

## A Message to Goalies: Starting the Season Effectively

Whether you are a returning a starter, a back-up fighting for the job, or the new kid at school, here are some random suggestions to get the year off to a good start.

*Act like the job is yours* — Don't be timid. Establish a presence with attitude and actions. Cockiness isn't necessary but an air of confidence is. Don't ever make a coach ask for a goalie to get in the net twice. If he says he needs a goalie, you get there first.

*Don't worry about things you can't control* — So the other guy had a great day at practice. So the coach didn't seem to be watching when you made that great save at practice. The new kid looks pretty good. Focus on things you can influence, things like your own effort.

*Establish good habits early* — We are a collection of our own habits, both the good and the bad. We are not who we want to be. We are not who we think we are, in many cases. We are what we do. Arrive early. Arrive prepared. Focus on the drill at hand. Work hard. Listen. Do the drill right. By the way, there is a difference between doing a drill right and doing it fast. Do it right. And then, as you master it, do it right AND do it fast.

*Don't cheat on drills* — If the coach says "post to post," make sure your skate blade touches the post. If the drill calls for you to follow each pass and then take a shot, don't cheat by advancing early to the spot from which the shot will originate. Follow the passes, if that's what you are told.

*Set two early goals: positioning and puck control* — From the start, work on your positioning. For depth, use the top of the crease. For centering, notice if shooters are lefties or righties. Care where you put rebounds and keep a clean crease.

*Solve problems* — Goalies have to compete, both with effort and intelligence. Don't let someone beat you the same way continually. Solve the problem.

*Follow your eyes and follow your hands* — Turn your head and watch the puck. Everything should follow. When moving around the crease, locate the puck; turn the shoulders and lead with the hands.

*Respect the importance of stick consistency* — Being sloppy with your stick can hurt you in so many ways. Not just in getting beat because you got caught on your heel or halfway to "paddle down." But also because not leading with and following the stick will hurt your efficiency of movement.

*Make saves when you can. Don't just block the shot* — On a "bang-bang" play in close, it's great to be able to move to smother and block the shot. But when a shot comes from far enough away that you can see it and move to execute a proper save, do just that. Don't let those long shots simply hit you like you were blocking a close shot. Too many young goalies get in such a pace of dropping and blocking that they sometimes forget to execute saves and control or direct those longer shots.

Follow these suggestions and you will start a successful season on the right notes.

Joe Bertagna, Director of Bertagna Goaltending Schools

[Bertagnagoaltending.com](http://Bertagnagoaltending.com)

[jbertagna@comcast.net](mailto:jbertagna@comcast.net)