

IN GOAL



InGoalMag.com
December 2011

Marc-Andre Fleury

The NHL's most athletic goalie finds control in his game

New Gear Reviewed

Exclusive first look: Ritual by Warrior

Brian's Sub-Zero

Bauer Prodigy for Kids

Mitch Korn's keys to good goaltending practice

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WARRIOR

Welcome to the first regular edition of the new *InGoal Digital Magazine.*

While some of you may already be familiar with this format from our Summer Camp Guide offered back in the spring – and with more than 55,000 downloads of that issue maybe that should read “most of you” – this marks the start of something new and exciting for us. Beginning with this edition, InGoal will be publishing in this magazine format every two months for the next year, with the goal of becoming monthly by next NHL season.

As you will see within these pages, the expansion includes the addition of new formats and sections, none more exciting than the equipment reviews that launch with this edition, and will be supplemented and supported with ongoing video reviews online.

Equipment has always been a big part of the position’s draw, and this season is already shaping up as one of the most revolutionary in terms of innovations, with the exclusive debut of Warrior’s new Ritual from long-time equipment guru Pete Smith – and the launch of a contest that gives InGoal readers a chance to be the first to own them – and our in-depth review of the recently launched and super light Brian’s SubZero line. There is a lot more in the hopper for January, including a potential game-changing development from Bauer, and the latest from Reebok, with lots of exciting new features and options.

Of course what you wear can affect how you play, with specific equipment suited best to specific styles, and our goal at InGoal is to make sure you know how each will perform for you before you go into the local shop, or add an item to the Christmas wish list.

As for how you play, we’re here to help in that regard too. Continuing the trend set in our Summer Camp Guide, InGoal’s new digital magazine will feature offerings from a growing list of partner coaches and schools, including long-time Nashville Predators goalie guru Mitch Korn with some advice for coaches and parents in this issue. We already have more NHL goaltending coaches lined up for the next issue, and will continue to expand the list of qualified instructors both here in the magazine and at InGoalMag.com.

In the meantime, have a look, and let us know what you think. This is a work in progress, with changes already in the works for issue No. 2, and a willingness to take suggestions, because just like the position itself, InGoal is always evolving.

We hope you like this next step.



**December 2011
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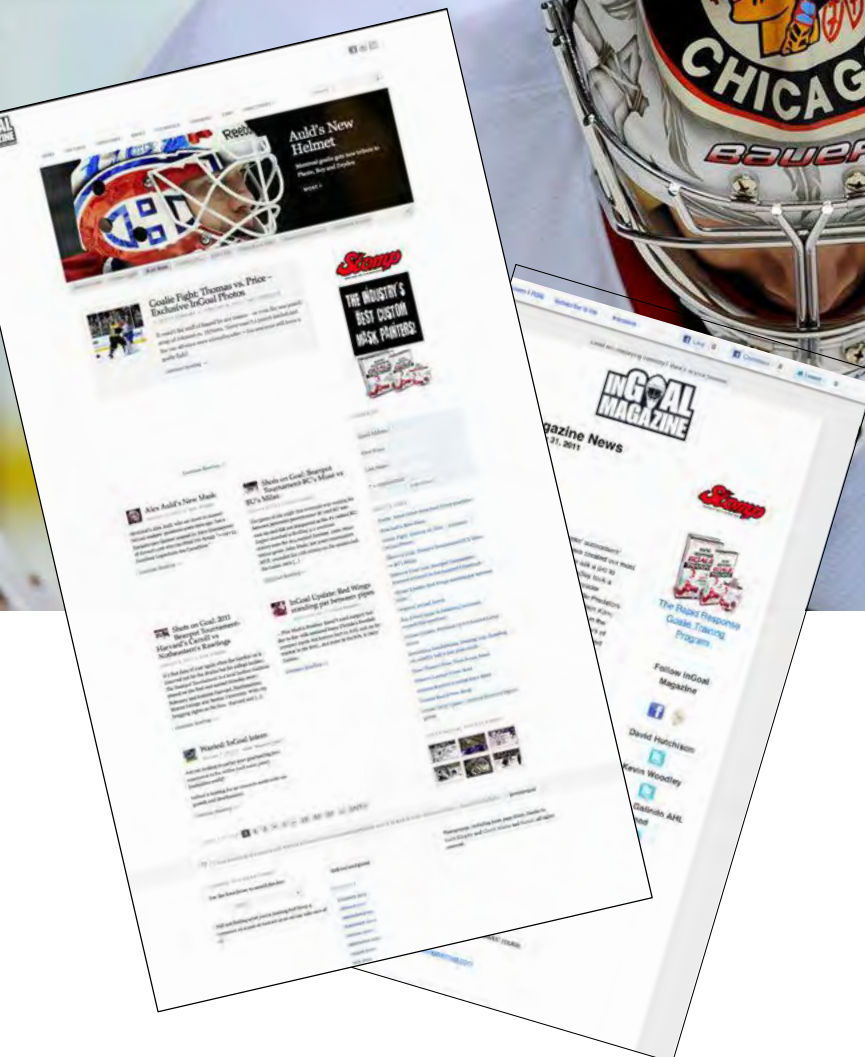


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Tomas Vokoun: 'I'm Getting Better

InGoal had a chance to sit down with the Washington Capitals new No.1 to talk about the current state of both his game and National Hockey League goaltending in general.

Not surprisingly, the 35-year-old said both are constantly evolving still, which is just one reason he believes older goalies – like himself, Boston's Tim Thomas and Edmonton's Nikolai Khabibulin – are still successful. The other is all that experience, and a willingness to learn from it.

"The goalie position has always been one where you can't buy experience when you are young and it's just something you have to kind of pick up along the way," Vokoun said. "You make so many mistakes over the years and you learn from them. You can't script that and tell somebody, you have to go through hard times and struggles yourself. And then either deal with it and you are successful or you can't deal with that and you are not going to be able to stay in the league.

"Nobody is the same at 25 as they are 35. People change, and I think for the goaltending position, if you keep yourself in shape at 35 it's not like maybe players lose a step. With goalies it's different movements, short movements, so as long as you keep up your conditioning, agility and flexibility, I think being mid-30s is not a problem for goaltenders."

If anything, Vokoun said, the experience allows older goalies to fine tune their save selections, become more confident about when to block and when to react, and what works best in each and every situation. But that too changes with time, and with the game becoming more and more dynamic in front of him, Vokoun said that pure blocking saves work less. For him

that means reaching more often into a more dynamic bag of tricks, and accepting that it might not always look pretty.

"Now you see people are more successful if they have talent and they have both things," he said. "Sometimes you catch. Sometimes you block. Sometimes you stand. Sometimes you go down. But it's really hard to play the simple blocking game, the guys are too good and the game is too fast. And you are susceptible once people find what you are doing and can exploit it. But if you are playing the situation - and I'm not saying you are going to flop around - just saying maybe there's a difference between looking good or stopping the pucks. I'll choose diving at the puck trying to stop it, as opposed to also sliding in butterfly to look good."

Vokoun adds there are still times a goalie simply closes up all the holes and rely on positioning – just less of them.

"In the end you are judged by how many times you stop the puck and not how you look. Nowadays you can see it: there are a lot of guys who can use their skill and skating ability. We've been through that phase when everybody said 'you gotta go down and block.' It's harder for a goalie when you are reading more and choosing more, then you are more susceptible to make a mistake or misread, but on the other hand when you are able to read that situation and react to it the right way I think it eliminates rebounds and second chances."

It's an evolution that starts at a young age, and never ends.

"I play a whole lot different than I played two years ago or three years ago, and I play totally different than 10 years ago. As goaltending evolves you have to change too."

With Age'





SCOTT SLINGSBY PHOTO



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Marc-Andre Fleury

A full-page photograph of Marc-Andre Fleury in his Pittsburgh Penguins white home jersey, number 29. He is wearing a silver and black Reebok hockey mask and is in a butterfly stance on the ice. He is holding a Reebok hockey stick. The background shows a blurred crowd in an arena.

*less is more for the NHL's
most athletic goalie*

by Kevin Woodley

Marc-Andre Fleury's powerful lateral thrust comes from being the first goalie to bring his knee so far across his body when he makes a butterfly push. It enables a longer leg extension that sustains his power push longer.

BUREN FOSTER PHOTO

Marc-Andre Fleury is sitting at his stall in the Pittsburgh Penguins' locker room, slowly shedding sweaty Reebok equipment after a hard practice while trying to explain the differences in his game to start this season compared to last.

As Fleury's somewhat rambling explanation wanders to how he's evolved overall during eight seasons in the National Hockey League – an incredible total for a guy just turning 27 on November 28 – a familiar voice pipes up beside him to interrupt.

“Control,” says backup Brent Johnson. “He’s so much more in control now.”

Fleury smiles.

Actually, Fleury is almost always smiling.

This grin, though, is just a little wider.

The likeable Quebec-born goalie doesn't disagree at all. Hands down the NHL's fastest goalie since breaking into the league prematurely at the age of 18, Fleury's incredible foot speed from both the skates and knees can be both his biggest asset and worst enemy.

