



Skating – The Foundation of Checking

Checking is a tactic aimed at gaining possession of the puck, not injuring an opponent. The purpose of a checking program is to introduce players to proper techniques and tactics so as to give as well as receive a body check. It includes a five step progression from the basics of skating, to position angling, to stick checking, to body contact/confidence to body checking.

However, the importance of skating is often over looked by coaches, parents and players. If you cannot skate well – you cannot check well!

To give and receive a check properly a player requires good stability on his skates. This stability on skates starts with a good hockey stance. With a good stance (head up, knees bent, shoulder with stance and a low centre of gravity), strong edges and proper balance a player will be stable on his skates. Even if a player is taller and or heavier than his opponent, there is no guarantee that he will win the 1 on 1 checking battles without a strong foundation of skating basics.

The basics of skating include a good

hockey stance, strong edges, proper balance, quick starts and stops, efficient glide/crossover turns, good lateral movement, the ability to change direction which requires good agility and mobility. All of these basic hockey skills are essential to giving and avoiding checks.

When performing position angling, a player requires in his or her skating tool box efficient glide / crossover turns to angle an opponent towards the boards. As well, the checker may need to change direction, start up, speed up, and stop, move laterally, control or save his or her ice to be successful in the checking game.

For stick checking, a checker requires good stability on his or her skates. Good skating skills will allow the checker to time his stick checking moves, challenge and be more effective with his or her stick.

Body contact/confidence will be achieved by a player with greater assurance and success if that player is stable on his skates. He will not be so insecure about falling down. A taller and or heavier player will not be so

intimidating to a smaller player if the lighter player is confident in his skating. He will play less on the perimeter; will battle more for the puck and play more in the traffic areas of the ice. He will not fear being hit and will not shy away from the physical / rough aspects of the game. A prime example of a little guy and a great skater, who was very effective in the physical game was 5'6" Theo Fleury.

Good body checkers are strong and stable on their skates. They can give as well as receive a check. The basic elements of skating including changing speeds and directions are essential to their checking game.

Skating is the foundation of checking. If the basic skating skills are mastered, a player will be more confidence in a contact game, will be more physical, shy away less from the physical side of the game, feel more safe on the ice, ultimately become a more complete and effective player – able to play a physical as well as finesse game and become more valuable to his team's overall success. One of today's NHL stars, who truly fits this mold, is Alex Ovechkin.

Fairness

"I think perfect objectivity is an unrealistic goal; fairness is not"

-Michael Pollan

Integrity

"I never question the integrity of an umpire.
Their eyesight, yes."

-Leo Durocher

Skill

"Fairness is not an attitude. It's a professional skill that must be developed and exercised."

-Brit Hume