



MIND THE NET GOALTENDING

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Save and Blocking Techniques: Tools for the Toolbox

Along with the basics of goaltender specific movement there needs to be an examination of the basic save and blocking techniques needed in goaltending. No matter what style a goaltender plays they need to be able to control all parts of their body both independently and in sync, at the same time. There should be no weaknesses in a goaltender's game because they cannot make several different types of saves. Basically, would anyone take their car to a mechanic that only possessed one or two wrenches? Of course not! Would anyone want a goalie that is only capable of making one or two types of saves? The answer is obvious. Again, when one thinks of the problems that might occur, having a goalie that only has limited tools in their toolbox is unlikely to have any sort of success or consistency.

Below you will find a number of different save and blocking techniques that every goalie should be able to perform based on properly tracking the puck to the body and what happens afterward. Keep in mind some basic save movements require down movement, where the goalie must leave their feet, and movements while staying on the feet.

Now, these are the basic saves that would be used while trying to stop a straight on shot as other save techniques and game tactics related to odd-man rushes and particular types of attacks will be examined at a later time. We will not be discussing desperation saves as we have already examined the basics of desperation saves in "Examining a Desperate Save Moment".

Save and Blocking Selections While Standing

Standing Wall

Keys to the Movement:

- This type of save/block requires the goaltender to start from a narrower stance indicating the puck should be at a poor angle.
- The pads are then slammed tightly together so that there are no holes through the pads at the knee or shin. Usually leaning slightly into the direction of the shot will allow the pads to seal.
- The goaltender must maintain the same level of knee bend as used in the goalie's regular basic stance, but maintain position on their feet.
- Keep the stick covering the five hole while keeping the stick out from the feet. The only hole through the legs, when this save is used properly, is a small opening at the boot break of the pad which must be closed off using the stick.
- Keep the hands forward/tight to the pads and facing the puck while ensuring there is no holes through the hands and the body.



When to Use:

- The standing wall should only be used when the puck is shot from the perimeter.
- If one was to draw an imaginary line from where the outside hashmarks of the faceoff dots meet the side boards to the middle of the goalline the puck must be below that imaginary line in order for the standing wall to be effective.
- This type of save/block should only be deployed on very poor angle shots where there is no backdoor pass options.

Centre Shifting/Body Trap

Keys to the Movement:

- Proper read of the release and continued tracking of the puck must indicate that the shot is above belly button height, while the goalie is in stance, to warrant a stand up save.
- The key is to try to get as much of the centre line of the body in front of the puck as possible which will require the goaltender to shuffle the body into the trajectory of the shot. The goalie should try to shift the body into the trajectory of the puck as often as possible.
- As the puck is about to hit the body the goaltender must keep the upper body concave, while bringing the trapper up and under the puck in order to trap the puck to the body.



When to Use:

- The centre shift while standing should be used on shots further away than the slot without any risk of deflections from in front of the net.
- A very good use for this save/block is to control hard dump-ins from outside the zone as this allows the goaltender to gain possession of the puck in a way that allows the goaltender to slow the game down or keep the play going.

Standing Trapper/Glove Saves

Keys to the Movement:

- Starts with the visual attachment that allows the goalie to read the release of the shot and follow its trajectory all the way to the goalie and off or beyond.
- The goalie should try to shift the body behind the glove while the goaltender attempts to catch the puck in front of the body.
- **It is essential with all saves made with the hands that goalies are starting in the basic stance with their hands forward, letting the puck come to them, and trying to make a controlled catch in front of the body. This keeps the puck in the goalie's focused, central vision and out of the peripheral vision.***
- Make sure to watch the puck all the way into the glove.
- Close the glove once the puck hits the pocket to avoid pop-outs. Goalies that can't or refuse to close their gloves will give up goals that are completely avoidable.



When to Use:

- Used on any shots above the belly button when the goaltender is in their basic stance.
- If there is a possible tip situation or a screen in front of the goalie the stand-up save should be abandoned.
- Stand-up glove saves on long(from outside the blue line) shots or dump-ins are key to allow the goaltender the ability to quickly handle the puck for transition purposes.

Standing Blocker Saves

Keys to the Movement:

- Starts with the visual attachment that allows the goalie to read the release of the shot and follow its trajectory all the way to the goalie and off or beyond.
- The goaltender must keep the blocker in front of the body to close off holes through the body and arm. Also, by keeping the blocker in front of the body the puck will stay within a goaltender's central focus and out of the peripheral vision where puck tracking becomes difficult.
- Angle the blocker as the puck approaches so that the puck will deflect up and to the corner. This is a change from the traditional blocker save form where the goaltender was instructed to snap the wrist while sort of punching out the blocker. By snapping the blocker the goaltender was supposed to direct the rebound low towards the corner.
- By allowing the puck to come to the blocker with the blocker angled rather than snapped the goalie is less likely to open the hole between the blocker and the body of the goalie.
- Watch and follow the rebound off of the blocker.



