



# MIND THE NET GOALTENDING

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## The Basics of Down Goalie Movement

One of the most fascinating parts of being a goaltender is that one can never know everything there is to know about hockey and goaltending in particular. Another interesting idea relating to goaltending is that one can never do too much work on the basics. A couple of seasons ago MTN Goaltending brought you the "Basics of Goaltender Specific Movement" which was very well received, but most related to goalie specific movement while the goaltender is on their feet. Now, MTN Goaltending wants to get into the basics of down goalie movement which will attempt to cover the basics of transitioning to a down save as well as movements while staying down.

So, without further delay here are the 10+1 basics of down goalie movements:

### Visual Attachment

As usual the goaltender's job is dependent on having strong vision habits where the goalie is properly executing the vision sequence and the save sequence. It is of utmost importance that the goaltender begin immediate post-save reaction by the time the puck is 6" to 12" away from the body. The goaltender must remove any post-save delay which only comes by paying conscious attention to the save sequence. Removing post-save delay is done through constant repetition of the vision and save sequence (see "Two Sequences Every Goalie Must Focus On") and through constant repetition of rebound control and proper recoveries depending on a situation. Basically, while the goalie is going or already down they need to know where the puck is at all times (see Tim Thomas as an excellent example of visual attachment at all times).



### **Keep the Upper Body Tall**

While doing any sort of down goaltender movement it is important to keep the upper body high for a number of different reasons...First, all rebound recoveries are easier to perform with power and proper balance if the thighs are tight and the torso is tall and straight. Second, vertical coverage must be maintained in order to ensure that the top of the net is not exposed. Third, by keeping the upper body tall the goalie will find it easier to perform backside pushes quickly and with power. Finally, it is easier for a goalie to regain positioning on their feet because they do not have to regain an up right position before recovering to the feet.



### **Use the Full Skate Blade**

When moving laterally from a standing position or from a down position it is imperative the goalie uses the entire blade of the skate to produce the most thrust. Many people argue that the push should be initiated using the toe of the skate. This debate can be resolved with a simple question...Which will give a goalie more thrust 2-3 inches of rounded steel, on the toe of the skate, or a full 7-10 inches of inside edge? This is like asking which engine will have more power a four cylinder or a V8?



The biggest adjustments a goalie has to make in order to use the full blade of the skate for a backside push/activation is to bring the loading leg position to a more vertical position (not completely vertical but in an 80-85 degree angle to the ice) and to make sure there is more pressure placed on keeping the heel of the skate in contact with the ice throughout the entire push.

### **Keep the Stick Covering the 5-hole**

No matter what kind of pads a goalie wears a shot completely flat on the ice, going five hole, is likely to go in if stick control is sloppy. Whenever a goalie must move laterally they must open a hole, that is a given, so there is only one tool that closes off the holes between the legs while moving...the stick. Often many goalies are good with stick placement while sliding to the blocker side, but drag the stick like an anchor when moving to the glove side. Goalies, make sure to take your sticks with you when moving to the glove side through conscious awareness in practice and warmups.

In situations where a goalie is making a down goalie movement, either from stance or while down, it is important to keep the stick covering the 5-hole if there is a possibility that the puck may be tipped on the way to the net. Even though goalies need to have active sticks on low shots they need to keep the 5-hole covered to avoid an easy tip back through the goalie's legs.



### **Lean into the Direction of Travel**

If a goalie must move laterally into a down position or in a down position they must make sure they do not lean the upper body away from the direction of travel. By leaning away from the direction of travel a goalie will lose visual attachment, vertical coverage and some momentum while attempting to track the moving puck. If the goalie is leaning into direction of movement they are more likely to keep visual attachment, momentum and vertical coverage while being in a strong position of balance to allow for a quick change of direction, if needed.



### **Keep the Hands Forward**

By keeping the hands forward the goalie will maintain better balance, automatically close holes between the arms and body and cut off the trajectory of the puck (cut down on the angle). Keeping the hands forward is similar to gaining depth when positioning for a shot. The closer puck proximity takes away available open net while at the same time cutting down on the distance a limb would have to travel to cover a shot towards a corner. Closer puck proximity is key when facing shooters from close range (within a blocking zone).

### **Close the Holes Quickly(arms and body, five hole, pads and stick to ice)**

If a goalie is requiring down movement there is usually a high likelihood that the rebounder/pass receiver is going to take a quick release shot; meaning the aim of the shooter is to just hit the net. If a player is just trying to hit the net the goalie must ensure that holes are minimized in order to keep a strong blocking save selection. The goalie must make sure the hands are moved forward, as stated before, the stick is flat on the ice covering the five hole and the goalie must keep the pads sealed to the ice unless the puck changes direction.

### **Keep the Upper Body/Lower Body Movements Separate**

"If your hands are busy helping you move they are too busy to help you make saves". This is something we have expressed at every MTN Goaltending camp over the last few years. Too many times goalies are taught to swing the hands in order to gain momentum when moving both on the feet and on the knees. Goaltender power and momentum should be generated from the torso - down. Steady hands are needed when doing all goaltender movements which requires an almost disconnect between the upper and lower body that looks fluid and powerful in elite, well-trained goaltenders

### **Rotate Before Exploding/Activating**

Strong visual attachment where the eyes lead the head, the head leads the shoulders and the shoulders lead the rest of the body gives insight into how a rotation must occur on a play requiring down goalie movement. Let's say there is a situation where the goalie has made a save and they need to use a backside push/activation on a play to the backdoor it is important that the goaltender uses the y-theory (courtesy of the legendary Mitch Korn) to get back to the post. The y-theory suggests that a goalie will work in a diagonal direction towards the corner of the crease closest to the desired destination which will give the goalie the greatest chance to gain squareness to the puck while regaining proper angle quickly. If the goalie does not rotate at the waist to regain squareness the goalie will most likely slide straight across to the puck, rather than diagonally back to the corner of the crease, which leaves the goalie off square and

off angle until reaching the point of release. Basically rotating before activating a down movement is essential, especially on staggered plays near the net. As usual, the entire rotation process starts with proper visual attachment.

### **Support the Extended Stick and Limb**

Basically, if a goalie must extend a pad or stick out to the side to make a save, either straight on or with a lateral play the pad must back up the stick and the pad must be supported by a trapper or blocker. One never knows when a weird bounce may occur so it is important to always back up the extended stick and pad to ensure a more wall-like save position.



### **Bonus: Use the Shoulders and Elbows**

Whenever a goaltender spends a lot of time on their knees, which is most goalies in today's game, they need to be aware of the number of players that believe they will score more goals by shooting high. Of course, most shots that miss the net occur high and the vast majority of all goals, even at the NHL level, are scored in the bottom 2/3 of the net. In order to stop high shots from a down position, especially a compact down position, the goaltender must get used to using their elbows and shoulders to make high saves. By using the elbows and shoulders on high shots in tight the goaltender can maintain squareness to the puck during the save and can make quicker and shorter save movements with shoulder shrugs or elbow lifts.



Down positioning and movement is an integral and advanced part of goaltending (thanks Francois Allaire and Patrick Roy) that has helped goaltenders be more efficient and effective over the last 10-15



years. By understanding that a goaltender must be as strong while down as they are on their feet any goaltender can work towards a consistent approach within their skills set. Essentially, understanding and practicing "The Basics of Down Goalie Movement" will help any goaltender regardless of age and skill level to make important improvements to their game.