“Sometimes being fast gets me out of trouble, but other times it gets me in trouble,” Fleury says. “I'd try to go too fast, slide too much and get out of my position and give them more net to shoot at. I would not stay in the proper position or square to the guy, so I've worked to get myself out of that habit. Moving that fast can be hard to get stopped and square.”

Learning to use his speed only when needed, rather than rely on it all the time has been his

biggest challenge, one he has embraced openly to become one of the game's top 'tenders.

It's been a slow, steady process, one that really started to come together two years ago, but was put to the ultimate test by an abysmal 1-6 start last season. The worse things got, the harder Fleury tried to fix it, too often using those ridiculously fast movements to chase the puck and the play out of position, rather than patiently letting both come to him.

“It was rough definitely, but it's a long season and you got to put those tough ones behind you as soon as possible and go back to the rink the next day and work hard, watch tapes, work on little things and get ready for the next one,” says Fleury.

What he saw in those tapes was a glimpse of his younger self, an overactive, inexperienced goaltender he thought he left behind for good with the 2009 Stanley Cup championship.

“It's something I've tried to improve on since I came in the league because I can get out of control a little bit sometimes,” says Fleury. “I've got to stay composed, not diving around and diving for pucks and reaching too much. I try to stay compact and in the blue.”

It's an interesting juxtaposition. No one will ever confuse Fleury for Rangers' star Henrik Lundqvist and his goal line-out style, or with a puck blocker like Colorado veteran Jean-Sebastien Giguere. But at a time when hockey is becoming increasingly dynamic and goalies with the ability to go outside the butterfly box are gaining praise for their ability to do more than block pucks, the game's most athletic puck stopper is trying to dial himself back a bit and reign in some of the explosiveness that used to

“Sometimes being fast gets me out of trouble, but other times it gets me in trouble”

define him. For Fleury it's been about learning to chase his next save position, and not always pursuing the puck.

It's a simple-but-effective formula, one based on the premise of re-establishing angle first, and worrying about depth second. At its simplest that means pivoting and returning toward the post, rather than always attacking the next shooter right away. The result is shorter, more controlled movements to begin with, leaving Fleury square to the next shot and free to save the desperation stuff for when it's needed. It hasn't been an overnight process.

"Practice is where I have to focus on it more because in games you can't be thinking, you just want to be out there doing your thing," Fleury says. "[Penguins' goalie coach Gilles Meloche] is always telling me 'don't chase the puck.' Gilles is always reminding me to relax, 'just put yourself in a good position. Chase your next position, cut down to the post.' Sometimes when I use the legs and the arm to get to the puck fast, the guy just goes around me so I'm (expletive). Like if maybe if the puck is right there in front of me sometimes I would go at it with my stick and get off balance and the guy can go right around me. I'd go straight at the puck using my legs to get there and if the guy gets it he shoots or goes around. Now I'm trying to maybe stay a little deeper and get to the next position... And now every time if I give a rebound, instead of moving and try to reach the puck as fast as I can like I used to, I just wait patiently instead and put myself in a good position again."

In a lot of ways, Fleury's career defining save – off Detroit's Nicklas Lidstrom in the dying seconds of Game 7 of the 2009 Stanley Cup Finals to protect a one-goal lead – is a perfect example of that increased patience, even if others saw it as an act of desperation. Yes, the man they call Flower threw his body awkwardly into the buzzer beater, but that was preceded by two left-leg butterfly recovery pushes across the crease and back towards that right post. It's easy to envision the old Fleury trying to make one

big push across and out towards Lidstrom. And almost as easy to see Lidstrom patiently waiting for Fleury to slide right through his save zone. Instead Fleury was in position for what still was a body save, and not sprawling or stretching out desperately with his limbs like he used to.

"Everyone is like that when they are young," Johnson says of the old Fleury. "You want to go out there and stop the world so you are inevitably doing too much and sometimes you end up shooting yourself in the foot. When you are young and inexperienced you want to go out there and do everything. It was just more accentuated because he's so quick."

Fleury still has that innate ability to use his incredible foot speed to make the show-stopping saves, and that will always be what sets him apart from his puck-stopping peers.

"If you were to make a goalie out of thin air, he'd be my prototype," Johnson adds. "It's unbelievable, he's got such great quickness and agility laterally. He's so dynamic. A lot of goalies now are very technical, almost robotic and kind of do the same thing. That's great but in a lot of cases these days you need the acrobatic aspect to the game as well."

That said, Fleury sees increased consistency from the stronger tactical foundation he's built, and as he gains NHL experience, it gets easier every year to find balance between the two.

"It's something I still have to work on, you know, being in control, but I think I'm doing better than I was," he says. "Not getting too quiet, but also not being too far out."

It has been a lot of work, but as Fleury enters an age range when so many athletes tend to peak, he certainly isn't resting on his laurels. The career Penguin continues to seek out opinions on his play and new ideas about the position every summer, typically working with more than one goalie coach in the offseason. It's the continuation of a learning curve that started with Francois Allaire camps in his native

Quebec, and continued for several summers into his pro career with current Vancouver Canucks goalie coach Roland Melanson.

Fleury spent this past summer with former Penguins goalie coach Gilles Lefebvre, and was on the ice for a couple of weeks with another long-time coach from his hometown of Sorel, Quebec. Four summers ago, coming off a breakthrough 40-win season, Fleury actually spent a week with four different goalie coaches outside of Melanson and Lefebvre.

“I spent a week with everybody. I kind of liked it, just to see different views and different ideas and what different guys think, just so I can pick up a little here, a little there. I’m not going to do a major change in my game but sometimes little tips, like one-knee down on the post, I didn’t used to do that before. So those little things, like playing the puck, rebounds, different angles and how to play them, like stand up or go down,” Fleury says. “It doesn’t matter how old you are, you always have stuff to learn. I definitely have more experience than I did when I was 18, but there’s still stuff I’ve got to learn, stuff I have to work on, and I have to keep thinking that way and trying to get better. There’s always room to improve. As long as there are still goals going in I want to keep pushing myself to get better.”

Fleury just doesn’t want to push himself too fast, or out of position on the ice.



MARC-ANDRE FLEURY TALKS ABOUT ...

...His first time in goal: “I think I was five years old. I maybe started skating at four years old and then the next year I was a goalie right away. I think I just loved the gear, and just to be able to dive on the ice. I wasn’t really good as a forward too so I was in the nets.”

...Growing up a Patrick Roy fan and later imitating him: “At first I just wanted to play and you just tried to get yourself in front of the puck. You don’t have really much technique and you don’t understand what the older guys are doing, but I think when I was little bit older then I understood how Patrick was playing and I started to try to imitate him what he does on the ice and do butterfly and stuff like that.”


...His first technical goalie coach: “When I was maybe 13 I went to my first goalie school with Francois Allaire and after that I started doing the proper butterfly and the block and leg recovery. And once I learned that I could see some other goalies who were doing that too. A lot of repetition work to learn new moves but I learned it pretty quick.”

...Working with Roland Melanson from age 15 until recently: “Every year I understood better what he was talking about. I like that he doesn’t always just block and go butterfly. For me he was been great, he’s taught me a lot. With Francois it wasn’t a one-on-one school. With Rollie I had a chance to be just me and him on the ice. I think all my game overall in the net, leg recovery has been faster, moving faster in the crease, going behind the net and playing the puck, those are all things he helped me with.”

...Whether playing in the NHL at 18 on a bad team was detrimental to his development: “No, it was my dream, you know, to be in the NHL and I was really happy and proud to make it at that age. It was tough, we didn’t win much, but I think I gained some experience from that and now I’m glad I had those years to get ready.”

...His Gumby-like flexibility: “It’s always been there. I don’t do anything special, just before practice I go stretch in the room and stretch on the ice and it’s just something I’ve done since I was young. Sometimes it gets me out of (trouble). Sometimes it lets me make one extra move to get to a puck, but it’s not something I really think about, it just happens. It’s not something I rely on to make a save but every once in a while it bails me out.”

Marc-Andre Fleury



2012 Warrior Ritual by Smith

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**BE ONE OF THE FIRST
GOALIES ANYWHERE
TO WEAR THE CUSTOM RITUAL LINE**



WHEN InGoal Magazine met with Pete Smith at the annual Let's Play Hockey trade show in Las Vegas, his level of excitement about joining Warrior Hockey and launching the new Ritual line was palpable even after more than two hours of talking. And if you know the stoic Smith at all, you know that's a pretty strong statement on it's own.

As for the gear, InGoal got a set a few weeks later, and it speaks for itself.

Okay, so the equipment can't actually talk, but if it could, Warrior's Ritual line would scream out: "I want to butterfly ... and slide ... and whatever else you want."

Simply put, in a 2012 launch year where innovation will be a catch phrase for new equipment, Smith and Warrior have teamed up to produce what will immediately be one of, if not the, most functional pads on the market. Those familiar with Smith's 25 years in the industry – both at Vaughn and running his own self-named company – will recognize many of the features in the pad from his popular Smith 6000 line.

