

Goalie Approach for U10/12 Coaches

*You have a great responsibility: creating goalies for the future.* What you do or don’t do this year will determine whether your future teams have enough girls playing net, or not. Ringette has ongoing challenges with attracting, developing and retaining players to play goal. Many ringette teams in U14 and up have NO goalies. Don’t let your team be one of them!

Your goal should be to have several players who can play and would like to play goal ***at the end of the year.*** Your goal must not be to win at all costs by playing only one or two girls. Some important points:

1. Address parents early in the season (parent meeting). Ask for support in:

* + - * 1. encouraging all players to try / continue playing the position
        2. refraining from making discouraging comments to players or in the stands among parents regarding goalie play

2. Teach your players that it’s every player’s job to stop the ring from getting to the goalie – if it gets there and goes in, teach them to say “sorry” to the goalie for letting the shot get there; teach them to say “great save” when the goalie stops it. Eliminate at all costs player perception that “it’s the goalie’s fault for the goal” . It’s a team sport!

3. Encourage all players to play the position – work through a rotation (all players at Step 1 and at least several players at Step 3)

4. Learn basic goalie technique. Coach resources, goalie instructors, other coaches, internet.

5. Provide proper basic goalie training every practice - delegate the ongoing duty to an assistant to ensure continuity. If your players are prepared, they will have success, and you will have players who want to play the position at the end of the year, and in the future.

**Choosing and rotating players through the position**

Group goalie instruction by goalie instructors or coaches early in the season should help generate interest and allay some fears of beginning players. A rotation through all players is in Step 1 is perhaps a good place to start, and if several (but not all) players show interest, those can continue through the rest of the year. For this level it is probably best to allow play but not put pressure on any player to play for the sake of winning. The hope is that several players will want to continue play next year.

It is not ideal in Step 3 to have a rotation through **all** players, as no single player plays enough to improve, and the team may not advance any potential goalies to the next year. Choosing those with the greatest chance of success in the position is key to developing someone who may want to continue in the future. I would suggest selecting 3-4 second year players, and 1-2 first years who show interest early in the season, and concentrate practice time coaching these players.

Players should be coached wearing full equipment at least one practice prior to playing a game to ensure the basics are familiar to them when put into a game. As the season continues, play those players more who demonstrate interest, ability and coachability. Reduce the number of players in the goalie rotation as the season continues based on the above. By the end of the year, one should aim to have two or more kids who have shown interest and ability, played several games and have had improvement and success.

If there is not enough interest, then generate some! Offer gift cards, player of the game or other minor rewards as “goalie pay”. You should not have a problem getting volunteers with this approach. After a short while it is unlikely you will need to continue this as they are rewarded in other ways.

Plan ahead, and take a consistent, but gentle approach. Ask players ahead of time if they would play next game, and let them know they may play once every 3-4 games, so they (and their parents) know it will be regularly but not permanently. If someone definitely doesn’t want to play, let them back away, but ask if they would play next time.

**Team responsibility and Support**

Young players do not understand that stopping goals is a team effort. Both players and the goalie will blame her for letting a shot in, but it is the coach’s job to explain that it is the team’s job to prevent the shots from getting to the net. Encourage all players to pat the goalie’s pads and apologize for letting the shot get to her in the first place following every goal, and to say good job for every save. This is crucial to preventing players from blaming themselves, or thinking that they aren’t very good in goal – a definite way to ensure they won’t try it again!

Skaters tend to get rewarded (right or wrong) for goals and assists. Goalies feel bad if they lose or let in goals, whether they played well or not. **Ensure the focus is on something other than how many goals go in.** Set a goal of stopping 10 shots, being positioned correctly, or keeping the stick down and flat. The coach is the primary determinant on whether a girl has a good experience or a bad one, based on how the team approaches wins, losses, goals for and against etc. Call your goalie in to the bench to give them a pep talk, encouragement etc. If they are struggling don’t leave them in the net without support.

For those girls who show potential, encourage attending the goalie clinics Edmonton Ringette hosts. Individual improvement occurs faster for those willing to attend. It should be clear there is still no pressure to play permanently for those considering this – we need players to take advantage of the free instruction. If they do, those players will undoubtedly have more success as they learn better technique.

**The “Full time Goalie”**

Most of the above is based on the assumption that there are no players who want to play often/full time goal. But what if you have a player who only wants to play goal in U10/U12? **It is often an easy decision for a coach to say “she’s the goalie”, and forget about the mandate to find and develop goalies.** There may be several players on that team who may want to play, have had experience, and may be needed in future years when the goalie of “this year” is on a different team, or decides not to play.

At U10 and U12, players need to learn to skate. Playing a skating position is critical to this development, and therefore should be playing games out of the net. Most players have not invested in goal skates at this age, so they are more than able to play other positions. This leaves room for other players to try and develop in the position of goal. We have a maximum goal play time for those players VERY interested in the position of 33% in Step 1, 40% in step 2 and 3, and 66% in U12 (B or C). If you plan your schedule well, and you can adhere to these limits and still have strong goaltending in the games that really matter (which remember, is NOT every game).

If you had players who played goal last year, and would like to play this year, room must be made for them to play, regardless of who has been determined to be “the goalie” this year. Many goalies will not decide to play full time until U14. Allow them the time to play while they are still making that decision. We will need them in the future.

Summary

* It is crucial that we develop and maintain interest at the early levels of U10 and Active Start
* It is also important NOT to specialize players in this position too early, as it can impede their overall development, and prevent others from playing the position.
* In U10 your goal should be to train and develop many potential goalies within your team
* For U12 you need to make room for players who have played goal previously to continue to develop. Do not exclude them if you have a “full time” goalie.
* Edmonton Ringette had maximum goalie play guidelines intended to support this goalie approach. <http://www.edmontonringette.com/files/rules_and_regulations_governing_ringette_sept2015.pdf>

Have a great season!

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