



## How to Score More Goals

As a Bantam A coach several years ago it became apparent to me that slap shots had become the shot of choice among youth players. Even a casual observer of the game recognizes the ineffectiveness of the shot. As a student of the game, I researched the effectiveness of the slap shot in bantams, college and professional levels. Once I collected a reasonable amount of data the numbers made sense and the next step was a ban on slap shots for our team. The result was an increase in goal scoring from more tips, rebounds and deflections. Since scoring goals is the idea banning the slap shot really makes sense. Without the head-high slappers coming towards the net the forwards are willing to get in front, the puck arrives sooner, and more scoring opportunities are created. Players will also practice their wrist shots more.

The article below validates this idea that many coaches and parents would think crazy.

Hal Tarse

Coach in Chief, Minnesota Hockey, January 2009

### **Bruins shoot for efficiency**

#### **Wrist preferred over the slapper**

Slap shots, Michael Ryder recalled recently. Nothing but slap shots.

"That's all it was," said Ryder about his shot of choice. "Slap shots. Always slap shots. When I was in peewee or playing at home when I was 15 or 16, it was always slap shots."

And that's coming from the Bruin who may have the most lethal wrist on the team - blink-of-an-eye release, top-shelf accuracy, heavy shot.

It was sometime in junior hockey, Ryder recalled, that he first realized the grip-and-rip slapper, then his preferred method of delivery, wasn't going to be his moneymaker. It took too much time to wind up and fire. It wasn't accurate enough.

"When you get to this level, guys are on you quicker," Ryder said. "You have to get shots off quick and on net."

As bombers like Zdeno Chara and snipers like Ilya Kovalchuk have shown, the slap shot is the sexy, fast-moving rocket that can whiz past goalies and bring fans out of their seats. Youngsters all around the world practice the slapper on their driveways, against nets or garage doors.

Pros like Chara hammer one-timers at triple-digit speeds that have opposing blockers - to say nothing of teammates like Chuck Kobasew, whose tibia was fractured by his captain's slap shot last season - cringing as they enter shooting lanes.

But with a league wide emphasis on shot-blocking and getting in shooters' sticks to take away the bombs, the wrist shot is, more and more, the go-to scoring weapon that players believe is the better option.

"I think the slap shot gets dramatized a little too much because of how hard it is and it looks good," said Bruins winger Blake Wheeler. "But a quick wrist shot? Ask Michael Ryder. It can be just as effective."

Like Ryder, Wheeler was taught the efficiency of a quick snap shot before he became a pro. For two years of youth hockey, his coaches had a rule: no slap shots.

"Our coaches talked about working on the wrist shot," said Wheeler. "Your snap shot is quicker and more effective. So, yeah, no slap shots allowed."

"Maybe that takes away from developing your slap shot. At the same time, you develop a quick release. And that's more important any time than working on your slap shot."

The result? When asked about his slapper recently, Wheeler said he couldn't recall winding up for a slap shot once this season. Like his linemate Ryder, Wheeler owns an above-average wrist shot that he can snap off in traffic.

"It's a lot quicker," Wheeler said. "It's on your stick for a nanosecond. You don't whiff on it as much and you can get more of the puck. I have more success snapping it off quicker."

The only time Wheeler winds up is when the rookie, who's been playing mostly on his off wing this season, opens up for one-timers. Even then, Wheeler doesn't pull his stick all the way back; he prefers the half-slapper to get his one-timer on the net even quicker.

"I don't know if I have the greatest slap shot in the world; it's maybe going the same speed [as the wrister]," Wheeler said with a smile. "So it's not even worth the time trying to get it off."

On the back line, Chara has the team's hardest slap shot, one that was clocked at 103.1 miles per hour during last year's SuperSkills competition at the All-Star Game in Atlanta. Dennis Wideman figures half of his shots from the point are slappers. Matt Hunwick, who usually mans the left point, likes to walk the puck off the boards, set up, and blast away.

"If I pull it toward my body and walk to the middle, that's a chance when I'll take a slap shot," Hunwick said. "For me, personally, I'm not as strong. So from that particular shooting spot, I'd rather have a little more oomph behind it with a slap shot."

But Hunwick, perhaps the most mobile of Boston's blue liners, is used to stickhandling in close quarters with opponents in his shirt. That's when he'll opt for a quick wrister to get the puck off for a scoring chance, a deflection, or a rebound.

"If it's a play where I'm moving more and have a little bit of momentum to the right or left, that might be a chance where I'll just take that snap shot," Hunwick said. "It's more for accuracy. I'm trying to get it on a pad or on one of our guys' sticks. It's just that little shift to the right or left. I'll get my weight on the left foot and just snap it."

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