Teaming up with Warrior's designers, Smith has advanced his forward-thinking designs to create a line that not only looks great (with a whopping 11 color zones to play with on

the front of the pad alone), but also performs perfectly on the ice – no matter how you play, or what you've played in before. By combining the options of a tight or loose leg channel fit, and flat-face consistency with a softer feel than most "box" pads, the Ritual is a line anyone can play – and play well – in.

"It's truly unique," Smith said of a line that also includes unique glove features, "And will position Warrior as true innovators, as opposed to just a copier."

CUSTOM PRO PADS

Total Listed Size: 34 + 1.5

Boot: 7.5 inches

From boot break to top: 28 inches

Weight (1 pad): 5 pounds, 3 ounces

Breaks in model tested:

2 internal (at knee and mid-thigh)

1 on outer roll (at knee)

Finding a pad to suit your preferences and style of play is important, and generally speaking certain brands typically specialize in specific feels and fitments.

So when Warrior told InGoal Magazine their new Ritual by Smith line is designed to work for any type of goaltender, regardless of past preferences, there was naturally some skepticism. But after testing the Ritual on a variety of goalies – from minor hockey to Junior A; from beer leagues to ex-professionals – with an equally wide range of personal pad history, we were shocked to find they had pulled it off.

Whether the goalie liked a really tight leg channel that locked in the calf for that feeling of complete control (a la a traditional Vaughn), or preferred the freedom of movement that comes from a wide open leg channel (like a Reebok), both were able to dial in the new Warrior Ritual Custom Pro pads to their preferences.

How, you ask?



The key is the inner calf wrap, which can be strapped up as tight or loose as you want, or left unstrapped and wide open. And even if you tighten it up around the calf, this new, padded inner leg channel has been designed with seams (or hinges or breaks if you will) that allow the ankle and skate to move freely to the ice when you drop into a butterfly, eliminating any resistance that can add stress to the ankles, knees and hips. But that's only one of the innovations that make the new Ritual pad so effective moving into, out of, and around in, the butterfly.

Warrior's sliding toe bridge allows you to tie the skate tight (instead of putting knots in the toe laces) and maintain that connection to the pad and responsiveness, but the skate still slides easily down to the ice when you drop, again lessening stress through the legs. That movement also makes it easier and faster to get an edge with that skate for pushing from, and out of, the butterfly.

Smith has also brought his binding-less design to the Warrior line, and while the smooth, rounded toe might look different from the industry standard, it should improve durability

(because what's one of the first areas to start to fray on most pads). It also eases transition down to the ice, which produced the same feedback from all our testers: They couldn't believe how well this pad slides.

Goalies actually had to alter how hard they pushed as normal exertions sent them flying through intended save positions, an adjustment they were happy to make.

The other unanimous comment from the InGoal testers: they were amazed by how light the pad felt, both holding it out in front of them, and even more so on the leg.

NEW KNEE CRADLE: Another unique feature on the Ritual line is the strapping system around the knee stack, or landing gear, something that is becoming increasingly important as more and more goalies at all levels opt for bigger and bigger kneepads under their leg pads. Often these oversized kneepads get caught up in the knee cradle area, pushing the leg pad from the inside, causing over-rotation issues.

Warrior's solution is a twistable knee cradle capable of moving with the goalie's leg regardless of kneepad size (and InGoal tested with one of the biggest out there, a new prototype we will unveil in the next issue). Again, they have accomplished it by adding "hinges," to the area that straps the knee in with Velcro, creating a totally flexible knee-lock that doesn't get caught



up with or resist big kneepads and push the leg pad into unnatural, slide-resistant angles when you drop.

STACK LEVELER: The new knee cradle



system also helps maintain balance in the “down” position by adding an extra piece of padding on the second layer of the stack. This eliminates the gap that used to exist because NHL rules mandate the layer touching the ice did not stick out as far as the rest of the knee stack, closing that hole while also ensuring the knees stay level and supported when the goalie drops.



TABLE TOP BOOT: Rather than a deep, defined channel in the boot that locks in the skate, Smith compliments his sliding toe bridge with a much flatter surface, again designed to work with the other components to ensure a seamless transition of the skate to the ice, minimizing stress on the legs, ensuring quick movements and allowing the pad to transition perfectly into and out of the butterfly.

Smith has also included three easy-to-adjust strapping options for the skate, with the more forward position pulling the pad back and up the leg, a neutral middle spot, and the back placement allowing the pad to sit lower on the skates.

OUTER CALF WEDGE: Another unique, new feature on the Ritual, we admit to scepticism when told this triangular outer wedge was designed to provide a better seal on the post when a goalie was on his skates. The theory made sense, since no goalie this side of Evgeni Nabokov wants to have that leg locked straight up against the iron, and we were pleasantly surprised to find our testers did feel like they had a better seal when they were in a more athletic, knee-bent position on the post.

STRAP OPTIONS: In addition to the boot options there are four different positions for the upper strapping system. The model InGoal tested came with lighter plastic buckles and nylon strapping for the top-two spots, and moving them was easy, but leather straps are also an option for the upper portion of the leg pad.

MORE RITUAL PAD CUSTOM OPTIONS

Sizes range from 32 to 38 inches, with +0.5” to +4” available on thigh rise

Boot shape: square or tapered

Outer roll breaks: 0, at knee, above knee or both

Leg Channel and Knee Cradle

Liner material: Carbon, Classic, 420D Nylon (lighter), or Nash (heavier)

Straps: nylon or leather options (except boot)

Toe Tie: Sliding toe bridge or Euro (fixed)



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BLOCKERS

The Ritual line includes two blocker options, the Custom Pro and the Custom SE.

One difference is obvious – the Custom SE has a traditional look with a binding along the outer edges of the face of the blocker, while the Custom Pro features a bindingless design. The theory is, since the NHL measures along the outer edge and that floppy outer binding counts, removing it maximizes blocking surface.

The other difference requires putting the blocker on: the Custom SE also has a more traditional hand position, while the Custom Pro has the hand located further up the face of the blocker. This provides more blocking surface below the stick, and in theory a little more extension outwards for those “low blocker” snipes, but some of our testers also felt they were more responsive because of the freedom of the wrist position. The contour of the face also seemed

to send rebounds fluttering up and away, rather than straight out, a point noted positively by one goalie coach in test sessions, but at the end of the day the choice comes down to personal preference.

Both blockers feature extra, collapsing palm material for vibration dampening but the feel, much like Warrior’s player gloves, is soft and responsive. One reason for this is the “articulating” thumb protection (our word, not theirs) that comes on both models. Whereas most blockers have a fixed and rigid thumb protection extending from, or part of the inside blocking area, the three-piece Warrior thumb is separate and even the stiff outer protection has a hinge, or break, on it, allowing the still beefy protective piece to move with the thumb, ensuring minimal gap between the thumb and

protection no matter how tightly you grip, and improved feel overall.

GLOVES

Like the blockers, there are two options for gloves: The Custom Pro and Custom SE.

The difference in this case includes the break angle – the SE is a 60-degree break and the Pro is 90 degrees – but the similarities include continuing with some of the innovations already in place at Warrior before Smith joined the team. Atop that list is an open cuff on the back of both gloves. InGoal had seen, played with and liked it at last year's Let's Play Hockey trade show in Las Vegas, and our testers were happy to see it remained in the line, especially after getting it out on the ice.

The theory is simple: Since a lot of goalies are using a more "open" glove position when they play – in other words, they try to hold the face of the glove open towards the shooter, both presenting a bigger target visually and giving them more blocking surface perpendicular to the puck's path – why not make it easier to do

so? By opening up the cuff with segmented back pads on both models, and adjusting the hand position relative to it, Warrior makes the open glove a more natural position, and easier to maintain without added strain on the wrist or forearm during a game.

The other common dominator on models tested was a "triple-T" pocket (single- and double-T pockets are also available, with regular or skate lacing) that not only enhanced visual intimidation with the open glove, but with a three-point internal strapping system for a quickly customized fit, also closed as easily out of the box as gloves worn for years, and seemed to suck pucks in and keep them there. Testers also noted how tight the glove sealed along the ice while covering pucks.

SUGGESTED RETAIL AND AVAILABILITY

Retail price range for the Pro Custom:

Leg Pads – approximately \$1,550

Trapper – approximately \$500

Blocker – approximately \$350

Launch dates: Limited availability starting in December, Online Customizer coming in February and retail stock (from Youth to Senior) in spring 2012.



Holding the Warrior glove more open (bottom) is a natural position with little strain on wrist and forearm.



RICK DIPETRO ON HIS WARRIOR RITUAL PADS:

"I like the leg channel, the knee cradle, the support. I like my pads a little bit more secure on my leg. It gives you a little more opportunity to stand up on shots and not have to worry about your pads kind of being spread apart or having slid off your leg. And they just close up really nice when they go down in the butterfly."

Dipietro's InGoal that goalies are only able to control how hard they work and how cool their gear looks: Well, Warrior's Ritual line has a whopping 11 different color zones on the face of the pad, six more on the side of the pad, and three on the back. You can also customize the colors of the lacing, straps, stitching, name and number embroidery, and even the logos.

