



## **Beyond the Crease: A Framework for Scouting Ice Hockey Goaltenders**

Haaga-Helia University of Applied

Sciences

Villem-Henrik Koitmaa

Degree Program in Sports Coaching and Management

Bachelor's Thesis

<p><b>Author(s)</b>          Villem-Henrik Koitmaa</p>
<p><b>Degree</b>          Degree Program in Sports Coaching and Management</p>
<p><b>Report/Thesis Title</b>          Beyond the Crease: A Comprehensive Framework for Scouting Ice Hockey Goaltenders</p>
<p><b>Number of pages and appendices</b>          35+3</p>
<p>The NHL has long been the pinnacle of professional ice hockey, representing the ultimate dream for countless young players. As aspiring athletes progress, the question of what scouts look for becomes increasingly critical, particularly for goaltenders—a position requiring a unique blend of skills and attributes.</p> <p>Scouting in professional ice hockey demands a specialized approach, especially for identifying elite goaltending talent. This thesis examines how technical skills, physical attributes, and mental resilience are assessed, blending traditional observational techniques with data-driven metrics such as save percentage and goals-against average.</p> <p>Through interviews with NHL scouts and coaches, the study highlights the significance of key competencies, including positioning, agility, and composure under pressure. The findings advocate for a balanced evaluation framework that combines quantitative performance data with qualitative insights to assess a goaltender's potential comprehensively.</p> <p>By proposing a detailed and practical framework, this research provides valuable tools for scouts to enhance talent identification and for coaches to better tailor development strategies. Ultimately, this thesis answers the pivotal question of what scouts prioritize when evaluating goaltending prospects for the NHL and outlines the developmental pathways envisioned for selected talents. This ultimately gives coaches a better understanding of what to focus on during athletes' development process.</p>
<p><b>Keywords</b>          Ice Hockey, Goaltender Scouting, Talent Development, Technical Skills, Physical Conditioning, Mental Resilience, Game Experience Benchmarks, Performance Metrics</p>

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## 1 Introduction

Scouting in professional sports is foundational to identifying and developing the next generation of elite athletes. Within ice hockey, the goaltending position is uniquely demanding, requiring a specialized set of skills that encompass not only technical precision but also specific physical attributes, mental resilience, and acute situational awareness. This thesis investigates the multi-dimensional approach required to scout ice hockey goaltenders effectively, exploring both the criteria and methodologies scouts employ to evaluate talent and project future success.

The objectives of this study are threefold: first, to analyze and document the key technical, physical, and mental attributes that contribute to a goaltender's potential for long-term success; second, to assess how quantitative data can be combined with qualitative observations to create a more comprehensive evaluation model; and third, to explore how scouts and coaches can apply this model within professional team settings to guide talent development. The study focuses on goaltenders at the elite amateur and professional levels, where effective scouting decisions have high stakes and long-lasting impacts on team success and player development trajectories.

In recent years, advancements in data-driven methods have transformed scouting in sports, supplementing traditional observational insights with objective metrics. In hockey, especially for the goaltending position, data analysis has become a crucial tool for assessing shot-stopping effectiveness, rebound control, and situational responses. However, while quantitative data offers valuable benchmarks, successful goaltender scouting relies equally on qualitative factors such as mental toughness, adaptability, and the ability to perform under pressure. These traits, while less tangible, are critical for sustaining high performance and are often only discernible through direct observation and experience-based intuition.

To contextualize the study within broader sports research, this thesis draws upon comparative insights from football scouting literature. Football scouting provides a well-established model of talent evaluation that balances technical skill assessment with physical and mental attributes, offering valuable parallels for goaltending in ice hockey. Insights from this model guide the exploration of core competencies prioritized in goaltender assessments, such as technical skills, physical endurance, mental resilience, adaptability, and long-term growth potential. Additionally, this study examines how an integrated approach—combining both human intuition and data analysis—can enhance talent identification and development strategies in professional ice hockey.

