

Deflections – Tips on Tipping

The art of deflecting the puck is a useful skill that all players should have in their repertoire. All that is required is good eye-hand coordination, timing and a willingness to “pay the price” in front of the net to put points on the board for your team.

Eye-hand coordination can be practiced both on and off the ice. Hitting a moving object, be it a baseball, tennis ball, or racquetball will be beneficial in improving this skill.

The other factor that is important in a physical sense is timing, the ability to move or position yourself in front of the net and make contact with the puck as it heads toward you. It might seem simple, but in reality, is an acquired skill and must be practiced.

The third component is the mental aspect. It takes competitiveness and toughness to hold your ground in front of the net while being physically abused by the opposition.

Although there are many ways of tipping or redirecting the puck into the net, the most effective is when a player is positioned in front of the net, with his back to the goaltender, facing the shooter at the point. In this position, the tipper has a couple of advantages. He can see and follow the shot as it approaches, but he also acts as a screen for the goaltender.

One common error in this setup is for the tipper/screener to be too tight to the goaltender and the net. If you are set up too close, it is difficult to tip the puck on the net (and you may cause a stoppage in play if in the crease). Most of the time, the puck is actually tipped wide of the net on a shot, that if left alone, might very well have scored.

The second most common error is getting too much of the stick blade on the puck, causing it to slow down.

The reason redirections or tips are successful is that the goaltender is moving on the initial shot to a spot where he believes the puck is headed. When a goaltender moves, he must open up his legs and makes himself very vulnerable to low shots. Very subtle or slight changes of direction, while only slowing the speed of the shot slightly will give you the greatest chance of success.

The best form to take to eliminate these errors is to stand in a “tripod” stance, legs a little more than shoulder width apart for stability with the stick on the ice in front. The tipper should try to begin close to the net, and as he sees that a shot is forthcoming, start to move slowly out toward the shooter. As he does this, he can use his body to “protect” his stick from being lifted or contained by an opposing defenseman, while still screening the goaltender. Another advantage of this is that as he moves out from the net, he improves his angle and gives himself more of the net to tip the puck into.

The heel of the blade is the best spot to use in tipping the puck and the less stick on the puck, the better. Less stick translates into more goals. As mentioned earlier, the more blade that meets the puck, the more it slows down and the less chance it has of scoring. Using the heel of the stick blade gives you the most control and lessens the chance of getting too much blade on the puck.

The most effective way to deflect the puck in this position is off the heel of the stick and through the tipper’s legs which makes it very hard for the goaltender to pick up. Typically, goaltenders are moving to where they think the puck is going, are very vulnerable between their legs and aren’t able to react. Most times they never even see the puck.

After the tip, the job is not finished. A screener/tipper must complete the job by spinning around to look for rebounds, because as we all know, most goals are not scored on the initial shot, but on the rebound.