

Take Your Game To That *Advanced* Level

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

Well it finally happened. All that time spent practicing and improving your skills has finally paid off. You are now ready to move up to the next level of competitive hockey. Whether that is the A-League in your local hockey program, the competitive tournament team in your area, or to a strong junior or college team, you've got to know what it takes to be successful at these advanced levels.

In addition to continuing to improve your individual skills, four areas that will increase your success at the advanced levels include the intangibles, reading/reacting/anticipating, puck possession, and objective self-evaluation.

The Intangibles

Moving up to an advanced level of hockey requires a player to effectively utilize both physical and mental attributes. Using mental attributes allows a player to bring fire and emotion to a team, create a desire to learn and improve, and help form a cohesive unit. These intangibles include such characteristics as self-confidence, motivation, patience, intensity, leadership, coachability, and determination. Most hockey articles skip over these areas, choosing to cover a players' physical requirements only. The intangibles are the ones that can make or break a player and set next-level talent apart from their peers. A player with good physical talents can rise to the next level due to his or her solid determination or intensity while a great physical player (and I have seen many) can fall by the wayside of mediocrity by not tapping into these intangibles. A definition of these intangibles is provided below. See which ones you have and which ones you need to work on.

- A *self-confident* player is certain of his or her abilities. This player is also not afraid to execute new skills and learns from each experience.
- A *motivated* player plays with purpose. A highly motivated player will continually strive to improve as an individual, improve the team, and help position the team to win.
- A *patient* player is not hasty. A patient player remains calm even when being covered by one or even two opponents. This is essential to maintaining control of the puck.
- An *intense* player plays with great emotion. An intense player works hard during practices and games, and shows it.
- A *leader* helps carry the team through both adversity and success. Leaders generally come in two forms, ones that direct and motivate a team by speaking and ones that lead by example. Good teams have more than one leader and these leaders cooperate with each other and the coach.
- A player that is *coachable* accepts the coach's direction and respects his or her authority. Most top players are very coachable because they wish to improve their skills and need the feedback and direction of the coach to do so.
- A *determined* player shows second effort when required and does not quit. This player works hard both offensively and defensively.

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*.

Take Your Game To That *Advanced* Level

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

Reading, Reacting, and Anticipating

I refer to these three player (and coach) abilities as hockey's tactical triad. *Reading, reacting, and anticipating* are skills required to best make use of a current situation and to create additional ones. *Reading* refers to the ability of a player to perceive the play (of both teammates and opponents) around him. Reading is performed with the head up and looking around as much as possible. *Reacting* refers to a players' actions. These are the physical moves that each player makes. *Anticipation* is a combination of skill, intellect, judgment, intuition, and experience and is the one element that sets upper echelon hockey players apart from average hockey players. *Anticipation* is the ability to read a play, predict a teammates or opponents probable course of action, and execute the best option available. Every play requires a team (and their individual players) to read what is occurring, anticipate what may be going to happen, and react with a coordinated series of actions. When you don't have the puck, employing the tactical triad helps you gain control of it. When you do have the puck, it will help you put it in the net. Utilizing these skills teaches a team to create their own opportunities as well as to take advantage of the opposition's weaknesses by attacking specific positions, areas, or players.



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*.

Take Your Game To That *Advanced* Level

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

Puck Possession

Puck possession is one of the biggest single factors that impact a hockey team. One important objective of this article is to drive home the fact that **Puck Possession Provides Opportunities**; what I call the **3PO Principle**. With possession of the puck, you can create potential scoring opportunities as well as control the overall flow of the game. Without possession of the puck you are on the defensive. On an individual basis, puck possession means that one player has control of the puck and the remaining players are supporting the puck carrier by either providing him with a passing/scoring option or not allowing a defender to attack the puck carrier (i.e., providing a screen).

Opportunities are created by having the puck carrier look (reading the play) to pass, shoot, or skate to the net. The puck carrier should move with the puck to draw the opposition out of position. Forcing the opposition into making bad plays is good offensive hockey and is critical to effective puck possession. If another player is open and in a better scoring location, pass the puck. If neither occurs, be patient and continue to move the puck while your teammates maneuver into better positions. An immediate and direct offensive attack is great, but when that is available, use your head and skates and be patient with the puck while your supporting players set up.