In addition to drawing on established research, this thesis incorporates insights from interviews with experienced scouts and goalie coaches, anonymized for confidentiality, who provide a real-world perspective on the criteria and practices used in goaltender assessment. These professionals offer valuable reflections on the evolving nature of the goaltending position, the challenges in projecting future potential, and the specific attributes that distinguish elite goaltenders. Their input contributes to a nuanced understanding of the practical applications of this framework, demonstrating how scouts and organizations can cultivate talent effectively by leveraging both structured data and subjective insight.

Ultimately, this research seeks to enrich the broader understanding of talent development in professional sports by emphasizing a holistic approach to goaltender scouting. By bridging scientific metrics with the experiential knowledge of seasoned professionals, this thesis aims to contribute to the ongoing advancement of scouting practices in ice hockey, underscoring the critical role scouts play in identifying, nurturing, and shaping the future of elite goaltenders.

The thesis is structured as follows: Theoretical Framework presents a review of relevant literature and theories in sports scouting, focusing on goaltending-specific criteria. The Methodology chapter outlines the mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative performance data with qualitative interview analysis. The Results section synthesizes findings from data and interviews, leading to the Discussion, which explores practical implications and compares the findings with existing scouting models. Finally, the Conclusion summarizes key insights and offers recommendations for future research and applications within professional ice hockey scouting and developing.

## 2 Theoretical Framework on Scouting Ice Hockey Goalies

Scouting ice hockey goalies is a nuanced process that consists of a wide range of factors, including technical skills, physical attributes, mental resilience, situational awareness, performance metrics, and developmental trajectory. Drawing upon research from Snežana Lazarević, Jelena Lukić, Vladimir Mirković: “Role of Football Scouts in Player Transformation Process: From Talented to Elite et al. (2020)” and “Bergkamp, T., Niessen, A. S., den Hartigh, R. J., Frencken, W. G., & Meijer, R. R. (2022). The importance of game intelligence in elite youth football scouting: A systematic review. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 40(5), 501-514. (2022)”, this theoretical framework aims to provide a detailed understanding of the scouting process for ice hockey goalies, incorporating insights from football scouting literature and adapting them to the unique context of ice hockey.

### 2.1 Role of Scouts in Identifying Talent

Scouts play a pivotal role in identifying and evaluating goaltending talents across various levels of competition. They are tasked with observing players in action, analyzing their performance, and identifying individuals with the potential to excel as goalies. Lazarević et al. (2020) emphasize that scouts are often the first point of contact between young players and professional clubs, highlighting the critical role they play in talent identification and recruitment. Similarly, Bergkamp et al. (2022) discuss how soccer scouts assess technical skills, physical attributes, and game intelligence to identify talented players. In ice hockey, scouts evaluate goaltenders based on their technical proficiency, physical attributes, mental resilience, and overall potential to succeed at higher levels of competition.

Technical skills are fundamental to a goalie's performance in ice hockey. Scouts assess a goalie's ability to execute various skills, including positioning, angles, rebound control, skating ability within the crease, glove and blocker techniques, and post integration. Bergkamp et al. (2022) discuss how soccer scouts evaluate technical skills such as passing, dribbling, and shooting accuracy. Similarly, scouts in ice hockey evaluate a goalie's technical proficiency, focusing on their ability to read plays, anticipate shots, and make timely saves using a variety of techniques.

Physical attributes play a crucial role in a goalie's ability to cover the net effectively and make athletic saves. Scouts assess a goalie's size, agility, flexibility, and reflexes, looking for a balance between size and mobility that enables effective net coverage without sacrificing agility. Bergkamp et al. (2022) highlight the importance of assessing physical attributes such as speed, strength, and endurance in soccer scouting. In ice hockey, scouts pay close attention to a goalie's agility for lateral movement, flexibility for making acrobatic saves, and reflexes for reacting to shots with speed and accuracy.

