

LAURA STAMM INTERNATIONAL POWER SKATING SYSTEM

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USING QUICKNESS TO CREATE OFFENSE

In today's hockey, explosive acceleration is a necessary attribute. If players want to control the game they need to be first to the puck.

In my Power Skating System we train players to take the initial two or three steps on their "toes" (the inside edges of the fronts of the blades). Toe starts (done properly) give players the advantage because these starts are explosive! These starts give the skater the "jump" on the opposition.

Starting on skates is comparable to sprint runners starting out of the blocks. In order to get going quickly and explosively they take the first few steps on the balls of their feet. They do not start on their heels! In hockey we need to do the same thing. What we call the "toes of the skates" is in actuality the front two to three inches of the inside edges (the balls of the feet).

Explosive starts (whether in running or skating) involve three elements: Quickness, Power and Distance. Starting on the toes accomplishes the first element, quickness. However, quick feet alone are insufficient – it is imperative to go somewhere (cover distance). Powerful, explosive pushes with the body weight projected well outward (toward the desired line of travel) help to achieve distance.

Why and when do hockey players start on their toes?

Hockey players start on their toes in order to get going *quickly and explosively*. Players who get the initial jump usually have the advantage, especially in breakaway situations. I call toe starts the "escape valve". Anytime you need to get away quickly, or when you want to create an offensive advantage, start on your toes!! From a faceoff, when changing gears (from slow to fast), when racing for the puck, when trying for a breakaway, or in any situation when an instant getaway is crucial, get up on your toes and GO! But keep in mind – the steps, while quick, are not short. The idea is push powerfully in order to achieve DISTANCE as well as QUICKNESS. *Tiny steps will take you nowhere fast!*

Note: The player with the quickest and most explosive starts has the advantage when racing an opponent or when trying to create an offensive advantage.

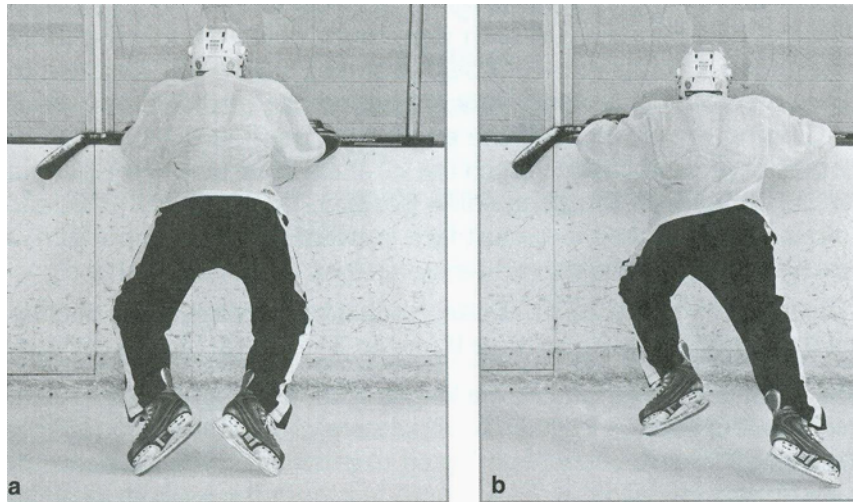
Although toe starts are taught at all Laura Stamm Power Skating programs and although we emphasize their importance, we often watch players (who do great toe starts at our clinics) start on their full blades in games. This may be from lack of concentration or from sporadic practice during the season. There's no use learning how to do toe starts (or any other maneuver) if you don't practice them all the time and then incorporate them in game situations.

To assure you will use toe starts in games, you must use them in all practice situations as well. When the coach blows the whistle for you to start out from a stopped position, start on your toes. Every time! This is the only way to make them "an automatic" response.

In order to get up on the toes of the skates you have to keep your heels off the ice. If your heels touch the ice the skates are forced to glide. Gliding is a process of deceleration; the result is that you will feel like you are stuck in the mud.

Skaters don't use the toes of the skates the same way as runners do. Because of the slippery surface, skaters need to dig into the ice so the skates won't slip. In order for the edges to grip the ice they must be on the ice at an angle that is *sideways* to the line of travel; thus the famous "V" position of the skates.

The following illustration shows a hockey player practicing toe starts against the boards:



TOE START DRILL

Now practice toe starts in open ice.

With your skates and legs in a duck like (what I refer to as the V-diamond) position, take the first two or three steps on your toes (on the fronts of the inside edges). Maintain a low and forward body angle. Leap out, not up! Try to cover distance (not height) while moving the skates extremely quickly and powerfully. Keep your heels off the ice during these initial running steps.

Keep in mind that it takes many years of training and practice to master these explosive starts. Don't expect to master them in a day, week, or year. You will have to do many thousands of them before you can finally do them instinctively and in games.



FORWARD TOE STARTS - SEQUENCE

Remember: Practice does not make perfect – only perfect practice makes perfect. So practice toe starts perfectly! Don't be concerned if you take a lot of falls in the process; it's a natural part of learning.

For more information on this very important subject, refer to my book and/or dvd, **LAURA STAMM'S POWER SKATING 4th Edition**. Both are available at www.laurastamm.com or www.laurastamm.net Also, check for a summer Laura Stamm Power Skating Clinic in your area.

Skate Great Hockey!

Laura Stamm
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