

Coach Nat

Alex Lin

I step out onto the ice and skate towards the bench. My teammate Austin behind me follows. I place my water bottle down and skate towards the net. Warmup is always important. Coach Nat always told us how crucial it is to get our muscles going before doing anything. The rest of my team step onto the ice and skate around the rink. Austin reaches for a puck. I continue skating.

"Alright bring it in, quickly!" shouted Coach Nat. He taps his stick on the ice.

We gather. Some of the guys at the front kneel down.

"We're gonna start with a quick simple drill. Defensemen are gonna pass the puck to the forwards, then you'll do a one on one down the ice. Try taking a shot on the goalie." He draws on the whiteboard for us to see.

We nod.

"Lets go!" said Coach Nat.

We turn around and skate to our positions. I stand first in line.

"Brrrr" Coach Nat blows the whistle.

I place my stick on the ice. Austin, passes a puck to me. I gently receive it without losing control.

"Good" I heard Coach Nat compliment us from behind.

I slide the puck forward. Austin skates backwards. He anticipates my movements. I glide to the right and take a shot. I miss. Austin had his stick in the way. I bite hard on my mouth guard as I skate to the back of the line.

"Alex, good shot, but make sure you have your head up." said coach Nat.

"Yea I know. I forgot." I said.

"Yea well if you're gonna forget in a real game I'll be seeing you at the hospital." he chuckles.

I nod. I place my stick down. I wait for my turn.

Coach Nat blows the whistle. Austin passes the puck to me. I cross over to the left and stride forward. I look up. I can see the blurry puck in my peripheral vision. I stick handle.

Suddenly the puck drifts away. I lose control. I stretch trying to reach it but Austin gets it first. I skate back biting my mouth guard again.

"Alex come here." said coach Nat in a strict tone.

I take a deep breath and skate up to him. I know it is never good when a coach singles you out.

"Take the puck, stare into my eyes and stick handle. Don't lose it."

I bend my knees. I can feel the puck with my stick. I look into Coach Nat's eyes. His face is stern. I move the puck left and right.

"Remember. If you don't have your head up, then you're just asking to be hit." he emphasizes. "So we gotta perfect this."

A drop of sweat trickles down my forehead.

"yea" I respond. I remain focused.

Suddenly coach Nat pokes his stick out. I pull the puck to the left.

"Nice" he compliments.

I drag the puck back in front of me. I feel confident. My eyes remain fixed on coach Nat.

He pokes his stick out again, hitting my stick. I almost lose control. I drag the puck to my right and away from him.

"Well done." he says. "Get back in line and try again."

I line up. My turn comes up. My teammate Chris passes a puck.

I stride to my left again. I feel the puck with my stick. I stare into Chris's eyes. I stride forward.

Chris suddenly jabs his stick out. I drag the puck to my right. I pull it further back, preparing a shot. Chris anticipates my actions. He lowers himself onto one knee to block the shot. I hold the puck behind me, waiting for the opportune moment. Chris slides too far. He over anticipates my shot, but I hold back a second.

I wrist the puck. It flies past the goalie, hits the post and goes in. A loud ding sounds across the rink. I skate back chewing on my mouth guard.

Coach Nat smiles encouragingly, but ever so slightly out of the side of his mouth, and fist bumps me as I skate by.

I smile back confidently.

Coach Nat blows his whistle. "Alright bring it in again!" he commands. "It's time for a new drill."