

VISUAL FOCUS...TRACKING THE PUCK IS KEY TO SUCCESS

It may seem simple, it may be logical, but focus on the puck throughout the puck's path is not consistently accomplished by most goaltenders, even those in the pros. It seems that many goalies do some, but not all components regularly. Let's break it down.

Reading the puck off the stick

Reading the puck off the stick gives the goalie a great "jump" on the shot or pass. Without it, things will happen too fast. This should provide the goalie with his/her first decisions... shot or pass. Let's follow the decision options:

Shot

- quickly decide left, right, middle
- quickly decide high or low... high requires the goalie to stand up, low allows the goalie to prepare to "leave his feet"

**consider that a shot from 60 feet away from the goalie (the blue line) shot at 75 miles an hour, gives the goalie less than 1 second to react. Reading the puck off the stick provides a fantastic advantage to the goaltender

Pass

- patience is required so as not to "leave your feet" early, assuming a shot...then track the puck

Good players are deceptive by moving the puck, hiding the pass or shot, and trying to surprise the goalie. The best I ever worked with at reading pucks off the stick was Hasek (that's obvious) with former Nashville goalie Mike Dunham a close second.

When Steve Shields turned pro with Buffalo's organization, he found this very difficult... he always picked the puck up late but he really improved with practice and concentration.

Tracking the Puck... follow the dots

This is the process of following the puck after it leaves the stick. A lot of goalies read the puck off the stick, then "look past the puck" and they do not track it to their body. Pucks not "tracked" often go through the goalie.

Shot

- decide on save selection, now that the goalie can pin-point where high or low and where left, right or middle the puck is headed
- assess the situation and decide what to do with the puck after the save (trap on body, cushion puck, deflect away from opponents, etc.)

Pass

- watch and move with the puck as it travels to the opponent and attempt to arrive before the puck
- decide on the save selection

Connect the Dots

This is the completion of the process.

Shot

- anticipate possible deflections by watching the puck and the sticks and bodies which come within the puck's path
- watch the puck into the goaltender's equipment for the save... control or follow rebound

Pass

- connect the stick blades (the dots) so the goalie reads the puck off the receiver's stick (again). Too often on quick plays around the net, the goalie just slides, but does not connect the dots (stick to stick) and is often not square
- by connecting the dots, the goalie knows where the stick blade is (inside-toward the slot or outside-toward the far post, etc.) allowing better body position, being more square, and seeing the puck better off the stick

Unfortunately, there are times where this process breaks down, and the goalie has less of a chance to make the save. Due to traffic around the net and screens, the goalie, through anticipation and experience, must "connect the dots" as if there was clear vision.

