



Training The Goaltender

“ A proper conditioning program should try to develop a better athlete, not a better weight lifter.”

In order to improve the goaltender's athleticism for the position, try to replicate patterns commonly used while performing the goaltender's position.

When training for the goaltender position areas that should be addressed are:

- 1) **Agility/quickness:** The ability to start and stop and/or change direction while staying balanced and under control.
- 2) **Lower body power:** This should be a major area of concern for the goaltender. Powerful initial thrusts are vital to a goaltenders movement. Not only in getting to the right position but in their ability to regroup, recover, and make multiple saves or skating moves.
- 3) **Abdominal/torso strength:** This area is the center of gravity for the body and related to all athletic and goaltender movements.
- 4) **Foot quickness:** Foot quickness plays a key role in all positions. The aim is to improve the ability to move the goaltenders feet as well as their ability to transition from one directional movement to another.
- 5) **Flexibility:** Proper flexibility will improve the goaltender's strength through a greater range of motion, as well as decrease their chance of injury. Greater flexibility improves the goaltenders ability to scramble, close holes, and to have greater net coverage in a quicker more balanced fashion.
- 6) **Hand/eye co-ordination:** Athletic performance relies on the co-ordination of the limbs and eyes.
- 7) **Conditioning:** Position specific conditioning will improve overall fitness by building a base for the goaltender to recover from bouts of exertion and maintain a proper level of fitness required to play the position successfully
- 8) **Upper body strength:** Emphasis should be placed on functional, explosive techniques that help to improve goaltender movement. Light weight training that improves muscular co-ordination and quickness

- 9) **Skill development:** Taking specific skills and use off-ice drills as if they were on ice.

Off Ice Drills

Visual Drills

Tennis ball toss

- Stand facing wall about 7 feet away.
- Throw ball against wall with right hand, catch with right hand; 15 reps
- Repeat with right hand to left hand; left hand to left hand and left hand to right hand.

Mirroring

- Player with eyes closed facing coach
- At coaches command player opens eyes and matches hand position of coach (Palms up, palms down, facing to one side, etc.)
- Use fingers instead of hands.
- 5 reps, record accurate reps within 1 second.

Eye Movement

- Player stands in goalie stance arms length from eye chart.
- One eye closed Coach behind goaltender calls out letter for the goaltender to locate.
- Goaltender finds letter by pointing it out with hand and fixates on it until coach releases him.
- Coach calls out next letter, repeat.
- 30 reps each eye.

Localization and Depth

- Using minimal head movement, use vision to direct hand movements.
- The goaltender holds a toothpick in their dominant hand.
- Coach holds straw within arms length of the goaltender.
- Upon coach's command the goaltender in one fluid motion attempts to put the toothpick in the opening of the straw.
- Move straw to various locations and in all positions of gaze (straight/up/up & right/right and down, etc.)
- 25 reps each hand.
- Watch for a consistent pattern of error.

Speed and agility

Squat Thrusts #1

- With fingers touching the ground, straighten one leg out to the side.
- With short hops rotate in a circle back to your starting position.
- Repeat going both ways and with both legs.

Squat Thrusts #2

- While in a squat position.
- Two jumps forward
- Two jumps backwards
- Two jumps to the left
- Two jumps to the right
- Relax and repeat 4 reps

Around - Through - And Over Race Drill

Set up six cones or small hurdles. Begin at one corner of course. Set up goaltender facing square to one consistent direction through the entire drill. To keep the goaltender's hands under control have them carry a tennis ball in each hand while completing the following:

Circuit one: Starting on coaches command, the goaltender does three butterfly down and ups and then begins by moving all the way around the cones, three more down and ups and then back again to the start with lateral shuffles ending with three more butterfly down and ups.

Circuit two: Next move in and out of each cone, forwards and backwards, (again facing the same direction throughout). Once again the goaltender does three butterfly down and ups when the goaltender has reached the last cone, three more butterfly down and ups and repeat to start finishing with three butterfly down and ups.

Circuit three: Three butterfly down and ups, lateral crossovers done over each cone, stopping outside the last cone. Three more butterfly down and ups before returning over the cones back to the start and finishing with three more butterfly down and ups.

Both feet must touch in between each cone requiring extra quickness. Try to make every single direction change quicker.

Shuffles

- Place pylons 6 feet apart in a zig zag pattern
- Start in goalie position, starting from left pylon
- Butterfly down and up and shuffle jump to the next right pylon.
- Butterfly down and up and shuffle jump top next left pylon
- Repeat up course
- Return backwards
- Repeat with the Goaltender, turning tightly around the pylon, doing a down and up and then shuffle.
- Repeat backwards.
- Two reps

Eye hand stick drop

- With a hand at each end of the stick (about shoulders width apart)
- Stand erect with arms extended forward and at shoulder height
- Release stick, clap hands and catch the stick with both hands before it hits the ground. Repeat.
- When releasing the stick turn your body in a complete circle and try to catch the stick with both hands before it hits the ground. Make sure you turn both ways. Repeat

- Hold the stick above your head and drop stick behind your back. Turn and catch stick with both hands before it hits the ground. Make sure you turn both ways. Repeat.
- Stand erect with arm extended forward and at shoulder height. Hold the stick up right in one hand at the bottom of the stick. Slightly open your hand to let the stick slide through. Try and catch the top end of the stick

Quickness and Agility

The goaltender must have the ability to start, stop and/or change direction, while staying balanced and under control. This aspect is what sets great athletes apart. Skating speed is not much of an issue with goaltenders however quickness and agility are.

Ball Drop

- Stands upright tennis ball in each hand, arms extended forward and at shoulder height.
- Goaltender positioned at set distance and facing coach in goalie stance.
- Coach drops a ball from either hand and the goalie must react and catch the ball after no more than one bounce.
- Repeat with player facing sideways from coach.
- Repeat with goalie having back to coach.

Agility Double "T" Stop and Start Hurdles

- Mark a course with a start and finish.
- Set up a pair of low hurdles on both sides (left and right) of the running line.
- Goaltender starts from the goalie stance and runs to end at the coach's command.
- When the goaltender is one step away from a set of left/ right hurdles the coach will give the goalie a signal as to what direction the goaltender will have to go first.
- The goaltender laterally steps over the low hurdles, and progresses back to the middle , the goaltender will do three butterfly saves, recover and laterally step over the hurdles on the opposite side from which he just did, progress back to the middle, do three more butterfly saves, recover and sprint to finish line.
- Repeat.

Hand-Eye, Quickness Hand Slaps

- Sitting facing a partner, legs shoulder width apart or more, and feet touching your partner's feet.
- One has palms down over the others palms up.
- Person with palms facing up and beneath the palms down partner will quickly try to pull his hands back and slap the top of his partner's hands.

Upper Body Strength

Take a Goalie stick at the butt end and do the following:

- Shoulder height, with locked elbows using the stick hand, hold the goal stick directly in front of you and at the butt end. Slowly raise and lower the stick from between the hips to the shoulders. Change hands and repeat.

- Same as above but hold stick out to the side.
- The number of reps and the length of time should be determined by each participant.

Flexibility

Introduce the goaltender to **Yoga**. While introducing them to mental visualization, relaxation and breathing skills Yoga will also give them better balance, better concentration and a better awareness of their body.

Summary

Dissect the training program so the goaltender is maximizing their ability to play the game. Strength and conditioning programs go beyond lifting weights and riding a bike. Emphasis should be placed on variety. This variety will provide the goaltender with a fresher approach and subsequently a better chance of keeping them motivated in an off ice conditioning program.

