

## Goaltending

### **Physical conditioning**

Playing goal alternates periods of intense exercise with periods of relative inactivity. Once goalies obtain a level of all around swim fitness, sets should focus on rapid recovery. There are a huge number of examples of this, and sets are easy to devise. A few examples follow:

25 yard sprints with 15 seconds rest (off the wall treading water)

50's alternating sprinting and as slowly as possible x 5

50's on a decreasing interval.

Ideally goalies will spend some time swimming but still have time to do goalie drills. A rough guideline is that they should spend about half the time that the field players spend swimming. Also, their swim sets should be a mixture of freestyle and breaststroke. The breaststroke is a good means of strengthening the eggbeater kick.

### **Goalie drills**

The essence of being a good goalie is a solid eggbeater kick. The kick is difficult to describe, but is similar to an alternating breaststroke kick. The proper technique needs to be emphasized and refined very early in each goalie's training.

#### Eggbeater drills

**Base strength.** Goalies should be able to tread water for long periods of time without difficulty. When I first started playing, my coaches wouldn't let us rest at all during practice. We would tread for the entire 3 hours. Not only is the activity of treading water important, the actual level in the water should be noted. You should try to maintain a comfortable level – and pay attention to where that is. Shoulders, neck, etc.

**Common mistakes.** One of the most common that I see is goalies leaving their hips up. Hips should be slightly behind the shoulders, and posture should be perfectly straight. (Back arched, shoulders back). It is important to use the hands, but keep them light and in front of you (not deep, and especially not wide. Never greater than shoulder width). Next – chin should be tucked, head straight or (very) slightly down.

The easiest way to build base strength is to tread the entire practice. However, once this gets easy, it gets much harder to build on. Next ways to build strength – increased height during the practice. Again, working for a long period of time is essential.

Further eggbeater drills all involve some sort of high effort/ recovery time. Good drills include:

30 seconds elbows out, 15 seconds straight up, 15 seconds rest.

Rolling a ball across the top bar of the goal then resting

Eggbeatering 25 yards – last 5 yards hands up high. This can be done with weights 5-10lbs

Conco drills – a personal favorite – hands in water, BRIGHT. Walk as high as possible. Stop, repeat x 25 y. Can also do with hands up.

Using a ball – one person out of pool throwing the ball to the player in the water. Hands out – then grab ball, get up and throw back. Repeat x 10 times.

SWIMDOWN between work sets. 1 lap breaststroke (prevent knee injuries). STRECH

So we have covered basic conditioning and eggbeater conditioning. The last bit is on technical drills.

High corners (the classic) – usually done in sets of 10 with complete to near complete recovery. Classic eggbeater posture. The movement starts with the head – look at the corner first. The chest comes up in the direction of the corner next as the opposite arm extends. Only then does the main arm come out of the water. The legs eggbeater during the movement but will end up coming together. On the recovery, it is very important for the lead hand to lightly slap the water (stay light) and to SNAP THE HIPS. Doing these things will let you recover about half the distance to the midline. A variation of these involves doing lob blocks to each corner. For these you do not reposition to the midline. You also use the opposite (trailing) hand.

6 on 5 positioning – This drill consists of moving from side to side in the goal in a semicircle, supposedly simulating where you would be during a 6 on 5. It is most useful to get goalies comfortable in knowing their cage. Specifically, a goalie should have a good idea where they are without having to look back at the cage very often if at all. Sometimes I would do these with my eyes closed trying to get from one post to the other. Ideally you want to end up within a few inches of your target.

Pulldowns – these are classically a part of warm-up, but are also very good as a technical drill, especially for the beginner. 2 players throw the ball back and forth at each other, blocking with TWO hands. These should be done after the arm is thoroughly warmed up. I would always do long passing before pulldowns. The idea here is to work on the hand/eye/body coordination so you must throw the ball HARD. Gradually bring the ball further away until the goalie can just make the block. A good drill to get the mind and body prepared to block shots. If you are unable to do this drill, you can let your shooters warm the goalie up prior to starting shooting. Have them shoot the ball hard, without faking, towards the middle of the cage.

Dutch drill – if done properly, I find this the hardest drill known to man. Make sure that your goalies are thoroughly warmed up prior to doing this drill – can strain groin

muscles. The drill is generally done as a 25 yard sprint broken up with 3 corners (up, left right) three times during the lap. While the swimming and high corners must be hard, the biggest emphasis is on snapping the hips going from horizontal to vertical and back again. After the lap is done, the goalie should IMMEDIATELY swim down 1 lap slowly. Rest on the other side, usually for a minute or more. Alternatively, this drill can be given to goalies waiting to work their way into the cage to take shots. The set rapidly deteriorates into poor technique if not enough rest is given.

Team drills – how to improve your goalie during the rest of the practice.

First off, many of the drills above can and should be given to goalies who are not working. If your team has 4 goalies, you can spend part of the practice working on those drills when they aren't in the cage. However, they need to spend some of the time watching the team and learning from that.

Next, when you do a shooting drill, it is important to think about what the goalie will be getting out of the drill. You may want to work on 1 on nobodies for your players. What do you want your goalies to work on? Communicate your expectations for them. Position, eggbeater, how to block some of the cage with their hands, how to bait.

How often are you substituting your goalies? If they are getting little rest, their technique may be lost. It is important to decide if that is because they aren't in good enough shape (leave them in) or if it is the nature of the drill. I always encourage goalies to slack off for 1 or 2 shooters if they need to recover – then go hard again with improved technique. This is one of the problems I would have when I played with Clayton – they would do their driving/shooting drill just too fast. I would not be able to position and get to all the shooters. And if I couldn't keep up, your goalie might not be able to either.

General goals:

Positioning. The goalie should be able to cover the strong side of the goal easily – make the shooter go to the weak side. It is harder to shoot across your body. However, it is very useful to bait the shooter – by that I mean be slightly out of position so that they try to go to where they see an opening. I encourage goalies to play around with this during appropriate times during the practice. Play way out of position. To one side or the other, or way out. See what the shooter does. Get a feel for the mechanics of shooting.

Reading the shooter. There is no textbook way. Obviously you want to watch the ball, but you have to pay attention to the wrist and arm and shoulder, body position, etc. When someone burns you with a fake, really pay attention to their shot the next time and the next until you KNOW how they shoot. Then make them shoot something else.

Hands should be in the water, but light as much as possible. Generally, you take them out to cover a backhand by the 2 meter man and when people get inside water close to the goal. Not much more than the elbows out – it is easier to go up than down.

Good shooting drills. I always felt that goalies get a lot from 1 person advancing and faking the ball, as much as they want. Ideally they should shoot from a range where they might make 30 to 50% of their shots. Another good drill is 2 people passing the ball back and forth, advancing and shooting. For this drill to be effective, players need a limited number of passes or better yet a time limit (more realistic), otherwise they will pass the ball forever. This is an excellent time to work on side to side positioning and baiting.

Scrimmaging. The goalie is an integral part of the defense. Last barrier. Better view. Need to communicate what they want, and the field players need to listen. All too often young goalies are devastated by missing shots. It is important to make sure that the goalie's teammates are playing good defense and protecting him or her.