

PROPS TO TRAIN GOALIES

When I speak with goalies, parents and coaches about training goalies, I stress two important points:

1. The training/practice process should be **more difficult** and **more unusual** than ordinary game conditions. This prepares the goalie for most anything and makes the "tough game saves" more routine.
2. You don't have to be a goalie genius to train a goalie. "Coaching" and "training" are a bit different. Coaching is often technical, with valuable feedback. Training is "drilling" and "preparation". It helps if "feedback and technical corrections" can be made, but is not necessary. Rather than "ignore" the goalie, it is better to help "train" the goalie if quality coaching is not available.

Often, the goalie has to "find a way" to make a save. They have to figure it out physically, and have to put "order to the decision process" mentally. They develop "muscle memory" physically, and adapt to stimuli mentally.

Simply, without coaching, through repetition, most kids do "figure it out".

We suggest the use of the "goalie props" listed below to help improve goaltenders without the "coach" having an intimate knowledge of the position.

Prop 1 – Screen Board

A "screen board" is a fantastic training aid. Anybody can make it. It's simply 2 legs and a tarp, blanket or piece of plywood approximately 6-9 feet wide and 4-6 feet high, with the "board" approximately 8-12 inches off the ice. It is placed approximately 6-10 feet away from the front of the goaltender.

The concept is that pucks are shot under the board forcing the goaltender to react very quickly both mentally (recognizing the puck has arrived) and physically (making the save motion)...while being physically efficient. The speed of the shot and the distance

the board is away from the goaltender is based on the age and skill level. I have used this "prop" a great deal in both my goalie schools, and with the pros in Buffalo and Nashville.

Mentally, too often goaltenders are "spectators" . . . they watch pucks go across the front of the net, or into the goal before moving. This certainly helps train and improve their ability to "read and react" much more quickly, and increase "puck recognition" speed.

Physically, the goaltender can be challenged to "explode" their legs and stick to help improve speed. Techniques of stick saves, half butterfly saves, closing the 5 hole, rebound control, etc., can be emphasized without the traditional dull circumstance when the coach shoots the puck to one side and the goalie makes the appropriate save selection. It creates uncertainty, and simulates traffic that happens in games, but rarely in practice



Here's a variety of drills/uses for the screen board.

1. The goaltender is stationary behind the board. Shots come under the board and the goaltender must use either the pads or stick to stop it. This can be done with or without a stick, isolating one side or another, etc. Don't cheat...don't guess...**react to the puck.**
2. The goaltender is moving laterally at the top of the crease and must react quickly to the shot, possibly while moving in the other direction! This really improves the ability to make transition.
3. Players skate toward the board, and approximately 3-5 feet from it, cut left or right **around** the board and shoot. This forces the goaltender to "pick up the shooter out of traffic," turn, square up, and attack.
4. The goaltender is on his knees (right under the body) and when shots are taken, the goalie must "flipper" the appropriate pad. This is a "second effort-rebound" related drill.
5. The goalie skates out to the board and puts his stick under the board so the shooter can see it. The goalie then begins to back up and the shooter shoots under the board. This forces the goalie to be able to make a 1/2 butterfly while moving backwards.
6. Do the same as #5 but the shooter now moves around the board like #3 above. Wow does the goalie have to adjust timing, make transition and stop the puck!!
7. The board is moved off to an angle and shots come from an angle on the outside 1/3 of the ice. Concentration here is to prevent rebounds from going into the slot. It's wonderful for stick control.
8. Same as #7, but the skater can either shoot on goal or pass to a player positioned on the "back door". It really improves the goalies ability to read then react quickly to a back door play. They learn to "read" the angle at which the puck is moving!
9. Put the board behind the goal line to the left or right of the goal and work on breaking up centering passes as the puck comes under the board.
10. The board is at the hash marks, with a righty to the right of the goalie on faceoff dot, and a lefty to the left on that dot. A passer, behind the board, can either shoot under, or pass to one side or another for a quick one timer. This simulates the "power play umbrella" with traffic.



Simply, the board provides a unique physical and mental challenge to a goaltender and nobody needs to be a goalie coach to use it! It's not easy...so don't let the goalie get discouraged.

Prop 2 - Deflection Boards

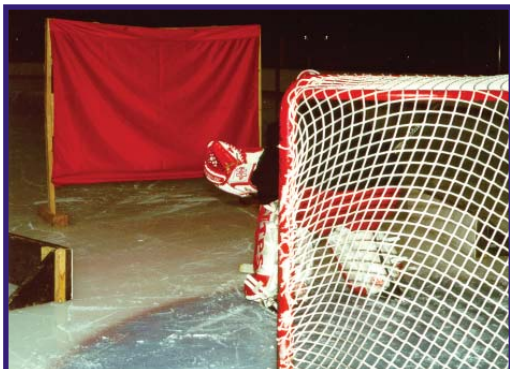
While a bit predictable, deflection boards are a great consistent tool to help train the goalie to handle deflections and back door passes. The objective is that the goalie adjusts to the "angle change" (must get square to the deflection) at the same time, closing holes, rotating the shoulders and body, and bringing their entire "package to the puck" with the chest square to the deflection. No sloppy sticks, no sloppy arms, no planted feet, and no ending up on your butt!

