

Breakaways, Penalty Shots, and Shootouts

How to Put the Puck Behind Bars

(Originally submitted as an article by Greg Siller for Roller Hockey Magazine)

Three of the most exciting times during any hockey game occur during a breakaway, penalty shot, and shootout. The goaltender--the lone defender--tries to protect his or her net from the puck carrier--the lone attacker (yes, I know that you goaltenders look at it the other way). These are the ultimate battles of one-on-ones because the stakes are high--sometimes *very high*. At a minimum, the breakaway and penalty shot will affect the momentum of the game. In some cases, they will also have a dramatic effect on the overall outcome of the game. Many people familiar with hockey say that during these situations, the goaltender has a slight advantage over the puck carrier; probably in the range of 55% for the goaltender to 45% for the puck carrier. In the case of a penalty shoot or shootout, the goaltender does not have to worry about giving up rebounds. This means that the goaltender can focus specifically on the puck and a single shooter, and because of that, *should* have a slight overall advantage.

So what can you do during these situations, as the lone puck carrier, to improve your odds of putting the puck where it belongs---behind bars? Five ways to improve your odds of scoring that all important, momentum-shifting goal are; to analyze the goaltender, control your speed, keep the puck moving, create your opening, and shoot quickly.

1) Analyze the goaltender. Long before a breakaway, penalty shot, or shoot-out occurs, you should be studying the opposing goaltender to determine weak and strong points. The goaltender should be watched carefully during the pre-game warm-ups and as the game progresses. When sitting on the bench, you can learn a lot about the opposing goaltender (and his or her teammates) if you watch carefully. Many players just watch the game and don't look for information they can use to their advantage the next time they are on the playing surface. Get the answers to the following questions during the early portions of the game and you will be ready to face your one-on-one challenge head-on.



Greg Siller, founder of Pro Learning Systems (www.ProLearning.com), has put his 25 years of ice and roller hockey experience into authoring several hockey articles as well as two highly acclaimed hockey books; [The Hockey Practice Playbook](#) and [Roller Hockey: Skills and Strategies for Winning On Wheels](#).

Breakaways, Penalty Shots, and Shootouts

How to Put the Puck Behind Bars

(Originally submitted as an article by Greg Siller for Roller Hockey Magazine)

Does the goaltender:

- Go down to the playing surface often and what moves get him or her there?
- Stay in the crease or come out to cut off the angle?
- Keep his legs together or wide apart when a shooter approaches?
- Purposely leave openings or fake a movement in order to draw shots to that location?
- Have a weaker side (stick or glove side, top-shelf or along the ice)?

2) Control your speed. Many young hockey players have a habit of moving in too quickly to the net during a breakaway, penalty shot, or shootout situations because they believe that they need a lot of speed to defeat the goaltender and score. This habit is probably the number one reason why scoring opportunities are missed; because unless everything is executed perfectly, your chance of scoring is usually gone before you know it. Correcting that problem, by controlling your speed, *will* raise your goal scoring average. Get in the habit of moving in on the goaltender at 60-75% of your maximum speed (unless you are being chased by a defender). This will provide you with a better opportunity to control the puck and the outcome of your breakaway.

3) Keep the puck moving. The player who develops a high degree of puck control is better prepared to take advantage of scoring opportunities. Keeping the puck moving is effective because, although it *may* not make the goaltender actually move his body, it will make the goaltender move his eyes. As the puck carrier approaches the goaltender, the goaltenders eyes focus on the puck and the stick blade, and move to what is called a *level*. When the eyes are on the *level*, they are most efficient and can follow the puck very well. If the eyes have to move to a new *level*, due to rapid puck movement, there is a short period of adjustment. This is why a curve ball is harder to hit in baseball than a fast ball. So when the puck carrier keeps the puck moving, he continually forces the goaltender to adjust his eyes, creating a slight reaction-time advantage in favor of the puck carrier.

4) Create your opening. When moving in on the goaltender, if you don't see an opening to shoot for, then you will have to create one. This is what deking is all about. Deking (pronounced deek-ing) is the skill used to defeat a goaltender during a one-on-one confrontation by using exaggerated and camouflaged player and puck movement. When deking the goaltender, the puck carrier should keep his eyes on the goaltender and manipulate the puck by feel as much as possible to create an opening (that means keeping your head up). This opening can be between the pads (5-hole), above the glove or blocker (top-shelf), or below the glove or blocker/stick (see photo on next page). As soon as the goaltender is drawn out of position, the shooters' eyes should focus on an opening where the player can put the puck. Effective ways to create openings are to force the goaltender to move laterally or skate to the side of the goaltender when he is too far out from the net. Even the best goaltenders will create an opening when they have to move.

Greg Siller, founder of Pro Learning Systems (www.ProLearning.com), has put his 25 years of ice and roller hockey experience into authoring several hockey articles as well as two highly acclaimed hockey books; [The Hockey Practice Playbook](#) and [Roller Hockey: Skills and Strategies for Winning On Wheels](#).

Breakaways, Penalty Shots, and Shootouts

How to Put the Puck Behind Bars

(Originally submitted as an article by Greg Siller for Roller Hockey Magazine)

5) Shoot quickly. After you see your opening (or you decide to create one), you have got to put the puck there. Whether you are taking a direct shot or are going to deke and then shoot, you generally have got to execute your shot quickly as the opening will disappear. If you see that the goaltender has given you some real estate, a quick wrist or snap shot will allow you to get the puck to your destination. If you decide to deke and can get the goaltender to move laterally, put the puck into the 5-hole right away. If the goaltender does not give up the 5-hole, delay your shot and put it into one of the corners. Whatever you do, do not miss the net; make the most of your created or presented scoring opportunity!



So whether you've got a breakaway, penalty shot, or are involved in a shootout---learn to shift the momentum of the game in your favor by employing my five techniques that will help you put the puck behind bars!

Greg Siller, founder of Pro Learning Systems (www.ProLearning.com), has put his 25 years of ice and roller hockey experience into authoring several hockey articles as well as two highly acclaimed hockey books; [The Hockey Practice Playbook](#) and [Roller Hockey: Skills and Strategies for Winning On Wheels](#).