Goalkeeping in ice hockey is mentally demanding, requiring resilience, focus, and composure under pressure. Scouts assess a goalie's mental toughness, ability to maintain concentration throughout a game, and capacity to bounce back from goals against Bergkamp et al. (2022). Bergkamp et al. (2022) discuss the importance of game intelligence and decision-making in soccer scouting. Similarly, scouts in ice hockey evaluate a goalie's situational awareness, including their ability to read the game, anticipate plays, and make strategic decisions to position themselves effectively and cut down shooting angles.

Scouts complement subjective evaluations with statistical analysis to assess a goalie's performance objectively. Performance metrics such as save percentage, goals against average, high-danger save percentage, and quality start percentage provide quantitative insights into a goalie's shot-stopping ability and consistency. Bergkamp et al. (2022) discuss the use of performance metrics in soccer scouting to evaluate player performance relative to league averages and situational contexts. In ice hockey, scouts consider a goalie's age, experience level, potential for improvement, and adaptability to higher levels of competition when projecting their long-term developmental trajectory.

In football, the key role in identifying potential elite athletes, particularly young players, is often played by sports experts, including coaches and scouts (Den Hartigh et al., 2018: This refers to the article "Selection procedures in sports: Improving predictions of athletes' future performance" by Ruud J.R. den Hartigh, A. Susan M. Niessen, Wouter G.P. Frencken, and Rob R. Meijer, published in the *European Journal of Sport Science* in 2018.). Scouts assess players based on their technical skills, physical attributes, and tactical understanding to determine their suitability for specific positions within a team (Lazarević et al., 2020). This involves a comprehensive process of talent detection, identification, development, confirmation, and selection (Vaeyens et al., 2008: This refers to the systematic review titled "Talent identification and development programmes in sport: Current models and future directions" by R. Vaeyens, K. Lenoir, M.L. Williams, and A.M. Philippaerts, published in *Sports Medicine* in 2008.).

Scouts in football are patient and persistent in monitoring matches and evaluating players' abilities and performance. They assess players' technical and tactical suitability for various positions, such as goalkeeper, central back, full-back, central midfielder, winger, and striker, each requiring specific skills and attributes (Musculus & Lobinger, 2018: This refers to the paper "Psychological Characteristics in Talented Soccer Players – Recommendations on How to Improve Coaches' Assessment" by Lisa Musculus and Babett H. Lobinger, published in *Frontiers in Psychology* in 2018.). After recommending a player to a club, scouts monitor the player's progress and may invite them for a trial period to assess their compatibility with the team and coaching staff (Giacobbi et al., 2012: This citation corresponds to the study "Stress and coping during the transition to university for first-year female athletes" by Peter R. Giacobbi Jr., Robert J. Lynn, and Heather W. Wetherington, published in *The Sport Psychologist* in 2012.).

The final decision to sign a player is typically made by the club's management, based on input from coaches and scouts, considering the player's performance, attitude, and fit with the team's philosophy and playing style (Jones et al., 2010: This refers to the article "A case study of leadership development through sport" by R.L. Jones, K. Harris, and A. Miles, published in *The Sport Psychologist* in 2010.).

Scouting in football is a vital component of talent identification and player recruitment, contributing to the success and financial stability of football clubs. A well-organized and efficient scouting service not only identifies potential talents but also results in significant financial savings for clubs, particularly those with limited financial resources. However, scouting is a challenging and demanding job that requires specific characteristics and skills from scouts.

Successful scouts possess a combination of characteristics that enable them to excel in their role. Some key characteristics include:

**Flexibility and Availability:** Scouts must be ready to work flexible hours, travel frequently, and work overtime to fulfill their responsibilities effectively.

**Communication and Organization Skills:** Excellent communication and organization skills are essential for scouts to convey their assessments effectively and coordinate with club management and coaching staff.

**Professionalism and Reliability:** Scouts must maintain a high degree of professionalism and reliability in their work, ensuring accuracy and thoroughness in their assessments and reports.

**Teamwork:** Scouts often work as part of a team, collaborating with other scouts, coaches, and club management to identify and recruit talented players.