Brian's Sub Zero



MODEL TESTED

Brian's Sub Zero pads,
glove and blocker

SubZero Pads

Total Listed Size: 34 + 2

Weight (1 pad): 4 pounds,
13 ounces

Breaks in model tested:

2 internal (at knee and
mid-thigh)

1 on outer roll (below
knee)

Brian's got a head start on the 2012 buzz by releasing their SubZero line before the end of 2011, but with a handful of unique innovations behind the lightest leg pad on the market – and possibly in hockey history – it's safe to say they would have created it regardless.

InGoal got its first in-person glimpse of Brian's SubZero line at the annual Let's Play Hockey trade show in Las Vegas, shortly after it made a much-hyped NHL debut with Winnipeg Jets' backup Chris Mason. It was a great chance to go over the new ideas and design principals behind the new gear with Brian's Pro Services rep Chris

Joswiak, and just a few weeks later a set arrived at the InGoal offices for some on-ice testing.

While the name says a lot about the focal point of the product, there are other unique new features in the SubZero – some subtle, some more in your face – that set it apart, both on the shelf at the local hockey store, and more importantly on the ice at the rink.

While there's certainly more to the pad, it makes sense to start with its defining characteristic, which is that there's less of it. The boldest innovation, a Velcro-based Smart Strap system that removes all but one of the traditional leather pad straps, makes this possible.

The only traditional leather-and-buckle left on the SubZero is the boot strap that goes through your skate, and this unique new approach, combined with Brian's proprietary E-Foam technology, is the biggest reason this new pad competes in the featherweight class.

It's also bound to create some scepticism among traditionalists, or anyone resistant to change. While Brian's has long prided itself on being a totally customizable equipment company – from build your own graphics, to break options, to actually changing the softness of the face of the pad, there's little they can't do – InGoal recommends giving the Smart Strap System a go the way it was designed to work.

Simply put, it functions as advertised, allowing you to lock in the leg channel however you prefer. Traditionally that has been with a tighter fit for the Brian's crowd, and while the channel on this model isn't going to leave anyone confused with the wide-open look of a product like Reebok, the option to loosen up exists with the new Velcro system. In fact, the Smart Strap options, while not quite endless, are aplenty.

The Y-strap set up is adjustable at three points. The first two are at the upper end of the "Y," which spread out and anchor below the calf and can each be adjusted for length. The third point is the Velcro anchor at the other end. Thanks to a patch of the softer Velcro receptor that extends over the entire length and thickness of the wrap on the topside of the calf, this end can be placed almost anywhere. By playing with all three it's possible to achieve pretty much any kind of custom fit and feel on the calf – certainly more than with leather straps.

The outer calf wrap closes around this inner channel with another Velcro strap, this time a single piece that can be left loose or pulled tight depending on how snug you like the pad to feel. And because you are not tinkering with buckles, "strapping on" the pads is a lot faster, with Mason joking he's now the first one out of the Jets locker room.



'Look Ma, no straps!'

Brian's innovative - and effective - "Smart Strap" system reduces weight and gives a whole range of options for wearing your pads.

“Flex darts” indicate custom stiffness in three areas of the pad.



EASY TO SEE CUSTOM FLEX OPTIONS: The new calf strapping isn't the only thing that's easy to customize on the SubZero, and Brian's has made sure the other options are easy for all goalies to recognize and understand.

It starts with three break stiffness choices at three different points identified along the outer edge of the pad. The traditional two break options – just below the knee and midway up the thigh rise – remain, but Brian's also offers a customizable boot break. “Flex darts” identify these customized internal breaks at each point,

with one symbolizing the stiffest, two for standard, and three “darts” for the softest.

There are also options for breaks along the outer roll – and it brings back the Dx2 triangular edge for a cleaner look – with no break for the stiffest option and standard outer roll breaks at both the knee and available on the thigh rise for the softest flexibility choices.

The InGoal test model was a 2-3-2 standard, with mid-range flex (two darts) at the boot, the softest break and accompanying outer roll break just below the knee (three darts) and another middle stiffness break on the thigh (two darts) without a second outer break. While the upper options are becoming more of an industry standard, the ability to alter the flexibility on the boot can change the entire fit, ensuring goalies coming from different brands can create the same feel, whether it's a stiff boot so the pad sits up on the skate, or a softer, lower fit.

KNEE LOCK AREA: Forget calling it the landing gear because Brian's knee really does lock the knee into the proper spot with a donut-style cradle – but still maintains the openness needed to ensure it doesn't interfere much with pad rotation, even if you wear oversized knee protection.

The cradle in the knee stack provides stability in the landing area.



The best feature of this knee, which has the strap coming through the lower block, is the ability to adjust the strap in so many ways. Rather than a single strip of receptor Velcro at each end, Brian's has provided patches as big as the knee cradle itself on both sides, allowing you to adjust the tension without having to buy different length straps, and also tinker with the angle at which it attaches on the topside of the pad (or outside the knee). These patches and straps are also double-sided to create a "sandwich" style lock that isn't going to slip. And while that does create a bit of a thick strapping area on the top, or outside of the knee, it's easy get it dialed in so it won't interfere with your pants, big kneepads or pad rotation when you drop.

CUSTOMIZABLE TOE TAPER: Brian's offers the ability to alter the angle on the inner edge of the toe on the SubZero, a feature that allows goalies that like a wider flare to their "up" stance to not worry about slipping out because the pad clips the ice on the inside of their skates. It can also limit resistance or ice contact in transition, making for easier pad rotation when dropping into, or pushing out of the butterfly.

That "butterfly-ability" is a calling card of the Brian's SubZero, which may surprise some who focus solely on the tighter-fitting inner calf wrap and assume this plays more like a traditional Vaughn. While Brian's has always had more of a narrow, defined leg channel, the new strapping options really do allow goalies to open things up and minimize rotation issues. And while break options also allow control of stiffness at the three flex points, the Subzero is not a soft-faced pad like a Vaughn.

Rebounds tend to kick off the flat-faced surface that comes with a nice S-curve already built in on the stock 2-3-2 break we tested. This more active surface is by design – and not just because a stiffer engineered foam (E-Foam) shell helps maintain that shape while also reducing breakdown, but because the European goalies involved in testing like the extra time longer rebounds give them to recover for the next shot. That said, Brian's has the ability to add a layer of

low-density foam to the face, continuing their history as a true custom company for goalies.

"With this pad there's essentially nothing you can't do," said Joswiak.

SUBZERO GLOVE



While the pads are getting most of the immediate attention, the glove features a unique innovation of its own: the ability to shape your own pocket thanks to the use of heat-moldable HD foam on the outer edge.

Simply place the glove in a skate oven for a couple of minutes and these two strips can be custom shaped to alter both the appearance to shooters and how the glove closes for both catching pucks or gripping a stick for puck-handling. And because these foam strips are a half-inch thick, the spin off benefit is a tank-like outer edge that, according to even NHL goalies like Jaroslav Halak, won't bend the glove on impact, leading to more pucks deflecting into the pocket instead of tipping into the net.

Brian's also added a new, softer material in the palm that actually gets tackier when it's wet, ensuring the glove won't slip when you sweat, and new plastic clips that won't loosen over the course of a game. They also consulted with Finnish goalie coach Jukka Ropponen to come up with a new soft pad insert below the palm that makes it easier to hold the glove open and

facing the shooter, long a preference of Finnish stoppers.

The cuff looks like a one-piece, but has a traditional two-piece seam on the backside, a set-up that combines the flexibility associated with a two-piece and impact energy dispersion of the newer one-piece trend designed to minimize stingers and maximize size.



The glove internals include three separate straps to adjust tightness, and the ability to open up the backside, which includes HD foam for protection while covering pucks, for easy adjustments and post-game drying. Other options include a double-T pocket instead of the standard single, and having the pocket finished softer with skate laces.



SUBZERO BLOCKER



Brian's has gone with a binding-less design to maximize blocking surface on the SubZero blocker, but the board doesn't extend the full eight inch width allowed by NHL rules. Why? Brian's has brought the side thumb piece up to the top of the board, rather than tucking it underneath, using this to bring the width up to the maximum while also saving weight by reducing the width of the thicker main blocker board. They've added an easy-to-remove (again thanks to Velcro) air pillow for added protection under the HD-foam used in the side thumb plate. The fingers all have HD foam protection on the outer edge, but it's not as wide as it used to be, as Brian's has added a second layer of more flexible, lower-density foam around the edges, improving feel without compromising protection.

SUGGESTED RETAIL AND AVAILABILITY

MSRP for the SubZero

Leg Pads – \$1,699.99

Trapper – \$479.99

Blocker – \$339.99

Chest & Arm – \$599.99

Launch dates: SubZero is already in stock at most top hockey retailers and available for custom orders



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Gear Review

Bauer prodigy

Kids line aims squarely at hockey associations and parents of new goaltenders.



When we first contemplated gear reviews at InGoal, looking at the latest features for beginner goaltenders was not part of the plan. As luck would have it, we gained some first-hand knowledge of what is new on the market, at least since we first laced on the horse-hair and leather back in the 70s.

