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Fundamentals of a Slap Shot in Hockey

Fundamental 1- Body Position

I picked this to be my first fundamental because this is the most crucial aspect of having a good slap shot. The rest of the shot revolves around being in the right place. If the puck is not in the right place with relation to the body, the shot can in no way be optimally performed. With incorrect positioning, the shot will either be week, missed or cause injury. For the slap shot, the puck should be between the two legs and out around two feet from the toes. The player’s center of mass should be lowered to create balance. The grip on the stick should be extended so that the lower hand is in the center of the stick. To teach this fundamental, I would have a player get in the proper hockey stance with my guidance. I would have the player align their knees over their toes, and then align their shoulder over their knees. This creates balance and lowers the center of gravity. I would also position the hands on the hockey stick. Then I would place the puck in the appropriate position.

Fundamental 2- Use of Ice

This is the second fundamental because this is the start of the kinetic chain of taking a slap shot. I believe that that skills should be built in stages. To do this, I should start with the beginning of the kinetic chain. Players use the ice to start gaining power. Loading the strong side leg with the bulk of the body weight starts this fundamental. From there, the player uses the ice to push off and start the remaining components of the shot. To teach this fundamental, I would build on the body position fundamental. I would have the play start in this position. From there, I would have the player put all of their weight on their strong leg. From there, I would have them transfer that weight to the other leg resulting in a stride. I would continue doing this multiple times before the player swings their stick. It is important to note that this only teaches the transfer of weight by the legs. There is more transfer to come later.

Fundamental 3-Arm Cocking/Scapular Rotation

Although this is slightly out of order in the kinetic chain, I would teach this fundamental next. For the slap shot to occur, the stick has to come from the ice and to over the head. To do this, the scapula must rotate and cock in position. This position is held until the hips are fully rotated. I would teach this fundamental third because I think that it is easier to teach the fourth fundamental with the stick at its appropriate cocked position. To teach this, I would again build on the first two fundamentals. I would model the right rotation with both elbows bent, the hands at the same plane as the head and the stick almost perpendicular to the ice. I would then have the players do this while I corrected.

Fundamental 4-Hip/Trunk Counter Rotation

This fundamental happen simultaneously with fundamental 3. The rotation of the body is essential to creating power. It is the link between the power created by the legs and the upper body. It is important to teach this rotation because it is impossible to make this connection with out first being in the proper position. This is much like a spring where you need to wind up to get the power going the other way. To teach this, I would first have the players be in the hockey position. With out a stick, I would have them rotate and their hips as far as possible without moving their feet. I would then incorporate a stick and have them do this hip rotation at the same time as cocking the stick.

Fundamental 5-Long Axis Rotation/Transfer of Weight

I would teach this fundamental next because this is what happens right after the stick gets to its peak and the body is wound up. This rotation in led by the strong foot. The foot uses gets power from the ice, transfers it to the hips, where the hips start to rotate back to the target. The shoulders and arms follow creating a whipping motion to the stick and weight gets transferred to the weak leg. To teach this, I would have the players be in the cock position. I would then tell them to visualize starting with their power of with their strong foot and having it travel the length of their body. I would have them go through this process making sure that both the hips and shoulder are rotating and weight is going from the strong leg to the weak leg.

Fundamental 6-Delivery of Power to the Stick/Stick Bend

All of the body mechanics leads to this fundamental. The power of the body in transferred into the stick creating a lever that strikes the puck. The stick is more than just a lever in that it bends creating a whipping power that is transferred to the puck. For this to happen, the player must hit the ice behind the puck to create this bend in the stick and a storage of power. As the hand continues to travel beyond the plane of the puck, the stick rebounds to strike the puck. To teach this, I would line up the player in the correct hockey position. I would place the puck in its appropriate position and then smack the ice with my stick about four inches behind the puck creating a mark. I would then tell the player that is where your stick should land before striking the puck. I would then have the player go through fundamentals 1-5, this time striking the puck.

Fundamental 7- Head Position

Much like golf, the hockey player’s head should not move while this whole process happens. Picking up of the head will raise the center of gravity and it will also not allow for full power to be developed. To teach this, I would have the player shoot a lot of hockey pucks against the boards keeping their heads down and without seeing where their shots are going.