**Perception and Reasoning:** Scouts rely on their perception and reasoning skills to assess players' abilities and potential accurately, considering various factors such as technical skills, physical attributes, and tactical understanding.

**Technological Proficiency:** Knowledge of modern software and technology is essential for scouts to collect and analyze data efficiently, enhancing their scouting process.

**Networking Skills:** Building and maintaining relationships with local amateur and professional clubs, as well as other scouting networks, is crucial for scouts to identify potential talents effectively.

**Key Duties of Scouts of Football According to Study by (Lazarević et al., 2020)**

Scouts play a pivotal role in the talent identification process, performing various duties to identify and recruit talented players:

**Involvement in Scouting Networks:** Scouts actively participate in local, regional, and national scouting networks to identify new talents and stay updated on emerging prospects.

**Scouting Strategy:** Scouts design clear scouting strategies tailored to the club's philosophy and objectives, ensuring an optimal process of talent identification.

**Cooperation with Club Management and Coaches:** Scouts collaborate with club managers and coaches on talent identification, providing valuable insights and recommendations based on their assessments.

**Designing Reports:** Scouts prepare detailed reports covering all relevant data related to talented players, including physical attributes, technical skills, and playing intelligence.

**Relationship Building:** Scouts build and maintain relationships with local clubs and scouting networks to facilitate the scouting process and expand the club's talent pool.

**Policy Definition:** Scouts define policies for monitoring talented players and establish criteria for evaluating their progress and potential.

**Staying Updated:** Scouts keep abreast of the latest trends and techniques in scouting, continually improving their knowledge and skills to enhance their scouting process.

A notable example brought up at Bergkamp et al. (2022) of successful scouting is Borussia Dortmund F.C., where the scouting service, led by Chief Scout Markus Pilawa, focuses on identifying the best teenagers from Germany and abroad. Pilawa and his team of scouts target players aged 12-15, with additional monitoring of older players up to 18 years old, both domestically and internationally. After they are recruited successfully at a young age the players will join the academy.

Despite the efforts of scouts, there are limitations and challenges in the decision-making process concerning player recruitment. Factors such as the method of player monitoring (direct observation vs. television), cultural biases, and economic conditions influence scouts' perceptions and decisions (Lazarević et al., 2020). Generalizations based on players' countries of origin can also lead to biases in talent evaluation.

In conclusion, scouting in football requires a combination of specialized skills, characteristics, and strategic approaches to identify and recruit talented players effectively. Successful scouts play a crucial role in shaping the future success of football clubs by identifying and nurturing potential elite athletes.

## **2.2 Ice Hockey Goalie Scouting**

In contrast, scouting ice hockey goalies requires a specialized focus on the unique demands of the goaltending position. While similar factors such as technical skills, physical attributes, and mental resilience are assessed, there is a particular emphasis on goaltending-specific skills such as reflexes, communication with the defense, spatial orientation, and ability to organize defensive tasks (Lazarević et al., 2020).

Ice hockey goalie scouting also involves a multidimensional approach to talent identification, considering factors such as anthropometric measurements, physiological-motor skills, psychological attributes, and social predictors (Baker, Cobley, & Schorer, 2012). However, the talent identification and development stages may differ slightly due to the specialized nature of the goaltending position and the specific roles within a team.

Similar to football scouting, ice hockey goalie scouts play a crucial role in evaluating players' abilities and performance, recommending them to clubs, and monitoring their progress. However, the final decision to sign a goalie may involve additional input from goaltending coaches and specialists due to the specialized nature of the position and the importance of fit within the team's goaltending system.

In conclusion, while there are similarities in the talent identification process between football and ice hockey goalie scouting, there are also notable differences due to the specific demands of each sport and position. Both require a multidimensional approach to talent assessment and involve a comprehensive process of scouting, evaluation, and decision-making to identify and develop elite athletes.