It turns out a youngster trying out the game between the pipes today stands a better chance of enjoying the game, staying safe, and mastering modern technique thanks to the gear innovations that have not just trickled down to the smallest equipment on the market, but have been developed specifically for the youngsters of today. It doesn't matter what company is producing the equipment, chances are if you're a middle-aged recreational player, your son or daughter can strap on better gear than you wore "back in the day."

InGoal got a chance to test-drive the latest for kids from Bauer. The Prodigy line is made up of pads, gloves, chest-arm and even goal pants (though we didn't test the pants).

Whether you're a coach, a parent or just an old-timer curious to see what you missed, there's lots here to like. And if you're buying for your association - you're exactly the person Bauer is aiming for.

The Prodigy line was designed specifically with hockey associations sharing gear amongst many players in mind. The gear is made to go on easily, be adjustable for a wide range of players, and in a stroke of insight you would never consider if you weren't a minor hockey coach or parent - it comes with instructions for wear built in!

Yes, if you're an experienced keeper you probably know which leg each pad goes on but more than the occasional minor hockey goaltender has had Dad or Mom strap them on wrong when the gear was tossed their way by a coach or parent volunteer too busy to stop and teach which leg is which.

Even if you've played for years, some of the innovations Bauer has put in - developed on ice with youth players - will benefit your youngster alone as much as it will help a busy association. Simple Velcro straps and plastic buckles make the pads easy to slip into and mean there is only one traditional leather strap and buckle - under the skate boot. The knee lock, the most crucial part of fitting a pad, is attached to the pad with Velcro and is moveable - a key innovation developed by iTech before they were acquired by Bauer. This feature doesn't quite mean one size fits all, but it does mean most kids trying the position on a team will be able to share the one set and a parent buying gear for their own child will likely get more time from this set than they expected as the pads can adjust as their child grows.

You might think Bauer is being altruistic here, sacrificing the potential profits from forcing parents into a new set of gear every season, but the adjustability makes developing quality equipment a realistic move for a very niche market. Creating the dies to cut pieces for just one size of gear is an expensive venture and Bauer has been able to create a line to fit a wide range of youth goalies, yet is only made in two pad sizes - 22" and 26". What is a win for parents' wallets is a win for Bauer as they can afford to go into the youth market in a significant way.

InGoal readers know an outer knee roll already and which pad goes on the right leg, but you'll appreciate the instructions when you first try to tie the toe-straps on the Prodigy pads. Designed with ease of use in mind - and probably having seen many a young goalie parent try to tie on a set of 20" pads with an adult skate lace - Bauer

BAUER PRODIGY

Youth line aimed at associations and goalies 5-9 yrs old

Key Features: lightweight, simple adjustments to fit a range of ages, great knee stack/calf wedge, instructions on gear, great protection, provides mobility.

Concerns: Some adjustments not as easy for the smallest kids.

Recommendation: Great pad for teams/associations sharing gear that will perform well for individuals. Landing gear reduces strain on young joints.

How to Diagrams and an innovative toe-tie are examples of how the Prodigy gear is aimed at associations and new goalie parents.



has created an easy to use Velcro tie that laces much like an adult toe tie.

While we wouldn't want a traditional lace on a youth pad, this innovation is one place Bauer erred slightly in the design of the pad. Not many in the 5-9 year-old age groups will have goalie skates - and certainly not the kids sharing association gear - but this toe tie was clearly developed and tested on kids using goalie specific skates with the extra support posts between cowling and blade. As most players skates only have the front and back supports it is impossible to wrap the toe tie on a small foot in the manner described and we had to wrap it an additional time around the foot to secure under, rather than on top of the skate. This one awkward problem wouldn't dissuade us from buying the gear again, but will make it hard for your youngster to tie the pads on themselves. It would not be hard to replace the tie with a traditional lace if you preferred - though do be sure you get one of an appropriate size.

Bauer Goal Business Director Greg Goyer confirmed with InGoal that the toe system had been designed with goal skates in mind and noted that they are looking at fixing the problem soon - and in fact the toe ties which are bound to wear out before the pad are easily replaceable.

The pad itself features a deep leg channel designed to fit securely on a young leg, and intended to work with the over-sized landing gear - the knee stack and calf wedge which provide one of the best platforms of support for a goalie that we have seen in youth gear. The thick landing gear is built flush to the inner edge of the pad so that when butterflying the pad will rotate properly while the thick inner pads allow goalies to butterfly on a stable platform and minimize strain on knees, hips and ankles while allowing joints to bend in a more natural way and giving strength to move and recover. This we felt was the key feature of these pads and why we would recommend it to parents.

One tip if using these or similar pads is that they are not designed to be worn with loose straps as an adult might do. The deep leg channel was created in part to permit tighter strapping, giving the young goalie a more secure feel and not hinder their mobility - loose fitting adult pads require a level of skill many youngsters won't have. At the same time, tighter straps pull the knee stack securely into place. The first few times our young goalie wore the pads with loose straps the thick knee stack resulted in real difficulty skating as his small legs can't spread wide enough to accommodate the stack but once we knew to strap up tight there were no problems at all.



Gloves

The gloves have the look and feel of a higher-end youth glove and will serve kids for several years. While not as easy to custom fit as the pads, they offer enough adjustments to fit most hands and provide more than enough protection against shots at all levels they would be used for, while having a broken-in feel right out of the box.

In fact, the shot-protection did highlight another area we suggested to Bauer could use improvement - protection from young players digging for pucks on the ice. It's not so much that the gloves won't protect - but especially for 5 and 6 year olds where goalies are rarely in danger of having to catch a puck - the beefy palm protection seems overdone compared to the soft padding on the back of the hand. At the youngest level of hockey, goalies face more danger to their hands down on the ice as overzealous kids swarm the net looking for rebounds.

Chest-Arm Unit

The chest arm unit again is adjustable, lightweight and literally offers more protection than we had facing shots in university all too many years ago. Like the rest of the line it was designed with ease of use in mind - only two Velcro straps that secure to the front of the belly are needed to do up the unit. While slightly older goalies will find this is true, again with the youngest of the young this missed the mark slightly, though certainly not to a degree that would stop us from using it. On a smaller goalie to balance the unit properly, the neck

strap needs to be adjusted to the point that it no longer will slip over the child's head and so must be adjusted when already in place. With the buckle that adjusts for this in the back, little guys will never be able to put the unit on solo. This is a minor point as parents are there anyway tying skates and more at that age and in fact many beginner goalies choose to wear forwards upper body gear still with shots rarely above ice level.

The Final Word

Lightweight, adjustable, ready to perform, the Bauer Prodigy line will work well whether you're looking for your own little goalie or buying for your association.



The True Value of Tandems

Now more than ever before, National Hockey League teams need two quality goalies to succeed.

by Justin Goldman



As each day goes by, the game is getting faster and the players are getting bigger and stronger. Sticks are lighter, so shots are harder, faster and more precise. Stricter rules allow for less clutching and grabbing, more speed through the neutral zone, more traffic in front of the net and more power play opportunities. All of these elements, added up over the course of a grueling 82-game season, put more strain on a goalie's body and mind than ever before.

Part of this corrosive grind is due to things like travel and daily practices, but it is also due to the fact that shooters are simply getting better and scoring chances are tougher to stop. Because of this, the era of workhorses starting more than 70 games has been fading fast. With every passing day, it's the beginning of the end, and the dawn of a new age is upon us, one that embraces the true value of the goaltending tandem.

Tandems are beneficial to an NHL team in many different ways. First of all, it reduces the strain and stress of the club's valued starter. Instead of being run into the ground by February or March, limiting their workload to around 60 games allows them to conserve energy for when it really matters – during the playoff push.

A true tandem also provides the team's backup with chances to prove their worth to their teammates, improve their skills, and and be a true contributor to the team. The level of talent in the NHL is mind-blowing; we're talking about the 60 best goalies playing the position. Many backups are capable of winning tons of games if they're just given the chance. Ultimately, it comes down to the head coach to provide backups with opportunities to showcase their talent.

More important than rest is the fact that a true tandem harvests healthy competition. Too many times, a starting goalie that is never threatened for playing time will fail to play with a high sense of urgency at different points in the season. They know their "starter" role isn't

being jeopardized if they lose, and they know that, if they make a few mistakes, they probably won't be benched due to weak performances.

But a head coach that elects to employ the "ride the hot goalie" strategy usually benefits in the long run. He creates an atmosphere of urgency between his two goalies. They can no longer be passive or casual in practice and they have to fight to out-perform the other. This not only boosts the level of focus and intensity of both goalies, but everyone else on the team starts to work a little harder in practice.

Furthermore, instead of skill dictating or influencing a coach's decision, now it is the goalie's work ethic, ability to battle, and their ability to play at a high level on a consistent basis that plays a role in a goalie's role on the team. Instead of starts being given to a starter, regardless of performance, tandems force both goalies to earn their starts.

So what exactly defines a true tandem, you ask? I would say any type of workload split in which both goalies play in close to 25 games. So whether that split is 62-20, 57-25, or 50-32, many NHL clubs are quickly learning how many short and long-term benefits can come from providing their prized starter with rest and competition during the season.

