

Tucker Hockey Tips -

Puck Control

The essence of puck control - if you control the puck you control the game. By improving your puck handling skills, you will not only increase your enjoyment of the game but also improve your opportunities for advancement. Good puck control doesn't happen by accident. Current NHL players like Pavel Datsyk, Patrick Kane, Sam Gagner and Claude Giroux have amazing puck handling skills but they have spent thousands of hours honing their craft! If executed correctly and efficiently good drills are essential to developing puck control skills. However, you must be willing to practice countless hours to develop and refine your skills.

The principles of Puck Control should incorporate the following:

- 1) Control
- 2) Creativity
- 3) Confidence
- 4) Speed

Proper Control is the basis for proficient puck control. It starts with the proper stick. Firstly, for developing hockey players, the stick length is ideally below the chin when the tip of the stick is placed on the ice. Secondly, proper stick lie will ensure you have as much blade on the ice as possible to ensure good puck control. The stick lie refers to the angle formed by the shaft and the blade to the ice. Thirdly, proper blade curvature – too much curve will restrict your puck handling effectiveness. A straighter stick is recommended for young or new players to the sport who desire to develop puck control skills. Good hockey stance – knees bend and weight on the middle of the blades on the inside edges for good balance. V- Grip of the stick with the top hand, and lower hand shoulder width apart. When performing the skill of puck handling, it is essential to roll the wrists. The rolling action will cause the stick blade to turn and cup the puck. Cushion the puck, and slide the stick blade along the ice i.e. soft hands. Learn proper hand and arm positioning – the ability to move the lower hand up and down the shaft of the stick, and the ability to keep the arms away from the body. Head and shoulder movements affect puck control – head up, look where you are going and keep the shoulders loose.

Creativity – develop a “Feel” for the puck by moving beyond your Comfort Zone; challenge yourself to try new

things, make mistakes, stretch your skills, grow and develop.

Puck control progressions start with:

- 1) Stationary
- 2) Moving
- 3) Puck Protection
- 4) Keep Away
- 5) Under Pressure / Game Situation skills and drills

Skill progressions can include: head up and head down, puck on the heel, middle and toe of the stick, puck away from the body to puck close to the body, forehand side, middle, backhand side, butt end of the stick to belly, figure 8 forehand / backhand - stationary and moving, top hand only, bottom hand only, lateral movement side to side, fakes right to left, left to right, 1 hand backhand, 2 hands forehand, create letters on the ice – X, Z, L, skating to a two foot stop, glide and crossover turns, full 360 turns – both forehand and backhand, slalom - both half speed and full speed, shift gears / speed, forward to backward pivots and backward to forward pivots, toe drags stationary to moving, toe drags to the skate stationary and moving, toe drags thru the skates stationary and moving, handle 2 pucks stationary, and 2 pucks moving, 1 puck blindfolded - stationary and moving, etc. There are many variations and progressions to enhance and stretch your creativity with the puck in open ice and around pylons! Later you can progress to protecting the puck from another player, playing keep away and handling the puck under pressure - 1 on 1 situation battles, within small scrimmage areas on the ice and to simulate game situations as well.

Confidence – as your confidence grows you will get outside the box and try new and advanced puck control moves. You will handle the puck longer in a game and feel more empowered to make more plays and a variety of different plays as well. Body fakes, skate fakes and stick fakes will now become a part of your game and you will be more dangerous with the puck.

Speed – once you have had some success with a puck control drill you can challenge yourself to do the skill faster – quicker hand speed, skate faster or a coach can even use a stop watch to challenge and monitor your completion time.

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The ability to skate fast with the puck and to shift gears will allow you to be more unpredictable in a game. You can skate 30 miles per hour but you will not be very effective in a game unless you can carry and make creative moves with the puck. The majority of hockey players slow down when skating with the puck. One of the few players who did not appear to lose a stride or reduce his speed when carrying the puck was NHL Hall of Famer Pavel Bure. He was a very special player.

Note: The average minor hockey player will only handle the puck 10 to 20 seconds in a game. However, with just a 10

minute continuous puck control drill a player will handle the puck for approx: 600 seconds the equivalent of approx: 25 - 30 minor league games. Yes, playing games are fun and the end result but good practice drills greatly enhance hockey technical skill development such as puck control. Puck handling is a very important component of hockey but one of the more difficult skills to master. Have fun and challenge yourself to do your best and seek improvement every time you are at the rink. Think – control, creativity, confidence and speed with the puck. Don't be afraid to make mistakes – that's how you grow and develop!

If

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you,
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise:
If you can dream - and not make dreams your master;
If you can think - and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken,
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools:
If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss,
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: 'Hold on!'
If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with Kings - nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And - which is more - you'll be a Man, my son!
~ Rudyard Kipling

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Please forward resumes to
programs@tuckerhockey.com

Note: Only Qualified Applicants will be Contacted for an Interview

Thank you for your interest in Tucker Hockey