When to Use:

- Used on any shots above the belly button when the goaltender is in their basic stance.
- If there is a possible tip situation or a screen in front of the goalie the stand-up save should be abandoned.
- Stand-up blocker saves on long (from outside the blue line) shots or dump-ins are key to allow the goaltender the ability to quickly handle the puck for transition purposes. In order to gain control of a high blocker side dump-in the goaltender must be ready to cushion the puck with a backward motion as the puck is hitting the blocker causing the rebound to deaden. The other alternative for control of dump-ins to the blocker side is to use the trapper to trap the puck on the blocker.

Standing Stick Saves

Keys to the Movement:

- Starts from a well balanced basic stance.
- Visual attachment is key. Make sure to turn the eyes and head with the puck while tracking the puck along the ice.
- Keep the hands forward of the pads to allow for proper stick rotation in both directions.

- Keep the stick the same distance away from the feet as it would normally be positioned while in the basic stance. The stick and hands should not pull back towards the body during this movement.
- Use a rotation or arcing motion with the stick to move the puck into the path of the shot. Do not stab the stick blade towards the puck. Make sure the puck comes to the stick, not vice versa.
- The stick should be angled in a way as to elevate the rebound.
- The goalie may shift their body towards the trajectory of the puck or back the stick with the trapper to ensure the puck does not skip over the stick and go into the net.



When to Use:

- On shots along the ice where there is no screen or chance of a deflection in front.
- Usually used on long or perimeter shots or dump-ins.
- A stand up stick save would also be used to be able to quickly get involved with the transition with a quick set, pass or clearing shot.
- If the puck is going 5-hole the goalie should go down to ensure better control.

Save and Blocking Selections While Down

Butterfly Save/Block

Keys to the Movement:

- From a balanced and comfortable ready stance the goaltender will drive both knees simultaneously to the ground while letting the inside edges of the pads flare out to the sides.
- The pads must rotate on the goaltender's leg to ensure the entire face of the pads stays upright to cover the most net possible. ** The skates should have a partial horizontal angle.**
- Thighs and knees should be squeezed tight to ensure closure of the five hole.
- The gloves will stay forward, drop down and forward to cover the space above the top of the goal pad.
- The goaltender's stick will slide or stay forward, while covering the five hole.
- Keep the upper body and thighs high to cover the top portions of the net.

- Be ready to react with the shoulders and elbows as they will be easiest and most efficient body parts to move when facing a high shot while down. With this said make sure the hands are able to react as well.



When to Use:

- On shots along the ice travelling toward the 5-hole or about one foot toward a corner.
- When a goaltender is completely screened and must use a blind drop.
- On shots directed toward the bottom 1/3 of the net.
- If a shot is travelling on a trajectory that is below the belly button; especially on mid-line shots to ensure greater rebound control at the body.
- If there is a quick passing play where the player receiving the pass is using a quick release shot within a 20 ft. radius around the net. The butterfly is predominantly a blocking type of movement that is used in areas where the goalie is more prone to blocking rather than reaction.
- A better alternative than using a paddle down on plays that are found in tight to the net because the goaltender is capable of being more mobile.

Half Butterfly/Stick Saves

Keys to the Movement:

- Visual attachment is key. Make sure to turn the eyes and head with the puck while tracking the puck along the ice.
- The execution of the half-butterfly is similar to the full butterfly, but is used on shots that are directed towards the low corners of the net.
- Constant visual tracking from the player's stick to the goalie and off the goalie.
- Both knees must be driven hard to the ice with the pads staying upright in a similar manner to the butterfly, BUT the leg closest to the trajectory of the puck is flared more to the side with the other leg angled back towards the centre line of the body like a narrow butterfly. **One leg should definitely be more flared than the other.**
- The goalie must back the stick up with a pad and trapper or blocker depending on which side the puck was shot towards.
- The upper body needs to stay high for extra vertical coverage.
- The hands must be held forward of the body and positioned for more vertical coverage in case of a deflection.

- The stick must be kept in front of the body and used in an arcing/rotating motion to intercept the puck in its trajectory. There should not be a stick flip on shots along the ice as this can create unnecessary rebounds off the pads or simply go in.
- The stick must maintain some angle to ensure elevation of the rebound. Do not stab the stick blade towards the puck. Make sure the puck comes to the stick, not vice versa.