With this philosophy continuing to spread across the NHL to begin the 2011-12 season, I've selected four of my favorite tandems through October. They're not necessarily the most talented duos, but they're tandems that have impressed me in terms of consistency, effectiveness and stability.

1 Marc-Andre Fleury and Brent Johnson: Fleury is a Stanley Cup winner and has a sublime combination of quickness and precision. His maturity level and consistency continues to rise, and even without potent offensive threats like Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin in the lineup, Fleury was strong in October. Brent Johnson continues to not only be a perfect veteran backup, but he brings deceptive speed and athleticism to the crease

as well. He instills a lot of confidence in his teammates and coaches, and has the work ethic needed to keep Fleury on top of his game.

2 Tim Thomas and Tuukka Rask: Everyone knows that Thomas is one of the most dynamic, unconventional and unique goalies to play the game. More impressive, however, is that he has essentially picked up where he left off after winning the Stanley Cup last June. Rask is an enigmatic, raw-skilled Finnish talent with a terrific combination of quickness and positioning, and has already proved he is a future NHL starter. He's off to a tough start, but the Bruins have already displayed tons of confidence in him by publicly stating he'll get a fair share of the workload this year.

3 Nikolai Khabibulin and Devan Dubnyk: After dealing with the law and his short jail sentence, Khabibulin shocked scouts everywhere by being the league's most effective goaltender in October. His resurgence has been a perfect complement to the rising skill of Dubnyk. Known as the Giraffe, the former first rounder continues to raise his stock as a future starter. Together, they not only push each

other on a daily basis, but they're an example of the valuable mentorship dynamic; Dubnyk continues to learn as much as he can from the former Stanley Cup-winning Russian.

4 Ryan Miller and Jhonas Enroth: Bigger tandems like Nashville's and Vancouver's have a significant advantage in terms of net coverage. But smaller tandems, like the one currently employed in Buffalo, must work that much harder to stop pucks. For that reason, I love what Miller and Enroth accomplish as a tandem. Enroth was clutch as a rookie last season, going 9-2-2 and keeping the Sabres in the playoff picture. Miller is an elite goalie that continues to act as one of Buffalo's silent leaders. They may be small, but they play with big hearts and make big saves.

Other Solid Tandems: I can't get enough of the raw potential between another small tandem in LA's Jonathan Quick and Jonathan Bernier. Jose Theodore and Jacob Markstrom make a great veteran-rookie tandem for the fast-rising Panthers, while Roberto Luongo and Cory Schneider deserve a lot of credit for playing through the sweltering pressure that comes with wearing the Canucks' crest.



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2011-12 SEASON JOURNAL

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POWERED BY:



Working with Goaltenders in Practice

By Mitch Korn

No one player can affect a team's bottom-line results more than the goaltender.

Yet too often that position gets too little consideration in practice.

Coaches need to be aware of their goalie's needs when planning a practice. They can't become moving shooter tutors for the rest of the team. The coaches and the goaltender need to communicate consistently to maximize development. They need to develop a mutual understanding, and it needs to go both ways.

While it's true the drills that dominate most practices do little, if anything to target their specific skill set, the goaltenders must also understand it can't always be about them. The other 14 to 18 players should not be "sacrificed" for two goalies, and the puck-stoppers have to take some responsibility for their own development too.

All that said, there are some things that coaches and parents can keep an eye out for to ensure the goaltender doesn't get lost during practice time, and some things the goalies themselves can do to ensure they get the most out of each session:

Goaltenders need proper warm up shots

Too often the players come in too close, too soon in a session and start blasting away, showing no regard for the goalie's desire to "see and feel the puck" as they mentally and physically prepare for practice. And throwing long-range "floaters" towards the net does no good either. I always say: "Shoot hard, but from further out," with the top of the circles or higher a good guideline. Your goalie will practice better the rest of the way if they get a chance to properly warm up.

Goaltenders, particularly developing ones, need time to reset

The need for enough time between shots starts in warm-up and continues in practice,



Communication between coach and goaltender is one key to improving a goalie's game. Nashville Predators Goaltender Coach Mitch Korn chats with Anders Lindback during practice.

especially when the drills involve wave after wave of players attacking off the rush.

If those waves come so fast and furious that the goaltender doesn't have enough time to reset themselves – both in terms of position and to a lesser extent mentally – between shots, it can become overwhelming. Goalies can develop bad habits trying to make every save rather than trying to make proper save movements and executions. This doesn't mean you have to slow every drill to a crawl for the goalie, but both sides need to understand it's okay for the goaltender to let a few go by unchallenged in order to reset their position and mind for the next one coming.

... But still hold the goaltender accountable

Ensure every shot counts and a goalie never quits on a puck. You want them to not only make saves, but to control and follow rebounds, and play out every situation. Just recognize they need time to do this. They can't track and recover properly on every rebound if the next shot is coming. And again, goalies need to recognize not every drill will provide them this time, and treat each accordingly. Find a balance over the course of a practice, and understand how each drill affects the goalie.

Coaches, set aside some specific goaltender time

Whether it's at the beginning or end of practice, or just while the rest of the players are working on their routine skills like skating and passing drills, goalies should be given time to work on their specific skillsets. These can be as simple as stopping pucks shot around the wall and either setting them up properly or passing them to predetermined outlet options, or just making specific types of saves like trapping pucks on the chest, angling blocker side shots to the corner, or using the stick to

deflect long-range attempts out of play. But find time for routine goalie skills.

Goalies, don't wait for that time to get better

Skating is your most important skill and goalies should work on it anytime they aren't actively involved in a drill or taking shots. No ice should be wasted. Use downtime between drills to do crease movements. Skate the alphabet. While letters like g, j, q and r can be tough to do, the rest can be skated to improve agility and edge work.

Don't just work on the things a goalie is already good at

This goes for both goalies and coaches. Set up drills to work on things a goalie is not good enough at, whether its rebound control, wraparounds and sharp-angle attacks, tracking pucks behind the net, or just passing them. Identify and attack weaknesses.



The Importance of Tracking

By: Perry Edlerbroom

President of Gold in the Net hockey schools

Former NHL goalie coach

Most hockey coaches today will readily admit they know little or nothing when it comes to working with the goaltenders. We hear it all the time.

Yet when it comes to addressing problems or concerns with their goalie's play, they are sometimes quick to criticize and offer advice and suggestions.

The real problem is often as simple as a failure to properly track the puck – and the coach's inability to recognize that weakness only exacerbates it.

When a goalie is struggling with tracking, they will often drop prematurely into a butterfly and block shots from further out than normal. The coach knows something is wrong because their goalie is dropping on every shot, but their solution is to ask the goalie to remain on



his skates longer and not go down as much, thinking they will have a better chance to stop the high shots as a result. And this is coming from the person who admits knowing nothing about goaltending.

The results can be devastating to the goalie's overall development and cause more problems. Sometimes the solutions can be simple, and the coaches that take the time to understand and get to the root of the problem to help their goaltender will also enhance the overall performance of their team.

Tracking drills are an easy remedy for many goalie issues during a season.

Every goalie has the ability to track the puck, but from time to time during a long season they will encounter mental fatigue, distractions, and pressure. They all result in a stress level that can cause a goaltender to stray from something as simple as tracking the puck. And when they don't bother to track the puck they often drop automatically into a butterfly. It happens more than most realize.

Early signs of a goalie stuck in this rut include a tendency to drop to the ice more than normal and in instances they don't know where the puck is going to hit them. There is no eye movement on the puck itself and they have no idea where the rebound is. And there often is a delay finding a loose puck after it hits them.

The importance of tracking begins early in a goalie's overall development and continues right up until he stops playing the game. It needs constant nurturing and can continually be enhanced even at the professional level.

Tracking in the early years

Tracking is a fundamental often left out of practice routines because of the assumption that anyone wanting to be a goalie can track a puck. But it is easy to test your goalie's tracking ability and distances in the early stages of the practice.

If you want to see if your goaltender is reading and tracking the puck, line up players for perimeter shots somewhere outside the circle during warm up. Tell the goalie that as each shot comes, they must read and track the puck. If the puck is high, they should remain on their skates, and if the puck is low along the ice, they should go down and direct it to the corner or absorb the puck.

You will quickly see if the goalie is actually tracking the puck or just dropping to block it every time. In the first stage it should be very easy for the goalie to remain up on high shots and go down on the lower shots. Now move the players closer to the goalie. The closer you get to the net, the more difficult it will be for the goalie to maintain his level of accuracy and control of the puck.

The ability to track – and therefore react – to pucks off sticks is a skill that most of the world's top goaltenders have developed, and one of the best of all time used to like to work on it regularly. Dominik Hasek's ability to read plays and follow the puck allowed him to play longer than most – and there were reports in November of yet another possible comeback for the 47-year-old Czech legend.

According to his former Buffalo Sabres goalie coach, Mitch Korn, Hasek used to like to do a drill where he had teammates line up "really close" and asked them to hammer the puck as hard they could at him. Amazingly, Hasek could read each one – high, low, left, right – from a very short distance, almost like he was seeing it in slow motion. It's something he credits to tracking, a skill that started at a young age, but one that didn't dissipate, allowing him to play to an old one.



