

HOCKEY NL GOALTENDING NEWSLETTER



**You don't have to be crazy
to play goal, but it helps!**

- Bernie Parent, NHL Hall of Fame Goalie -

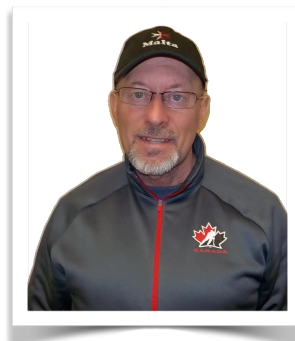
MESSAGE FROM THE HOCKEY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

On behalf of the Hockey Development Committee (HDC) I would like to sincerely thank and congratulate Mike O'Brien and the Goaltending Mentorship Team on another great newsletter! This Team works exceptionally hard at mentoring, facilitating, researching and brainstorming goalie development and growth within our Province.

Goalie recruitment and retention is a priority for the HDC and Mentorship Team as we work together to help grow the position. We'd also like to recognize the many Associations in their efforts to entice players to try goaltending and to encourage those who put on the gear to continue working hard.

We commend the Mentorship Team for their ongoing commitment and wish them continued success in all they do.

Yours in Hockey,
Garry Dove
Hockey Development Chair, Hockey NL



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DIRECTION OF MOVEMENT

by Cory Keats

While the shortest distance between two points may be a straight line, the most efficient path for goaltenders is through the middle of their crease.

The term "Path of Direction" or "Direction of Movement" is a goaltending term that simply means moving through the centre of the crease to get into your next position so that we take away the middle of the net as quickly as possible. A mentor of mine once told me it's about chasing space, not chasing the puck! The following will help give you a better meaning of what this exactly means.

Common theory tells us that the quickest way to get from point A to point B is a straight line and in many cases that is correct. But in the goaltending position it's about filling up space and taking away as much of the net as quickly as we can. If we travel in a straight line we increase our risk of giving up the short side and we actually take longer to fill the middle of the net.

"It's about chasing space, not chasing the puck!"

For example, when we are on our post and the puck moves from below the goal line to the middle of the ice we must come through the middle of the crease to take away net space as soon as possible.



Another example is when we are at the top of the crease facing the dot and a pass is made to the far face off dot we need to move slightly backwards to fill space through the middle of the net more quickly.



Key points to remember are we need proper angle, squareness and depth to be in a good position. Out of those three, the two that are non-negotiable are being on angle (in the middle of the net) and being square to the puck (shoulders/hips/toes all facing the puck). We have a higher percentage of making a controlled save by having these components all come together.

The game of hockey is fast but we as goaltenders have the ability to slow it down by not chasing the puck, by understanding the space we are covering, and by hitting our spots to give us the best chance to make the save.

THE SAVE CYCLE

by Mike O'Brien

When non-goalies think about a save, they typically focus on the discreet action when a goalie actually stops the puck. For goalies and goalie coaches, stopping the puck is only one part (albeit an important one!) of the full process of making a save. This process is collectively referred to as the **SAVE CYCLE**.

The Save Cycle can be divided into three major sections made up of five key activities:

PRE-SAVE: Prior to making a save: (1) use eyes to find the puck; (2) maintain a strong visual connection to the puck while moving into the shot line; and (3) get into the proper stance, square to the puck and at an appropriate depth.

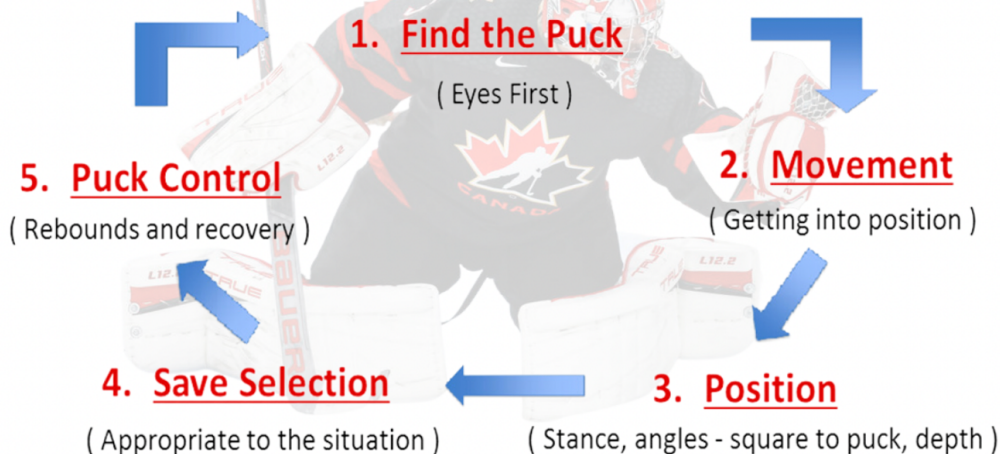
SAVE: Read the shot and make a correct save selection/response to stop the puck.

POST SAVE: After the save, smother the puck or track it and immediately re-position to the new shot line to best defend the net if a rebound is produced.



The Save Cycle is shown graphically in the figure on the following page.

THE SAVE CYCLE



BUILT ON THE ROCK: HNL GOALTENDERS MAKING US PROUD

by Mike O'Brien

Three Hockey Newfoundland and Labrador goaltenders have recently made notable breakthroughs at the professional and major junior levels. Each has translated strong technical skills and competitive resilience into key advances in their hockey journeys. These achievements represent an encouraging benchmark for goaltending development in our province and a clear signal of what is possible for the next generation of Newfoundland and Labrador netminders.



