



“A very effective way to limit their scoring opportunities”

DEFENSIVE ZONE – BLOCKING SHOTS

Great tactic! What could be simpler? As the opposition starts to take a shot on our net use your body or stick to block the shot!

Oh yea, try it sometime. It takes great technique, understanding of what shot is being taken, how long each different type of shot takes to execute (wrist, snap, slap, half slap), confidence, timing, courage and practice. However, when shot blocking is done well you become like a second goalie for us. Plus, the timing of their players shooting is affected as they will begin to have to anticipate the shot block, hurry their shot or may hesitate a bit giving our goalie more time to get set or come out on the white ice.

Here are some TIPS on the do's and don'ts of how to block shots effectively and when to try to:

AT OUR BLUE LINE

1. Without Going Down

Our forward coving their defenceman at our blue line should ideally prevent a pass coming to their defenceman at or around our blue line but when it happens our forward must close the gap between him and their D as quickly as possible under control with his body, shoulders and legs square to their shooter and in their shooter's shooting lane to our net. This will hurry their shot. But when doing this, maintain your agility and balance so you are ready for their defencemen to make a move around you.

If you cannot get close enough to get your stick on the shot just before or as the shot is being taken to block it or to deflect it away from their player or to take all or nearly all the speed out of the shot, make sure your skates and legs are together facing and directly in the lane of the shot to our net so that the shot will likely hit your shin pad or skates on the front side. If you are too far away from their D, even if on the right angle, and you slow down with your skates together reducing your speed, all you may do is screen our goalie and give their D more time to shoot. If you can't block the shot, skate hard at their D to hurry his shot and finish your bodycheck on their D. He will see you coming hard and this in itself may cause him to pass off, put the puck in our corner or make a poor, weak shot.

DO NOT TURN SIDEWAYS AND TAKE THE SHOT ON THE SIDE OF YOUR ANKLE



2. Sliding Your Legs Towards The Puck On Their Stick

Or if you cannot get close enough to their defenceman to get your stick on the shot, but you believe you can block their shot as he prepares to shoot (usually by pulling the puck back to his side), go down and slide your legs together towards the puck on the D's stick with your head on the other side from the puck. Be ready to get up very quickly. Their D's shooting preparation is easier to anticipate when their D winds up for a slap shot than it is if he takes a wrist or snap shot as either of the latter takes less time for the shot to be completed.

3. Going Down on One Knee

Same technique and timing as in 2. above, but going down on one knee gives you more blocking space with your arms tight to your body, allows you to use your hands and arms to coral the puck after the shot, and allows you to get back on your skates faster to get puck possession or clear the puck out of our zone. More risk as your head and body are closer to the shot as it comes. Be very sure you are close enough to block the shot like this before it rises very much. Practice your timing going down and getting up quickly.

4. Going Down On Both Knees

Same as in 2. and 3. above.

IN THE SLOT, DEEP SLOT OR IN FRONT OF OUR NET

Same as at the blue line above, but as their shooter is closer to our net, using your stick to block the shot runs the risk of only deflecting the puck making it harder for our goalie to stop it. Same with going down and sliding your legs towards the puck. If the puck gets under your legs our goalie has very little time to pick the puck up as your legs are screening his seeing the puck as it is being shot. The preferable shot blocking technique here would be the one knee or 2 knee shot block to ensure you block the shot.

COMING DOWN THE WING

If their speedy forward has a step ahead of our D coming down the wing close to the boards, our D should have his stick fully extended as close to their forward's stick as he can so if a shot is taken it will be blocked or deflected away from our net. Your stick position will also make their forward move closer to the boards making the angle of the shot easier for our goalie to handle. Sliding or diving here is too risky usually as their



forward can just protect the puck by keeping it as far away from you as possible, accelerate and skate by you, leaving you lying on the ice.

And coaches, keep some stats on how many shots are blocked in a game and by whom. If it's none, or very few, or only being done by certain players, you will identify development needs for your team. And obviously recognize that the age of the players and their overall physical and hockey intelligence skill levels. Blocking shots can cause significant injury sometimes even if performed properly. Make sure the players' equipment provides adequate protection, is properly sized, and fits properly. And remember, we aren't pros mostly doing this for a living.

PRACTICE DRILL:

AT OUR BLUE LINE

Simply run a defensive zone coverage drill with 2 D separated as usual at our blue line and 2 wingers around the top of each circle covering these D. Place 2 other players high against the boards close to the blue line with tennis balls. On the whistle, one ball is passed to each of the 2 D. The wingers covering practices the various blocking techniques described above reducing the risk of injury.

IN THE SLOT, DEEP SLOT OR IN FRONT OF OUR NET

Same as above with deep slot or in front of our net drill. Just move the players deeper in the defensive zone with the shooters closer to our net and the coverages far enough away so they can't intercept the pass to the slot or in front from the players on the boards.

COMING DOWN THE WING

Use 2 on 2 drills and have the puck carrier go wide at times forcing our D to chase him. Shouldn't go wide all the time to keep our D from knowing the play each time.