The coach can see at which point on the ice his goalie can actually track and read the puck, and at which point he will just commit down low and just try to block as much of the net as he can. What makes this information so valuable to both the goalie and the coach is it gives them the starting point of which they can build upon, both in terms of working to improve tracking and understand which zones on the ice they can confidently react, and when they need to block. Slowly decreasing the distance will enhance the overall performance of the goalie.

Another great way to increase the productivity is to create a game in which the goalie can compete with the coach or against the players. The goalie can earn a point by reading and tracking the puck correctly and will lose a point for every puck he doesn't read and track properly. All goalies love to compete and challenging them will increase and heighten the intensity of this drill.

As simple as this drill is, it will enhance the goalie's tracking skills and prevent him from falling into a situation where he is not paying attention to tracking.

Tracking for the advanced goalie

It is easy to work tracking techniques into a goalie's everyday workout, and there's no reason not to start right away with the warm up.

It doesn't matter if they are playing midget, Junior A, college or even in the NHL, warm-up is a crucial part of a goalie's development, and the perfect place to begin reading and tracking to prepare for the actual practice or game.

Do you ever watch a warm-up before a game and see a goalie standing way out high on the top of the crease or higher, taking shots as the players skate in? If you do, you will also notice that there is very little movement with the gloves.

That is because the goalie is out so far there is not much of a target.

The majority of the shots are missing the net and the goalie is not getting the most out of his warm up. Pucks are hitting them but there is little or no control of the puck and even less hand movements. So there basically is no tracking or reading of the puck, which can create some bad and lazy habits.

For me it all starts with the warm-up. The goalie should be deeper in the net and begin tracking and reading pucks. You will find players will not miss the net as much and you can actually get your arms and body moving into the puck. This is where he will get his eyes tracking the pucks into his glove and blocker.

You can find this and more guide to tracking in Gold in the Net's volume one of the DVD series, which is available online at: www.goldinthenet.com



Drills should always progress to address not only the basic need to improve, but also the need to continually evolve with the game. And tracking really amounts to control. When you can read and track the puck it allows you to take much more control of where the rebound is placed, or what you can do with the puck.

Tracking can be implemented into many existing drills, as long as you are aware and pay attention to it. But here are a few favourite drills dedicated to tracking:

1. The goalie begins lying down with his skates in the net, and the player will be 15 to 20 feet out with a puck placed just a few feet in front of the player.
2. The player will lead off and shoot the puck at the net, while the goalie will have to get up and move into the top of the crease to stop the puck. However, just like the beginner's drill above, the goalie has to read and track the puck.

If the puck is low and along the ice the goalie should be going down into a butterfly, pushing their body into the shot and deflecting the puck into the corner using his stick. It should never touch the pads from that distance.

If the puck is high, the goalie should remain up for the puck. It is also important to note that if the puck is shot too wide or high, the goaltender should not be chasing it outside of their posts. This drill is also great to work on speed.

You can add a degree of difficulty to the drill by having the goalie fight off traffic to find the puck. Now you can use players in front of the goalie to make it more difficult to find, read and track the puck. Personally, however, I like to use other goalies because they have much more coverage when it comes to protective equipment and they also are bulkier than players so it adds to the distraction.

Use the same set up as before, but now place another goalie standing, with his legs open, in front of the goaltender lying down in the net. The goalie will be able to see the puck and player through the legs of the screening goalie. But once the player moves to shoot the puck the goalie has to get up while the screening goalie skates away from the play. All of the other rules apply.

The goalie must track the puck high or low and act accordingly. This can be a great game to play with the goalies, having them each compete against each other, which can drive them work harder to find and track the puck.

COREY CRAWFORD ON TRACKING

Anyone doubting the importance of puck tracking and how drills like these can improve it should have a conversation with Corey Crawford.

InGoal Magazine did, and when the Chicago Blackhawks' standout was asked about how to improve his reactive game, something they are always working on with goalie coach Stephane Waite, Crawford pointed out that not only was it was an every shot thing in practice, but he does some of these same drills:

"Every shot in practice is a reaction drill but for teaching it there's some drills you can do where you're facing maybe behind the net and you spin around and you have a guy maybe top of the circle taking a slap shot as soon as you face him – as soon as he sees your eyes he's shooting," said Crawford. "Or you can go on your stomach, get up and as soon as your skates hit the ice the guy is shooting."



SCOTT SLINGSBY PHOTO

Aggressive Poke Checks and Hook Checks should not be a lost art

by Joe Messina

Head Instructor and VP Operations, Bandits Goalie School

And Goalie coach for Davenport University

The aggressive poke check and hook check are two important save selections for all goaltenders to develop. Unfortunately, even skilled professional goalies are lost when it comes to using their sticks effectively in certain situations. But the proper use of these two poke checks allow goaltenders to be aggressive and challenge shooters with greater confidence while still taking away valuable net and ice.

Aggressive Poke Check

The aggressive poke check can be used in a variety of situations where the goalie chooses to be aggressive.

For example: When a left-handed shot is sweeping to the net from the left wing (blocker side for a “normal” side goalie that catches with the left hand). If the player is under pressure from a defenseman who is trying to force him to the outside, the natural reaction will be for the attacker to lean to the center to defend the puck, and transfer his weight to the outside edge of the lead skate. As this happens, the attacker will attempt to pull the puck from his forehand to his backhand and pull the goalie across the top of the crease.

In these situations, the goalie has two basic options:

The first is to retreat with the shooter and follow him across the top of the crease and stop him on the backhand in a butterfly or a half split.

The other is to stand high in the crease and claim the ice at the front of the net. By taking a short step to the puck with the blocker foot, the goalie can actually force the shooter to pull the puck to his backhand. When this happens, the goalie should extend the stick to the center and execute a pad stack to take away the short side and defend against the shot. It should be noted that this is a very aggressive move and once a goalie finds themselves backing up or retreating, he should continue and abandon the aggressive poke check and use another save selection. It should also be pointed out this type of poke check is most difficult against shooters coming down their off wing. That’s because the shooters can easily pull the puck back and out of the range of the goaltenders extended stick.

Another situation that lends itself to this type of aggressive poke check is when the goalie moves out quickly to challenge a left-hand shooter on the blocker side who has just picked up a pass and is moving towards the net. As the goalie

moves out to challenge, the natural reaction of the shooter is to counter the goalie's aggression by moving from the forehand to the backhand and pulling the puck around the goaltender. In this situation, the goalie should use the aggressive poke check to take away the path of the shooter in front of the net. Once again, this move works effectively in specific situations.

Hook Check

The rules for the hook check are similar to those of the aggressive poke check, except that this save selection is most effective on right hand shots approaching the net off the right wing (the glove side for most goaltenders). As with the aggressive poke check, the goalie must not be in retreating posture, but should be standing firm at the top of the crease or slightly beyond. Also, the goaltender should telescope the stick all the way to the knob and extend it to the center so that it intersects with the path of the puck. The goalie should never sweep at the puck as this increases the likelihood of the puck skipping over the stick and into a dangerous position. Another important point to remember is that the goalie should never point the toe of the stick up in the hope of creating a wall or greater obstacle for the puck carrier. If the goalie does this, there will be a slight gap at the shoulders

of the goalie stick, which the puck can squeeze under. Keep the stick flat on the ice at all times and allow the puck to hit the stick.

Be aggressive but patient, and attack the shooter.



Joe Messina grew up in Detroit, Michigan before moving away at 17 to play for an "AAA" Select under-18 team in Wisconsin, and then nationally recognized hockey prep school Shattuck St. Mary's in Minnesota. From there he was off to the State University of New York for NCAA Division III Ice Hockey, where Messina won an All American Scholar Athlete Award in his senior year. Working at Bandits Goalie School since the summer of 1998, Messina's growing list of students include some of the most elite amateur, AAA, high school, Jr., college and pro goalies in the area, while also coaching Davenport University to four consecutive ACHA National Championships. Learn more about Messina and Bandits Goalie Schools – and learn to rob the shooters blind – at <http://www.banditsgoaltending.com/>



Myofascial Release, or foam

Why stretching alone isn't enough to increase your flexibility

by Maria Mountain M.Sc.

If you do have no idea what myofascial release is, prepare to have your mind blown.

Before I tell you all about the importance of myofascial release, however, let me show you what it can do for you. This is a participation demonstration, so I need you to go get a tennis ball, lacrosse ball, baseball, golf ball or—you get the idea. Then take off your shoes and socks (you may want to warn others in the room before you do this).

Now you are going to stand up and put your feet side by side (touching one another) with your knees perfectly straight. Bend forward to touch the floor – or kneecaps for some. Basically we want to see how close to the floor you can get. If you can touch the floor then see if you can touch your knuckles to the floor. If so, can you touch your palms to the floor? Make a mental note of your current range of motion.