We used to use low boards, but goalies began to cheat by extending the pad, but not squaring the body. So we created boards to handle high shots, so the goalie cannot just take the ice away.

All drills, especially with the young ones, require the development of muscle memory. Therefore, no thinking at first... all shots to one side until the goalie develops a "flow" that is comfortable.

Here's a variety of drills/uses for the deflection boards.

1. Both boards are set up and the goalie rotates into the space between the end of the board and the net either with a half butterfly or butterfly. Initially, be predictable when shooting. One side first... then the other side. Develop the rotation. Then mix it up. Goalies should always lead with the stick... paddle up or down. Start low, then go high, mix it up.
2. **Breakaway Simulation:** While the timing of the coach is important, we can use the boards to develop "flow" for breakaway training.
 - The goalie comes out extra far toward the shooter or coach.
 - The goalie begins to back up as the skater moves toward the goalie.
 - At the right moment, the coach shoots the puck off a deflection board. The goalie, while moving backward, has to rotate into the "back door space" and stop the puck. Again, the key is shoulder rotation, with a body $\frac{1}{4}$ turn, a good push, and closing of holes.
3. **Back door off the Angle:** This could be very difficult for the goalie because of the long distance required to be traveled to get to the back door. It is easier for an "off-side" wing to hit the board. This drill can be done with the goalie cutting down the angle at different distances and flowing backward like the breakaway drill above.



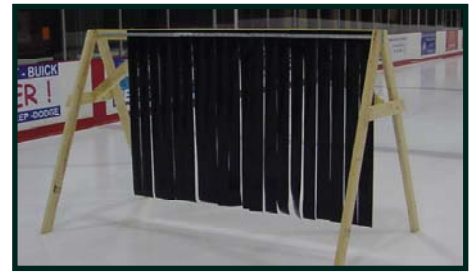
4. Make it even tougher by adding the screen board (left). Wow, does this improve the goalie's quickness and ability to mentally react quickly.

Prop 3 – High Shot Screen Board

It hit me over 25 years ago while in a car wash, but it was not until our creative facility support staff at Miami University (Jeff Carey and Jeff Hucke) were provided with the idea that they were able to construct a version that really worked. They built me a portable version that I travel with all summer.



As can be seen by the pics, the pucks come thru the black plastic strips helping the goalie to improve the use of their hands, trapping pucks on the body, etc, while fighting to find pucks, like in a game, through traffic. Of course, pucks can come through on the ice as well. The black 2 inch strips allow for some vision, but it comes and goes like in a game.



We can do a lot of the same drills with the “high shot screen board” as we outline last issue with the “low shot screen board”

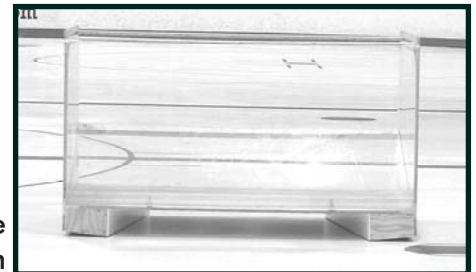
Prop 4 – Deflection Ramp

Another great device created with the handymen at Miami University. As I write this, we are working on a portable version for camps this summer. The original ramp is very big, bulky and on wheels so we can move it around.



The ramp has many uses, with the primary objective to create elevation on deflections, training the goalie to “connect the dots” tracking the puck, anticipating and reading the deflection’s angle....or reading no deflection at all.

Other options to keep it challenging is to shoot pucks under the board, or bank pucks off the side creating high shot deflections (like the deflection boards).



Prop 5 – On- Ice Mirror

We talked about this for years, and finally found unbreakable mirror material. We unveiled this at camp last summer. For simplicity, we use our “high shot screen board” as the frame, added hooks, and hang the mirror. Feedback is more immediate than video tape.

The goalie can make skating moves and observe if their arms and legs are sloppy or efficient. They can make save selections and see how well their gloves, pads, pants and stick work together, if they are sloppy, and if they



are creating holes as they close others. We use the mirror as a “screen board”, shoot the puck under the mirror, have the goalie make their save selection, and then they look up and instantly to see their arm/leg positions.

In addition, we put a black piece of tape down the middle of the mirror as a center point, attempting to teach goalies how to drop “into shots” rather than “fall off pucks”.