Diagram 1
Read the Puck off the Stick
The goalie must decide quickly

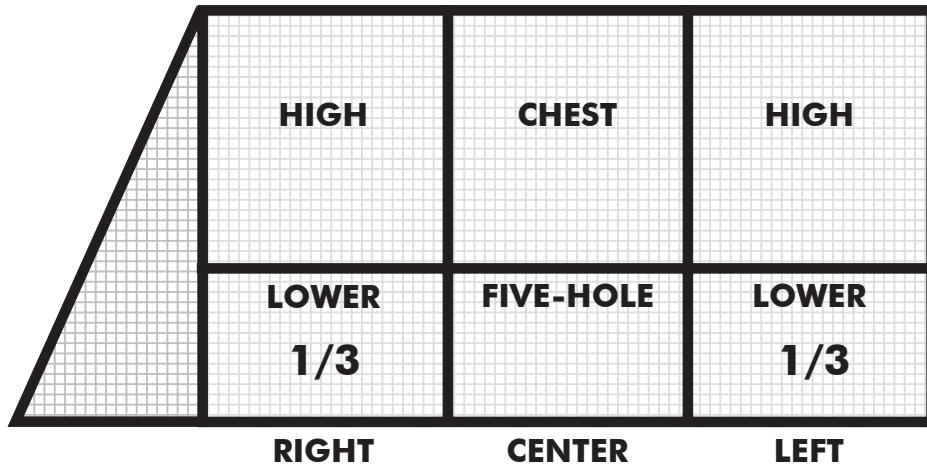
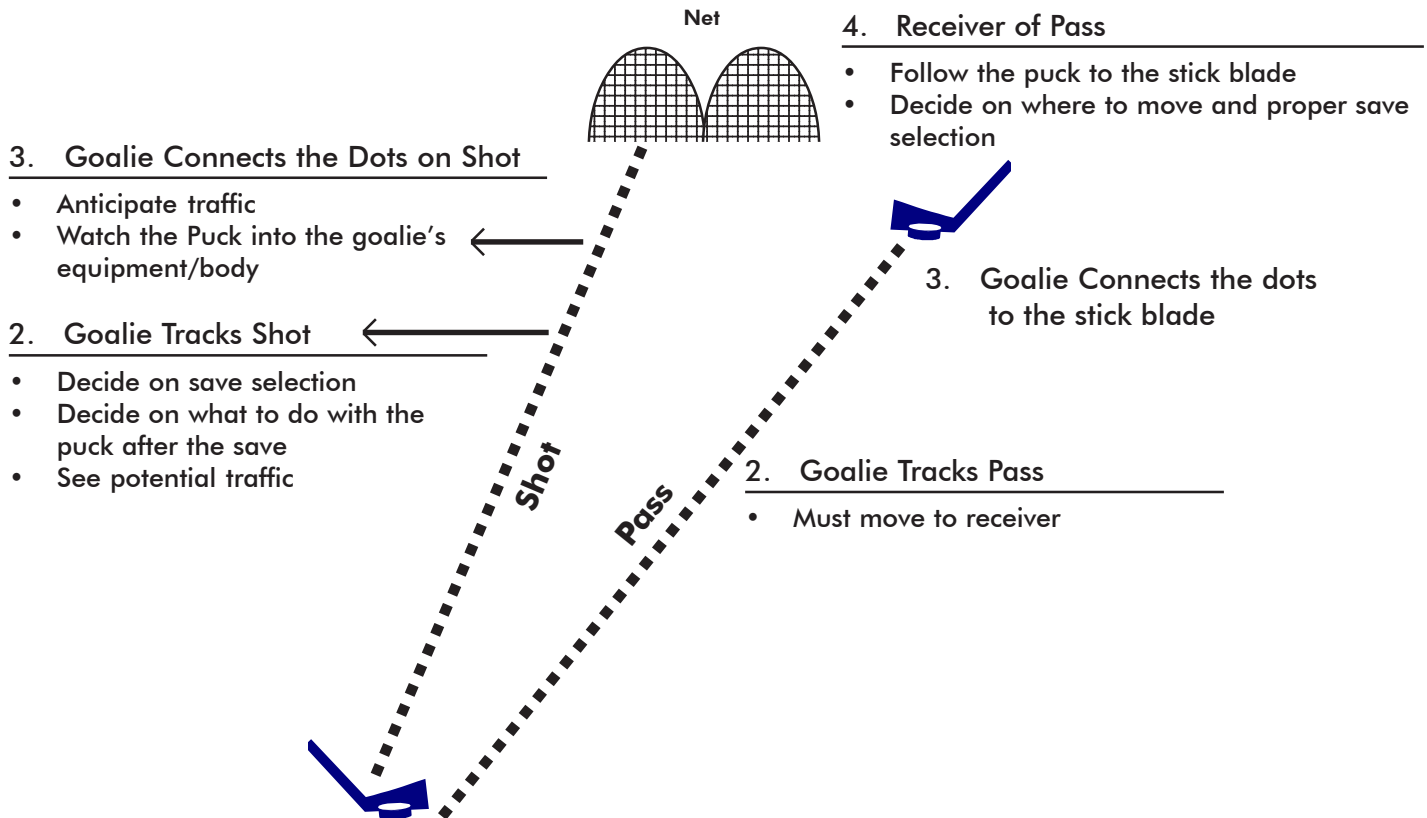


Diagram 2
The Process of Following the Puck



Player with Puck

- 1. Goalie Reads Puck off Stick**
 - Shot
 - goalie determines high/low
 - goalie determines left/right/center
 - goalie tracks shot to body
 - Pass
 - goalie tracks puck to receiver