Now put your foot on the ball. You will roll your foot on the ball, traveling from the base of your toes to the base of your heel. Apply enough pressure that you can feel it, but not so much pressure that it is painful. Roll your right foot on the ball for 60 seconds. Then switch and roll your left foot on the ball for 60 seconds.

Now re-evaluate your forward bend. I'll bet you get about two to three inches further – and some may get even more. And that is what myofascial release can do for you.

Did you stretch at all? No.

Did you practice touching your toes? No.

Did you release some of the thick fascial band on the bottom of your foot (plantar fascia)? Yes, you did. And did that have a rather dramatic and immediate impact on your flexibility? Yes, it did. And did it feel kind of good? Yes, it did.

Now I can tell you a little bit about what fascia is and how it works.

Fascia is a continuous connective tissue matrix that is found throughout the body. It surrounds muscles, it helps suspend our organs, it exists in tendons and ligaments, and it meshes from one muscle to the next to create myofascial systems.

Fascia also contains 10 times more sensory nerves than the actual muscle tissue, so it is constantly gathering information about how the body is positioned, what stresses are being transmitted through the body and in which direction. Fascinating, eh?

The other thing you need to know about fascia is that it is the slowest tissue to lay down a pattern (like, say, the splits or a wider butterfly flare) and the slowest to let go of old patterns (like tight hip flexors or a crummy slouchy posture).

So now you know what it is and some of what it does, your next question is, "How do I treat my fascia if I want to be a better goalie?" The simple



What does this lacrosse ball have to do with stretching?

Rolling, for Goalies

answer is myofascial release using a foam roller, lacrosse ball, medicine ball or even a PVC pipe for the very brave.

You see adhesions can develop between fascia of your skin and the fascia of your muscles and even the fascia within the muscle. These adhesions prevent you from improving flexibility. You may be stretching the underlying muscle consistently without any results. You feel cheated because you are trying to do the right thing, but it is not paying off. That is because those fascial adhesions are robbing you of flexibility and mobility.

The key areas you will want to release are:

Adductors (groins) – roll from just below your hip joint to just above your knee joint on the inside aspect of your thigh.

Hip Flexors – A ball works really well for this, but a foam roller will do the trick too. Roll from just below your hipbone (but stay off your hipbone) to just below your hip joint. You should be able to find a dense bundle of muscle tissue in the front of the hip. Still not sure where to roll? Here is a trick. Stand up. Place your hand across the front of your hip joint (right where your hip creases when you lift your leg) and lift your knee up toward your chest. Did you just feel a bundle of muscle tighten? That is your target. It may be a little more to the outside than you originally thought – do not roll into your groin, it will not feel good.

Glutes – I trust that you can all find your butt. To make the release more effective we can put the muscle on stretch, so if I am rolling my right glute I will put my right foot up on my left knee and then roll the glute from side to side rather than front to back. This lets you more closely follow the direction of the fibers.

Iliotibial Band – The man who introduced me to the concept of myofascial release has said that it is impossible to roll out the iliotibial band (ITB). He said it is too thick and dense. So when you work the outer portion of your thigh,

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from just below your hip bone to just above your knee, focus on the borders of that thick sheath – the border close to the quadriceps at the front of the thigh and the border close to the interface with the hamstrings at the back of the thigh.

Latissimus Dorsi – This one is often ignored, but it is so important for a goalie's shoulder function and tall ready position. Our Lats tend to get pretty tight and they then want to rotate your shoulders in and limit the movement in your mid spine. For this one, think of rolling the back border of your arm pit from just below your shoulder (you should not be getting up onto your arm at all) about six inches along the back of the armpit to the outer portion of the mid-back.

Important points to remember

Avoid bony prominences like your hipbone when you are releasing your hip flexor. Your soft tissue will get pinched between the rolling device and the bone, which can cause bruising and discomfort.

Rolling your tissue is not always the most comfortable thing in the world, so when you are starting out, be kind to yourself. Use your arms or legs to take some of the load off so you are not putting your full body weight on the foam roller or ball.

Go slow. It is not a race. Slowly work the top third, then the middle third, then the bottom third of the muscle.

In the beginning you may wish to limit your rolling to every other day until you get accustomed to it.

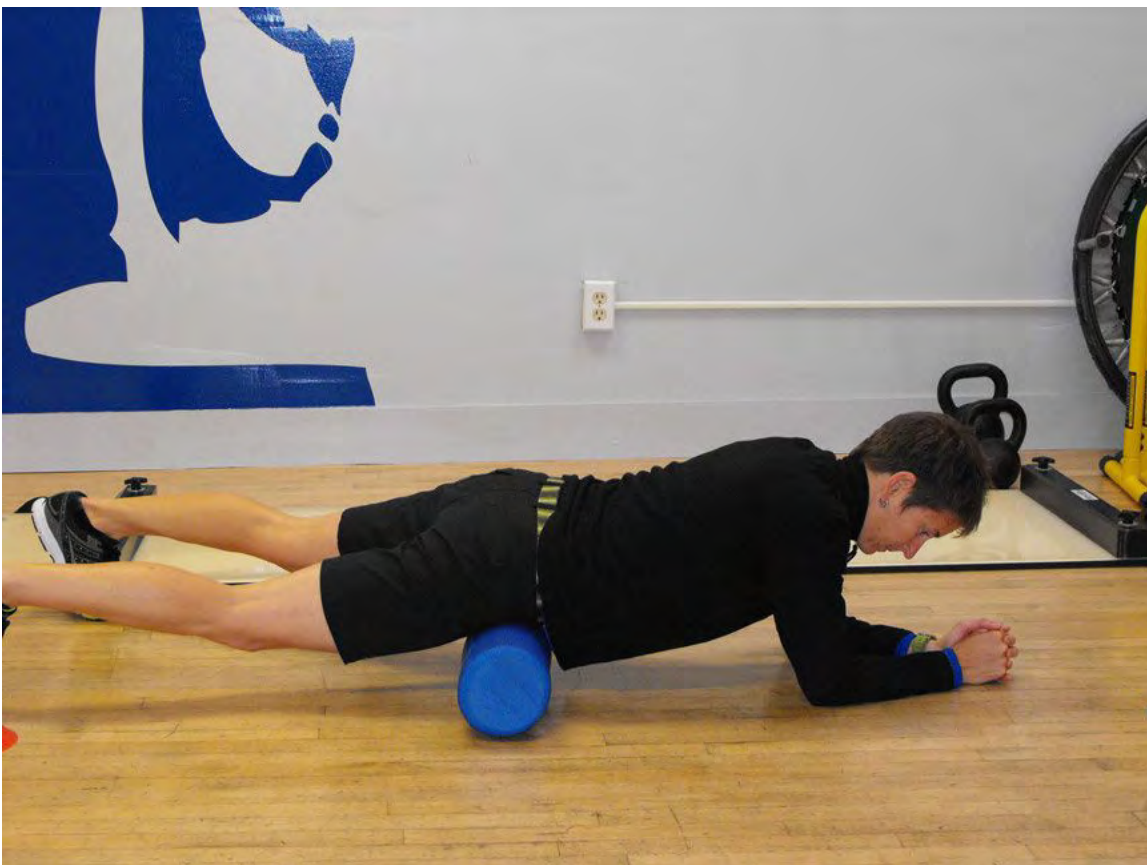
Over time the release should become very comfortable for you and actually feel good.

Consistency is key. Foam rolling once a week will not have an impact on tissue that is so resistant to change. You need to show it you mean business by working consistently. Spend about 30-45 seconds on each area three to seven days a week.

You should also be aware that what I have covered here is 'self' myofascial release.

There are wonderful massage practitioners who have studied myofascial release and having a good one can make all the difference to an athlete. Just make sure they actually have special training. Myofascial release is becoming a bit of a buzzword in the business so it seems that everyone is adding that to their shingle these days.





Kid's Crease

Can you find the following NHL goalies in this month's word search?

Q Z H P E V Y O V N F C H J N M P S T I
V Y I N O R R O T Z I F R A T R Y U M E
M M N K U T L H X U K L O A R K C I U Q
X I O E E A E E N S N W U S W D W E Y R
R U L I G O J R C L I W W B U F I O F E
N F P Z D B G E O G N O U L I R O N X I
T I Y O E P F U M V J W E X A B P R G M
D R R X C T B G E V Y V A N D A A I D E
B E H F I R M I T L R Z O R E N N H K R
N R B Y R F U G H X Q S L B D H T X K Z
M S Q Y P K S P Q V O B Y E M I L L E R
Q W X Q F Q O A X L T G S B H I E B W H
H O W A R D X C O S J F B Z M T Q S Y Q
L O Z Z A Z H R I R S L O E O Z O G U G
S A M O H T Z V C E M V I T D F I N A G
L Z D X W B Q K Y L I N G G R T J Z E X
F T P Y O D N E S L T W X I M F G I K N
W G P J N Z F F D I H A B X R D C C N E
D M Z U J F L V A H B A X K D E P I W Z
P I L A J D Q L C E E B R B S C A I N H

BRYZGALOV
CRAWFORD
DIPIETRO
FLEURY
GIGUERE
HARDING
HILLER
HOWARD

KHABIBULIN
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