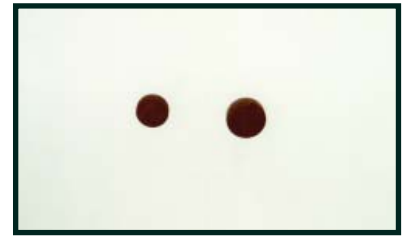


Prop 6 - Mini Pucks

My buddy Steve McKichan (now Toronto Maple Leaf goalie coach) turned me onto these little beauties. This puck is 2 ½ inches instead of the full size 3 ½ inches. It's a bit lighter so it really takes off. Baseball players swing 2 bats so the one seems lighter... after stopping mini's... the real pucks looks like a chocolate cake!

We do a lot of in tight drills working on the catch glove, 5-hole, 6-hole, and getting pads down. Again, make it tougher than a game! Try them with the deflection and screen boards. Wow... it really works!

One problem...be careful, for those that wear the wide eye "cat eye" masks, the mini-puck can fit through the bars.



Prop 7 - Focus Enhancer

I cannot believe how many goalies (even pro goalies) fail to follow the puck well or pick it up through distractions. A fellow goalie guru, Chris Economou and I, were brainstorming on how to improve the mental skills of "focus"... and we came up with this... our "focus enhancer". It's a mesh bag, big enough to fit over the mask. The size of the mesh and color (black or white) can vary with the goalies experience and skill level. The smaller the mesh holes the less light and vision, thus making it more difficult. We found that white makes it even more difficult. Back to the concept of a baseball player who swings two bats in the on-deck circle to make the one bat feel lighter at the plate.



Do your normal practice shooting drills wearing the "focus enhancer"... then take it off... the puck looks huge... and is easier to follow.

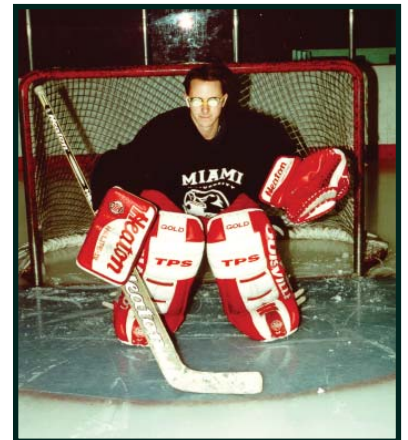


Prop 8 - The Blindfold

Goalies take their movement around the net for granted. Take away the sense of sight, and their movement falls apart. Why? The muscle memory of going post to post, or coming out to the top of the crease should be second nature... like a blind person moving about their home... automatic.

With the use of a simple winter cap, pulled down over the mask or taped swimming goggles (photo 10), a coach can "talk" the goalie through moves... "right post, left post, come out to the corner of the crease to your left, come out to the middle of the top of the crease, back to the right post... etc."

Watch how the goalie's movement around the net becomes more fluid, how he can follow the puck better because he will not rely on his vision to move. Ask the goalie to "visualize" the movement in the dark.



Prop 9 - White Pucks

Years ago we used to paint them white, but the paint would always chip off. These are white thru and thru. While a little bouncier than regular pucks, they are an unbelievable challenge to the goalie to "follow". This might be the toughest of all the props.



Prop 10 - Racquetballs

Turn the net around and face the boards. Use racquetballs, tennis balls, etc., and toss those at the boards, forcing the goalie to react as it comes back at them. Change angles, locations, and trajectory of the toss to make it more difficult. Make sure the goalie is looking at the boards and not using the glass as a mirror to see the person throwing the ball!

Because the balls bounce, it forces the goalie to really follow the ball and expect the unexpected. It enhances the use of their gloves.



Prop 11 - Glove Weights

These are one pound each, worn under the gloves to add weight in the practice setting, attempting to build strength and speed. Our pro goalies have used them as well. When they come off, gloves should be quicker. It is the same concept as a baseball player, who swings a weighted bat on the on deck circle.



Some off ice ideas



Prop 12 - Bungee Ball

With the "new NHL" has come the need to have better gloves, to catch more pucks, to prevent more rebounds. So many young kids have trouble catching. Some of the problems are the size/fit

of the gloves, but other problems involve the goalies' mechanics/visual hand-eye coordination skills. With so few youngsters now playing baseball, the bungee becomes a valuable way to improve their catching skills, by themselves, in a fun way.



Prop 13 - Balance Boards

While we have used balance boards off the ice (with the goalie out of their gear) to develop leg strength, balance, a good deep crouch, etc., we began to use the boards with goalies off ice, but in their gear (skates too). It is a challenge, on blades to control



**Many of these props are available
on our website: www.mitchkorn.com**