Backhand Shot

With Brian Gionta of the New Jersey Devils

Brian Gionta may be small in stature (5-foot-7) but no one in the NHL plays with more heart. He enjoyed his best season in 2005-06, scoring 48 goals and 89 points. That same season, he was named to the U.S. Olympic Team, scoring four goals in six games. He has also competed in three IIHF World Championships (2000, 2001 and 2005), two IIHF World Junior Championships (1998 and 1999) and the 2004 Deutschland Cup.

I think the backhand shot is one of the most seldom used but effective shots in a sniper’s arsenal, especially when taken from in close. Sometimes you don’t have the time to move the puck onto your forehand. That’s where a backhand shot comes into play.

**Tip #1**

This shot uses the same technique as a wrist shot, only done on the backhand. Start with the puck on the heel of the blade and as you transfer your weight forward from your back foot to the front, roll your wrists over and release the puck while pointing at the target on your follow-through.
Tip #2
The key to a backhand shot is the element of surprise. Since the shot is seldom practiced or used in a game, many goalies aren’t used to the shot. They’re not used to how the puck is going to come off the stick, whether it’s going to go low or high, left or right. And when you don’t have to waste time moving the puck to your forehand, you don’t allow the goaltender time to set up.

Tip #3
One of the reasons the backhand shot is not used as much anymore is because of the invention of the curved stick. So many players today have such a big hook in their blade that it’s really tough to take an effective and accurate backhand shot.

Tip #4
You can practice your backhander just like you would the wrist shot. Line up near the boards with some pucks. Pick out spots on the boards (one low and one high) and practice hitting the targets. Remember to concentrate on your weight transfer and follow-through.

It’s also good to set up cones near the bottom of the face-off circle and cut around the cones, working on both your forehand and backhand as you get your shot on net.
Remember This

The backhand shot shouldn’t be a dying skill. It’s just as important as a good wrist shot. Most players don’t have a strong backhand shot because they don’t practice it enough. Coaches need to develop drills that will help you practice this very important, but under-used shot.

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