The positioning of non-puck carrying players is just as important. Non-puck carriers or supporting players should maneuver themselves into an open position to create options and should base their movement on the puck carrier, the defenders, and the open playing surface available. Supporting players should make themselves available to receive a pass, clear an area to allow space for the puck carrier, and offer close support to the puck carrier. To be effective in this support role, a player must anticipate the puck carrier's intentions, read the defensive pressure being applied on the puck carrier, and adjust his or her position in relation to the puck carrier.

Objective Self-Evaluation

Performing an objective and unbiased self-evaluation is crucial to your improvement process. This single step may do more to improve your game than any other. By evaluating your abilities, you are objectively defining what you believe to be the skills that you are proficient at as well as the ones that you need improvement on.

Take a few minutes to complete the **Siller Player Evaluation Profile** below. This tool is designed to help you evaluate your abilities in specific areas of your game and rate those abilities. When rating yourself, compare your play in your current league or organization to your teammates and opponents (generally of a similar age group). For each category on the left, circle a number in one of the four right-hand columns that corresponds to your ability (beginner=1, intermediate=2, advanced=3, or pro=4). When you're done, add the totals in each of the four columns and then total those four numbers for your final rating. There are two evaluation profiles, one is for forwards/defense and the other is for goaltenders. If you are one of those rare individuals that play both positions, rate yourself in both profiles to see where you are objectively positioned.

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*.

Take Your Game To That *Advanced* Level

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

SILLER PLAYER EVALUATION PROFILE - Forwards / Defense				
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Pro
Skating				
Forward / backward	1	2	3	4
Stopping	1	2	3	4
Turns and crossovers	1	2	3	4
Transitioning	1	2	3	4
Stickhandling/Puck Control				
Open area	1	2	3	4
Around pylons / players	1	2	3	4
Puck protection	1	2	3	4
Puck possession	1	2	3	4
Head up	1	2	3	4
Passing and Receiving				
Forehand	1	2	3	4
Backhand	1	2	3	4
Receiving passes	1	2	3	4
Head up	1	2	3	4
Shooting and Scoring				
Wrist shot	1	2	3	4
Snap shot	1	2	3	4
Backhand shot	1	2	3	4
Slap shot	1	2	3	4
One-timer	1	2	3	4
Rebounds	1	2	3	4
The Tactical Triad				
Read, react, anticipate	1	2	3	4
Intangible Qualities				
Self-confidence	1	2	3	4
Motivation	1	2	3	4
Patience	1	2	3	4
Intensity	1	2	3	4
Leadership	1	2	3	4
Coachability	1	2	3	4
Determination	1	2	3	4
TOTALS				
Score: 27-40 = Beginner-Level Player, 41-67 = Intermediate-Level Player, 68-94 = Advanced-Level Player, 95-108 = Ready For The Pros!				

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*.

Take Your Game To That *Advanced* Level

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

SILLER PLAYER EVALUATION PROFILE - GOALTENDERS				
	Beginner	Intermediate	Advanced	Pro
Goaltenders				
Stance	1	2	3	4
Starting, skating, stopping	1	2	3	4
Crease movement	1	2	3	4
Playing the angles	1	2	3	4
Glove/blocker/stick/pad saves	1	2	3	4
Controlling rebounds	1	2	3	4
Handling the puck	1	2	3	4
Stick checking	1	2	3	4
The Tactical Triad				
Reading, reacting, and anticipating	1	2	3	4
Intangible Qualities				
Self confidence	1	2	3	4
Motivation	1	2	3	4
Patience	1	2	3	4
Intensity	1	2	3	4
Leadership	1	2	3	4
Coachability	1	2	3	4
Determination	1	2	3	4
TOTALS				
Score: 16-23 = Beginner-Level Player, 24-39 = Intermediate-Level Player, 40-55 = Advanced-Level Player, 56-64 = Ready For The Pros!				

Congratulations. By reading and utilizing the concepts in this article, you've just taken a major step toward understanding what it takes to compete at the next level. Continue to improve your individual skills, intangibles, reading/reacting/anticipating, puck possession, and periodically perform an objective self-evaluation to take your game to that advanced level.

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*.