When to Use:

- This movement can be used on as many shots heading towards the bottom 16" of net as possible, from any distance away from the net.
- A good tactic on shots where there is minimal traffic or deflection possibilities.
- Long shots along the ice where there is no traffic. This type of situation should almost always result in an elevated rebound, at minimum.
- On quick passing plays around the net, especially in the same blocking areas as described in the section on the butterfly save/block.
- A strong tactic to use when defending a deke or plays in tight to the net.
- Stick use can be executed with almost all types of saves where one or both pads are in contact with the ice and the shot is headed towards the bottom 3-6" inches of the net.
- The only time a goalie should be weary of having total stick involvement on shots towards the low corner is when there is a lot of traffic or the possibility of a deflection. If a deflection is likely keep the stick covering the five hole and use the pads for rebound control. This is key to ensure the goalie has not opened unnecessary holes for easy tip-ins through the goalie.

Pad Extension

Keys to the Movement:

- Visual attachment and tracking is key, as usual.
- This save selection is similar to a half butterfly, but the leg that is flared/extended is not sealed tight to the ice. Only the leg opposite the direction of the shot is in full contact with the ice.
- The toe of the extended leg must stay down. In the words of Mitch Korn "toes down, not toes up."

- The extended leg must be extended out to the side not kicked forward. If there is a kicking forward of the pad the rebound will be uncontrolled and unpredictable. The flared leg is angled in a way that the puck is going to hit the leg and head to the corner.
- The blade of the stick must be in full contact on the ice, in front of the body, covering the 5-hole. There must be enough angle to ensure the rebound is elevated.
- Keep the gloves in front of the body and stacked above the pads for extra backing in case the puck is higher than the extended pad.
- Lean the upper body towards the toe of the extended leg to ensure the goalie does not pull themselves off square from the puck or push away from the trajectory of the puck.



When to Use:

- For use on long shots where the puck is directed at the bottom 2/3 of the net with little to no traffic or chance of a deflection.
- On shots that are not on the ice and the rebound can or should be directed to the corner.
- Can be used on shots that are definitely headed for a bottom corner and the goalie may be required to stretch to make the save.

One Knee Down

Keys to the Movement:

- Vision basics are required.
- This is an old school save selection where the goalie has put one knee down to make a save but has kept the leg that is on the same side that the shot was directed towards more vertical than a leg extension.
- Keep the stick covering the 5-hole in front of the body.
- Keep the upper body high while leaning in towards the shot.
- Make sure there are no holes through the body by sealing holes with the elbows.



When to Use:

- On mid to high shots where the puck is going towards the top ½ of the net.
- Again, not very useful in screen or possible deflection situations.
- Can be used to stop high one-timers.
- Useful on some plays in tight where the player tries to shoot high. This requires tremendous patience and incredible anticipation skills.
- can be used well on high shots taken during breakaway plays.
- A strong save selection to be used on slapshots as players rarely use much deception with slapshots.

Trapper/Glove Extension

Keys to the Movement:

- Again this is similar to the Standing Trapper/Glove Save, but is used from a down position where the goalie has either one or two pads in full contact with the ice.
- Starts with the visual attachment.
- The goalie should try to move the body toward the glove while the goaltender attempts to catch the puck in front of the body. This will ensure the goaltender is not completely relying on a fully extended limb.
- Let the puck come to the glove rather than swat at the puck.
- Make sure to watch the puck all the way into the glove.
- Close the glove once the puck hits the pocket to avoid pop-outs.
- This save can be used in combination with most other save selections where the goalie is down.



When to Use:

- Basically, glove use is extremely important as the goalie can gain control of the puck more often through effective trapper use.
- Any shots that are 6" high or higher on the goalie's trapper side should be within range for the goaltender to attempt to catch the puck.
- Trapper involvement is key regardless of a screen or deflection possibility. If the goalie only tries to block with the body, when an extension is necessary, the puck will go in.
- Some times, a shot that is headed towards the top 12" of the net will require the goaltender to use an elbow raise to ward off the shot. Sometimes catching the puck may not happen due to proximity and speed of the shot, so the elbow may be needed.

Blocker Extension

Keys to the Movement:

- Similar to a Standing Blocker Save.
- Lock on to the shot visually.
- The goaltender must keep the blocker in front of the body to close off holes through the body and arm.
- Angle the blocker as the puck approaches so that the puck will deflect up and to the corner. Try to avoid snapping the wrist at the point of contact as this may result in a low rebound or a deflection off the extended blocker and in to the net.
- By allowing the puck to come to the blocker, with the blocker angled rather than snapped, the goalie is less likely to open the hole between the blocker and the body of the goalie.
- Watch and follow the rebound off of the blocker.
- Be sure to extend the blocker down on shots that are 10"-18" inches off the ice. Do not try to use the paddle of the stick to stop shots just above the pad.



When to Use:

- Any shots that are 10” high or higher on the goalie’s blocker side should be within range for the goaltender to attempt to get the blocker in contact with the puck.
- Blocker involvement is key regardless of a screen or deflection possibility. If the goalie only tries to block with the body, when an extension is necessary, the puck will go in.

