. This does not mean that there is any extra pressure placed on your shoulders. It is your job to show your team that you have improved over the off-season. Whether you are the returning no. 1 goalie or the returning backup you need to show a drive for improvement. Show everyone why you are valuable to your team.

What can I do to make tryouts less stressful?

Tryouts are not the end of the world and should not be something to stress out over. There are some things off the ice that you need to consider:

- Be well prepared. Tryouts are not the time to get into shape. The majority of team veterans will be in excellent shape and so should you. Equipment failures are no excuse for failure. Make sure your equipment is ready and up to standard.
- Make sure that you are well hydrated. You need to drink lots of fluids; especially on days when you workout more than once. ***You are not hydrated until your urine is clear.***
- Eat right! Just because you are away for the weekend and are very busy does not mean that fast food is a good choice. Fast food will make you sluggish and slow. Take a cooler, stop at a grocery store and buy lots of healthy snacks, fruits, veggies and stuff for sandwiches. When eating out order healthy foods.
- Get proper rest. Despite the temptations of being out on the town make sure that you are well rested. Learn how to maximize rest by understanding your body and what it needs to perform. ***Take your pillow from home if you are staying in a hotel.***

- You need to be early for all meetings and deadlines. Elite hockey has strict time schedules. You need to be as professional as possible both on and off the ice.
- Be coachable. Teams are looking for kids who can learn. Try stuff out in practice. If the suggestions do not work for you take comfort in the effort to try.
- BE YOURSELF! Play your game(the one that works for you). Do not follow the crowd of cool kids; usually the most raucous players are all bark and no bite. You are there to fit in with the team not the class clowns. Do not be tempted by outside distractions such as girls, partying and alcohol/drugs. Most teams are very visible in the community, even the players trying out will be recognized by others.
- Relax and have fun! You are there to have fun. You will be disappointed at some point in your career, but persistence will pay off as well. If things do not work out, do not burn bridges or become too disappointed. You need to accept each failure and success and be happy for learning experiences; they will make you a better goalie.

What can I do to make training camp less stressful?

Despite the fact that there is always going to be competition for your spot you need to be confident in your abilities. You are at an advantage because the team has already seen your work. Here are some guidelines to keep in mind, aside from the usual tryout guidelines(the ones above):

- Show them you have improved whether that is through your on ice abilities/techniques, attitude, work ethic, fitness level, or leadership skills.
- Avoid the temptation to declare your veteran status. You need to do most of your talking in your actions towards the veterans and rookies. Rookies are an important part of the team; DO NOT treat them poorly whether others do or not.
- Be aware of the temptations that come with being back around friends and teammates. You do not want to do something that will negatively affect you or the team.
- Be supportive of all teammates.
- Regardless of how much ice time you get make sure that you are pushing the other goaltender. Friendly competition is excellent for camaraderie and on ice performance.
- Play your game! All you need to do is be consistent.
- Be yourself! Do not worry about others or who the competition may be. Despite attempts at your position show everyone why you deserve to be the number one goalie.
- Relax and have fun! Hockey is much harder if you are stressed out. Be in the moment. Be confident. Be a warrior!

What can I do at the rink to be noticed?

MTN cannot stress enough the importance to be yourself, but here are some suggestions for making sure you are noticed around the rink:

- Be the first, or one of the first players on the ice. If you get on the ice early it will show your enthusiasm. Make sure that you are doing something productive as well. Show them that you have the work ethic to succeed.
- Communicate LOUDLY! All of your on-ice communication should be loud enough for the coach, watching in the stands, to hear you. If mom and dad can not hear you crank up the volume. Show everyone how you take charge.
- Keep a calm demeanor. Show everyone that you are not fazed. A bad scrimmage does not mean that you will automatically be cut from the team. Use confident body language on and off the ice.
- Be supportive of teammates when you are on the ice, on the bench or in the dressing room. Show your leadership skills by supporting teammates that you don't even know. ***Being a good teammate ensures that everyone plays hard in front of you.***

- Play your game and only your game! Do not add flash if you have no flash in your game. If the coaches are not enlightened enough to see that your solid positioning causes all the shots to just “hit” you then they are the ones who need to change, not you.

While training camps can be stressful they can become some of your most treasured memories of your career. Take some of these guidelines into consideration and you will find tryouts/training camps to be valuable learning experiences.