

# Tucker Tips

## What is Evasive Skating?

Evasive skating is a tactical game situation skill. A skater seeks to evade, protect and keep the puck away from his or her opponents – to maintain possession of the puck, to make a play and to ultimately generate a scoring chance or a goal. A player often skates one way, fakes and then goes the other way. It's deception with the puck. By performing effective evasive skating skills a player will limit his or her giveaways and turnovers in the game.

However, in order to accomplish evasive skating in a game a player requires strong technical skating and puck control skills. Technical skating consists of forward and backward: balance, edge control, starting, stopping, striding, tight turns, crossovers, pivots and progressions to agility and mobility. This is the fundamentals of skating. The fundamentals of all aspects of forwards, backwards and all direction skating requires specific technical practice to achieve mastery. It is often in the form of deliberate practice. Technical skating is the foundation of playing the game. A player requires a strong technical base of skating; otherwise he or she does not have the tools to play the game, to keep up and to be involved in the play. Being able to skate well is one thing but being able to skate well with the puck and keep the puck on his or her stick and not give it away while being pressured or checked by an opponent is a skill with a much greater degree of difficulty. A player must practice puck control both stationary and moving. Work on his or her control, confidence, creativity and speed with the puck. With effective practice of those skills a player will be more comfortable on the ice. The player will be able to play more instinctively without thinking. With improved skating and puck control abilities the game becomes more automatic. Once becoming proficient in the technical skills a player needs to take these learned skills into a game or tactical situation with handling the puck under pressure with 1 or more opponents trying to take the puck away. A player learns to create, control time and space on the ice with the puck - that's the art of evasive skating.

At the NHL level today there are many gifted evasive skaters such as Duncan Keith, Patrick Kane, Pavel Datsyuk but none better than Sidney Crosby. Crosby is so strong on his skates and so gifted in handling the puck down low i.e. the

short game - along the offensive zone side boards, corners and behind the net. It is very difficult for a defenseman to take the puck away from Crosby. Defending players just hope to contain him! Even a defenseman like Zdeno Chara at 6' 9" 255 lbs continues to have trouble handling Crosby down low in a game even though Crosby is of much smaller stature at 5' 11" 200 lbs. Due to Crosby's low centre of gravity, exceptional skating and puck control abilities, it's very difficult for anyone including Chara to take the puck away from him. The art of evasive skating is a tactical skill that Sidney Crosby has mastered with many years of practice. One of the very best over the past two decades has been Jaromir Jagr. During the 2015 IIHF World Hockey Championship at the ripe old age of 42, Jagr still showed his great evasive skating skills being deceptive with opponents and controlling the puck and the play. His outstanding play won him the tournament MVP award.

To teach evasive skating, one of my favorite drills is to perform 1 on 1 Battles with a player in a confined area on the ice. Start with the player in the neutral zone, between the blue lines, with the puck. Check / battle with the player, then reduce the playing space to between the redline and one of the blue lines, then reduce the space to the centre face off circle and further reduce the space again to only half the centre face off circle. The challenge for the player with the puck is less space / area to control the puck and skate around. With this limited space – there is less time to handle the puck. With limited time and space to perform evasive skating the player is increasingly challenged and the skills will be stretched. In conclusion, evasive skating is a tactical skating skill which is extremely valuable and effective in hockey – watch for it the next time you view a game. Watch the game within the game!

