

Coach Rex's Favorite Drill

Skating Agility – 6 & 12 O'clock Drill

Skating agility is of paramount importance in today's fast paced hockey. Players must be agile on their skates - to be able to smoothly change direction with dexterity and nimbleness. Skating agility is especially critical for a defenseman.

One of my favorite drills is the 6 & 12 o'clock drill on the faceoff circle. Picture a clock – 6 at the base, 12 at the top, 3 on the right hash mark and 9 on the left hash mark. For this drill, the player does 2 complete continuous repetitions on the circle.

Progression of teaching points for the 6 and 12 o'clock drill:

Start at the base of the circle, at the 6 o'clock position, with a v – start.

- Moving to the right, forward striding into forward crossovers around the right side of the circle – 3 o'clock position.
- Pivot from forward to backwards at the top 12 o'clock position – toes should be pointed towards the right – 3 o'clock position - while the body moves to the left. To ensure the player doesn't stop at the top of the circle, the player needs to lift the knees, bounce and sit, to get the butt down low for a strong backwards c-cut.
- Left leg backward c – cut start / alternating backward c- cuts or crossovers to move down the center of the circle to the 6 o'clock position.
- Pivot backward to forward, moving to the left, pushing off of the right skate to go to the left with a forward T-start to forward stride.
- Moving to the left, forward stride into forward crossovers around the left side of the circle – 9 o'clock position.
- Pivot from forward to backwards at the top 12 o'clock position – toes should be pointed towards the left – 9 o'clock position - while the body moves to the right. To ensure that the player doesn't stop at the top of the circle, the player needs to lift the knees, bounce and sit, to get the butt down low for a strong backwards c-cut.
- Right backward c – cut start / alternating backward c – cuts or crossovers to move down the center of the circle to the 6 o'clock position.
- Pivot backward to forward, moving to the right,

pushing off of the left skate go to the right with a forward T-start to forward stride.

- Repeat one more time around the circle for a total of two repetitions of skating agility around the circle.

Try the following progressions.

- 1: Correct technique - slowly without a puck
- 2: Correct technique - quick feet without a puck
- 3: Correct technique - slowly with a puck
- 4: Correct technique - quick feet with a puck

Note: Within this skating agility drill, 8 different individual skating components are incorporated into one drill.

- 1: V – Start
- 2: Forward Striding
- 3: Forward Crossovers
- 4: Pivot Forward to Backward
- 5: Backward C – cuts
- 6: Backward Crossovers
- 7: Pivot Backward to Forward
- 8: T-Start

Players will have a stronger side and a weaker side when doing skating skills. Pay particular attention to the weaker side pivots of the player to enhance balanced skating. Also, ensure players do not go too wide on their crossovers, but stay on the circle. The backwards skating down the center of the circle should be done in a straight line in order to properly align for the pivot turn to forward movement.

When players master the 6 & 12 o'clock drill, they will be able to execute good skating agility and mobility. Quick moving feet will allow the handling of transition skating with grace and ease in a fast paced game.

A prime example in today's game is Calgary Flames outstanding skater Jay Bouwmeester. Being a power skating instructor, I always enjoy the opportunity to watch Jay's transition skating and showcase his world class agility! The next time you view a Flames game take a closer look at Bouwmeester's skating agility.