



**MIND THE NET GOALTENDING**  
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## **Product of Environment: Goaltending and Coaching**

Reading various goaltender forums on the net MTN has started to believe that goaltenders become, what and how they are coached. Even some goaltenders can be chastised for their little understanding of the position.

To properly train for this important, yet misunderstood position, one must be able to recognize what happens in the game and how one reacts to these game situations is vital to how one should practice.

Practice situations should resemble game like situations. Sounds simple doesn't it? Yet, ask yourself, how many times in practice drills have you or your goalie made a save putting the first puck in one direction yet the next second puck shot at the goalie comes from a direction that is opposite of the first pucks placement? Now, how often does that happen in a game? The goalie has just stopped the first puck to their right but by some miracle they must now react to a second shot opposite to that first direction. Over, and over it goes in practice, now when game time comes the goalie puts the first save to his right and the rebound goes to the right side. This is new to the goaltender as this has rarely happened to them in practice and now the rebound is a goal. Who is to blame? The goalie for giving up the rebound and not properly reacting to it, or the coach who never gave his goalie a chance to see this situation in practice? In this case, both parties are to blame.

Goaltenders become a product of their environment. **Even good goaltenders can not compensate for bad coaching.** Eventually, they can only be able to react to what they see the most in practice.

Vision is the fundamental start to goaltending. The goaltender must be able to follow **three steps in a save sequence:**

1. Getting into position then seeing and reading the release of the puck off the shooter's stick blade.
  2. Follow the puck to the body
  3. Be able to read the puck off their body.

If the goaltender consistently gets to follow these three steps in practice they will increase their puck tracking skills and game situation awareness. Now, when one of these three situations is taken away from them, they will be able to react accordingly.

What does MTN mean by this? After time, if a goaltender has consistently been able to follow the three steps, puck awareness is developed for when one step is taken away from them. For example, if a goaltender has constantly been able to follow the puck off their body they will instinctively know where the puck will go by what part of the body it hit.

*\*\*HINT: Try having the goalie go into a butterfly position and close their eyes. Next shoot the puck at them and have them react, with eyes closed, to where they think the rebound is. Once the goalie is in the*

*new position tell them to open their eyes. A goalie with a good feel of the puck off their body will be very close to reading the right rebound situation. However, this is a skill that has to be developed and once again we harbour back to the three steps of a save situation. \*\**

Goaltenders should not think that coaching at higher levels will always improve game-like practice situations. Watching a recent Sask First Zone 5 tryout (the elite program to start to recognize potential players for Team West for the Under-17 World Tournament on ice coaches, running drills, had no knowledge how to properly run the drills during the goalie sessions.

An example of an on ice evaluation drill was as follows: 5 shooters in the offensive zone (one at each face off dot, one in high slot, two at blue line at opposite sides). The rotation was the player at face off dot shoots, player at other face off dot shoots, player at blue line, high, shoots, other blue line, high, shoots, and finish with the player in the slot shooting. Sounds simple, yet if the shooters have no direction it is a hapless drill. The shooters should shoot so that the goalie must be able to react to the next shooter as in a game situation. If this is allowed to happen an evaluator can evaluate such things as a vision skills with head and shoulder rotation to the puck, showing tracking abilities, compactness of save position while moving to the next shot, etc. Yet, this did not happen! Shooters were allowed to shoot anywhere making all goalie movement irrational and desperate. The proper scenario should have been as follows: shooter 1 at face off dot shoot low and to far side (this will mean that the rebound could have likely gone to the second shooter at the other dot, shooter 2, shoots far side and high, this means that the rebound could have either gone wide around the boards and back to the shooter at the opposite blue line or in the corner and passed back to the blueline, Shooter three, shoots low and to far side, resembling a possible situation where the puck goes around and back to shooter four, at the blue line, shooter 4, shoots middle of the net, so rebound could have gone to shooter 5, in the slot , shooter 5, shoots at will.

These, so called, Elite Certified Coaches had little understanding of this drill and if they ran this drill like that all year would be more detrimental to the goalie than helpful. Making the goalie a product of their environment!