

# PROPS TO TRAIN GOALIES

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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. (Photo 1)

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.

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.

## 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...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! (Photo 2 and Photo 3)
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.



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". No sloppy sticks, no sloppy arms, no planted feet, and no

ending up on your butt!

These boards are like picnic benches or benches which skaters sit on around the rink. We made ours and added the plastic from around the inside of the ice surface to the "face" of the deflection surface. This helps the pucks "jump" better.

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.

1. (Photo 4) 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, butterfly, or even a two pad slide. (photo 5) 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.
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 coach.
  - The goalie begins to back up as the coach 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.(Photo 5)
3. **Back door off the Angle** (Photo 6): 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 (photo 7). Wow, does this improve the goalie's quickness and ability to mentally react quickly.



Photo 4



Photo 5



Photo 6



Photo 7

### **Prop 3 - Mini Pucks** - (Photo 8):

My buddy Steve McKichan 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.

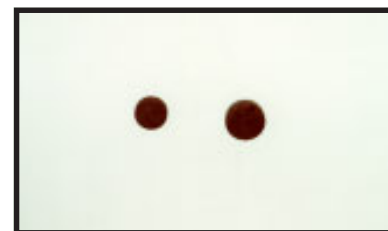


Photo 8

### **Prop 4 - Focus Enhancer** – (Photo 9)

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.



Photo 9

### **Prop 5 - The Blindfold** – (Photo 10)

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.



Photo 10

## **Prop 6 - Racquetballs** - (Photo 11)

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.



Photo 11

## **Prop 7 - White Pucks** - (Photo 12)

This is my latest innovation. 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 8 - Bungee Ball** - (Photo 13)

This is a neat off-ice device to help hand eye coordination for all ages... and the goalie can work on it by him/herself!



Photo 12

## **Prop 9 - Wrist Weights** - (Photo 14)

These weights are approximately 1 lb., and are worn under the gloves. It is the same concepts as swinging a bat with a weight before the hitter gets up to the plate. They help make your glove faster!

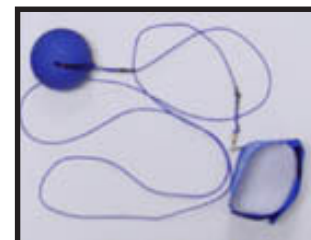


Photo 13

## **Prop 10 - Deflection Ramp**- (Photo 15)

We created this to challenge the goalie even more. Pucks can hit the ramp and deflect up...or hit the sides and deflect...or disappear under the board and re-appear to make the save...or the puck can deflect off the legs. This really helps the goalie "connect the dots" anticipating the puck's change of direction and elevation.



Photo 14

**Most of these props  
are available on  
our website:  
[www.mitchkorn.com](http://www.mitchkorn.com)**

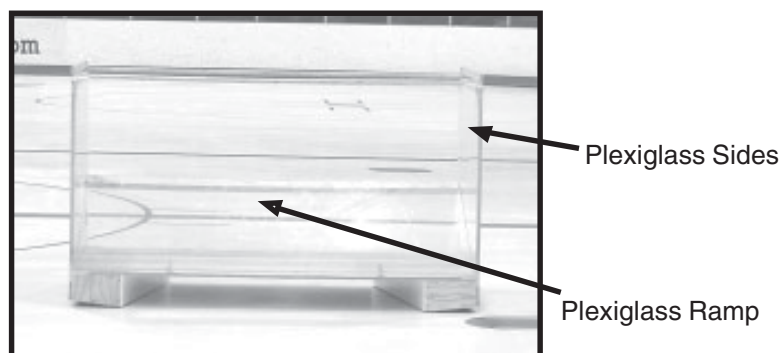


Photo 15