Building on a very successful five year career with Drummondville Voltigeurs of the QMJHL (82-47-14, 2.92 GAA, .907 SV%), **Riley Mercer ('04/Bay Roberts)** has attended NHL training camps with the Montreal Canadiens, Ottawa Senators, New Jersey Devils, and Minnesota Wild. His performance impressed the Wild who signed him to an entry-level contract during the offseason. After spending the first half of the season the Wild's ECHL affiliate Iowa Heartlanders, he was called-up to their AHL affiliate Iowa Wild in mid-December and made his AHL debut on December 20, 2025, earning a shutout and shootout win in his very first start! He is Drummondville's franchise leader in wins, shutouts, games played, and save percentage.

Back with the QMJHL, the Charlottetown Islanders have shown a real affinity for Newfoundland-born goaltenders. After a strong season with the Cornwall Colts of the CCHL (17-8-0, 2.36 GAA, .925 SV%) followed by an impressive rookie season with the Islanders (15-9-2, 2.82 GAA, .902 SV%), **Donald Hickey ('07/Conception Bay South)** has taken over as the Islanders' No. 1 goalie this season. Hickey continues to excel with the Islanders this season.



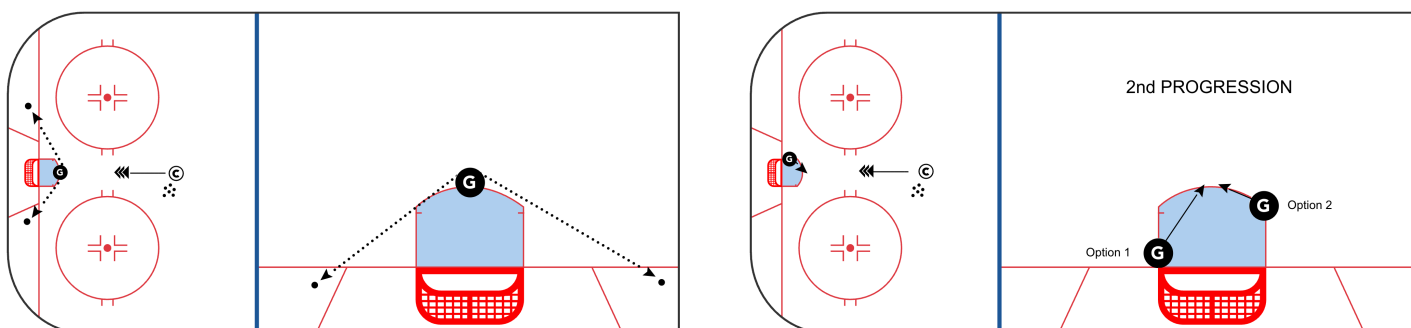
The Islanders doubled down in late-December, signing **Jack Carter ('07/Portugal Cove-St. Phillips)** to join Hickey to make up their goaltending tandem on their final 2025-26 roster. Carter had been having an outstanding season with the Rockland Nationals of the CCHL where he had posted a 13-1-0 record through the first half of the season with a 1.72 GAA and .928 SV%, numbers which made him the CCHL's top goaltender at the time...he has gone 2-2-2 with a 2.90 GAA and .893 SV% since joining the Islanders. This was the second time this year that the Islanders had an all Hockey NL goalie tandem...they called up Will Morgan ('09/Holyrood) from Chaleur Lightning of the MHL...and marks the first time this has happened in almost 20 years when **Roger Kennedy ('88/St. John's)** and **Mark Yetman ('88/St. John's)** played together for the Halifax Mooseheads during the 2006-07 season.

PRODUCING BETTER GOALTENDERS

Progressive drills for purposeful development.

We regularly receive requests from coaches across the province for sample drills that they can use with their goalies. **Producing Better Goaltenders** is a practical resource for coaches that features ready-to-run drills that they can integrate seamlessly into team practices. The focus is on fundamentals that are essential for all goaltenders and include progressions so they are scalable for all ages and skill levels.

Below is a simple stick save drill from Mentor Kelsey Shute that you can use to help your goalies work on this key skill. It includes a progression to add some movement so they can also work on their skating skills.



Details:

- **G** starts in their butterfly at the top of the crease; **C** is positioned in the high slot with pucks.
- **C** shoots pucks along the ice towards the goalies pads; alternate shots towards left and right pad.
- **G** must steer the puck to the corners with their stick and follow the rebound with their eyes.

Teaching Points:

- Goalie should maintain a strong visual connection to the puck at all times, including following the rebound.
- Position stick in front of pads and in their vision so they can see the puck, stick and gloves at the same time.
- Angle the stick to control the rebound; move the stick in an arc in front of the body...do not "jab" at the puck.

Progression:

- Add some pre-save movement to the drill by having the goalie start on their post or square to the face-off dot and move into position before making the save; goalie should use their eyes to find the puck before moving; alternate sides so goalie practice moving in both directions.

QUESTIONS? COMMENTS? IDEAS?

Do you have any comments or ideas you'd like to see covered in this newsletter? We'd love to hear from you!

The Goaltending Mentorship Team is available to provide support to aid in the development of our goaltenders from grassroots to elite levels. Our Mentors can deliver coaching clinics, provide assistance with minor hockey association/team goaltending sessions & drills, or help with any other goaltending support required by goalies, coaches, teams, and parents.

If you have questions or would like more information on goaltender development, please contact one of our Mentors.

Hockey NL's Goaltending Mentorship Team (L-R):

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