Paddle Down/Barrel Block

Keys to the Movement:

- Strong visual fundamentals should begin the movement.
- The goaltender should transition quickly from the basic stance or save position to a position where the paddle of the stick is flat on the ice, with the face of the paddle facing the puck.
- The blocker should be pushed down onto the ice.
- The trapper side leg should be extended outwards. Both pads can be kept flat on the ice or can be left with the knee off the ice to keep a little more vertical coverage.
- Keep the upper body leaning forward, and as high as possible, while keeping the paddle in full contact with the ice.
- Stack the glove, on top of the extended glove side leg, while moving the trapper forward towards the puck in order to cut off the vertical angle.



When to Use:

- Should only be used on in-tight plays around the net, particularly within a stick length of either post.
- Effective on quick wrap around attempts to either side of the net.

- Can be used on screen shots from the point in an attempt to gain sightlines between the legs of the screeners or in total screen situations.

Vertical/Horizontal

Keys to the Movement:

- Visually identify the angle of the shooter and distance away from the net.
- The pad closest to the post must be vertical in a way that it runs nearly parallel with the same side post.
- The rear leg must be flared, at minimum, just above the goalline while staying flush with the ice.
- Keep the upper body high on the blocker side and depending on which V/H is used on the trapper side.
- On the blocker side the blocker stays beside the pad in a way that allows the stick to stay covering the 5-hole. The trapper is stacked just above the back leg in order to close holes through the body and is open/ready to scoop up low shots.
- On the trapper side the goaltender can perform the V/H in two different forms. The most common is similar to the setup on the blocker side with the upper body kept high, stick forward and covering the 5-hole, but the glove is stacked on top of the thighrise of the vertical pad. The other option is a V/H that is simply a paddle down block with the trapper side leg being more vertical than a regular paddle down. Again, the glove is stacked on top of the post leg thigh rise to close off the vertical angle.



When to Use:

- The V/H is best used on plays that are within a stick length away from the net on plays where the puck is between the bottom of the faceoff circles and the goalline.
- Of particular use when the puck is brought quickly by one player from below the goalline and whipped around towards the net. This is a common play in some power play schemes.
- Also, the V/H is strong when a play is close to the net, at a poor angle or with a backdoor passing play option available as the goalie is already loaded to explode across the crease while already covering low.

One Knee Down Shift

Keys to the Movement:

- This is a blocking movement that mixes a centre shift with the one knee down save selection.
- Vision basics begin the process.
- The goalie pushes themselves into the trajectory of the puck at the same time as executing a centre shift, but the trail leg is not closed.
- Keep the stick covering the 5-hole in front of the body.
- Keep the upper body high while leaning in towards the shot.
- The lead pad is flush to the ice.
- Make sure there are no holes through the body by sealing holes with the elbows.
- This is the only save selection where it is acceptable to not have the proper limb being used on the same side as the direction the puck is travelling.
- ** *If the goaltender uses the same One Knee Down Shift on all shots, despite the trajectory of the puck, then the goaltender does not have enough body control necessary to be successful. Essentially, this could be a sign of a one save goaltender, which is a huge weakness in today's game.***



When to Use:

- Usually on hard mid-line to high shots or slow moving shots where the goalie is trying to gain control or provide a very well controlled rebound.
- Useful on plays where the puck is moving slowly towards the goalie and they are preparing to control the puck with the stick in order to quickly cover up for a whistle.

Centre Shifting/Body Trap

Keys to the Movement:

- The execution of body activation involves the goaltender pushing laterally to meet the puck with as much body as possible.
- In most cases the body must only shift a couple of inches to a maximum of two or three feet.
- The goaltender must be able to explode into the save with control in order to maintain angle and compactness.
- Most often a body activation will involve a butterfly slide into the new position.

- ***A goaltender's ready stance must not be too wide to ensure more power for a push into a save. If the ready stance is too wide the goaltender loses the power of extending the pushing leg.***

- By activating the body the goaltender has improved the chances of controlling the puck at the body.



When to Use:

- Body activation is especially helpful in a deflection situation because the puck has changed angle because the deflector is the new shooter.
- A deflection should be considered a new shot from a new shooting angle which requires an adjustment by the goaltender; body activation is the best way to make the angle adjustment.
- A goaltender should try to use a centre shift as often as possible on shots belly button height or lower as the torso absorbs rebounds and is more reliable than an extended limb. While it is impossible to do so all the time it is a good habit to get into.

When trying to become an effective goaltender it is important that the goaltender has as many different tools in the toolbox, that can be used in different game situations, as possible. Interestingly a goaltender must be able to control their limbs in a way that one limb works independently, but must maintain control of the other parts of the body. Hopefully, this will be a guide for goaltenders and their coaches that can be used to gain an advantage over the competition rather than being a one dimensional goaltender that becomes victimized due to a lack of tools in the toolbox.