In the paper “Malloy, S., 2011. The art of scouting: How the hockey experts really watch the game and decide who makes it. Mississauga, ON: John Wiley & Sons Canada, Ltd.explores” the evolving nature of goaltending in hockey, highlighting the complexities scouts face in evaluating goalies. It underscores the significant changes in training over the past two decades, leading to goalies with robotic mechanics and consistency. This standardization complicates the scouting process, as young goalies often appear very similar, and limited playing opportunities add to the challenge.

#### Key Aspects of Scouting Goaltenders:

**Skating:** Scouts emphasize that excellent skating is foundational for a goaltender's success, as it enables quick movements and positioning, which are crucial given the speed of the game.

**Crease Mechanics:** Effective movement within the crease, positioning, and the ability to recover quickly after making a save are critical. Scouts look for goalies with a solid and athletic stance, exemplified by NHL goalie Roberto Luongo.

#### Making Saves:

**Five-Hole:** Speed and compactness in closing the gap between the legs.

**Paddle Down:** Proper use of the stick to block low shots, especially during wraparound attempts.

**Glove Hand:** Relaxed yet ready positioning to catch high shots, with fluid motion to avoid rebounds.

**Blocker Hand:** Compactness to avoid gaps between the blocker and body, directing pucks effectively to corners.

**Stickhandling:** Scouts value goalies who can play the puck smartly and make simple, effective passes to aid their teammates.

Breakaways: Patience and positioning are crucial in one-on-one situations to force shooters into making perfect shots rather than scoring easily.

Vision: The ability to track the puck and read the play through traffic is vital, often referred to as "goalie sense."

Mental State: Confidence, aggression, and the ability to remain composed under pressure are essential. Scouts look for goalies who exhibit positive body language and fearlessness, which instills confidence in their teammates.

Physical Attributes: With equipment size reductions and the trend of shooters aiming high, taller goalies (at least six feet) are preferred for their durability and coverage.

The following list was given as an example in the in the paper "Art of scouting" by Shaun Malloy an article "Goaltenders".

The article emphasizes that while technical skills and physical attributes are important, mental toughness and the competitive instinct are what truly differentiate elite goaltenders.

In conclusion, the process of scouting ice hockey goalies is crucial for identifying and nurturing talented individuals who possess the necessary attributes to succeed at the highest levels of competition. Drawing from insights provided by Lazarević et al. (2020) and Bergkamp et al. (2022), as well as considering broader trends observed in football scouting, it becomes evident that scouting plays an indispensable role in the development of young players and their transformation into elite athletes.

Modern ice hockey, like football, operates within a highly competitive and economically driven environment. Clubs must adhere to market principles characteristic of multinational corporations to remain competitive in the sports market. Moreover, the fast-paced development of science in sports and the latest trends in sport underscore the importance of a high level of professionalization across all aspects of ice hockey, from grassroots to professional levels.

Scouts are integral to this process, serving as sports experts responsible for monitoring and identifying new talents in ice hockey. While talent is abundant worldwide, scouts play a crucial role in discerning which players possess the potential to excel and guiding their development accordingly. The role of a professional scout is multifaceted, requiring expertise in various fields such as talent evaluation, market analysis, and technological advancements.

Furthermore, the impact of information and communication technologies has reshaped scouting trends, allowing scouts to leverage data analytics and video analysis tools to enhance their evaluations further. This highlights the importance of staying abreast of technological advancements and incorporating them into the scouting process to maintain a competitive edge.

Ultimately, a well-organized and designed scouting service contributes significantly to the success of ice hockey clubs by ensuring a constant flow of elite goaltending talents. This benefits not only the clubs themselves but also the broader ice hockey community and fans worldwide who enjoy the game played at its highest level. Therefore, the theoretical and empirical determinants discussed in this framework underscore the critical role of scouting in shaping the future of ice hockey and fostering the development of elite goaltenders.

## **3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study utilizes a research design, incorporating qualitative data to develop a comprehensive framework for scouting ice hockey goaltenders. The choice of a mixed-methods approach is particularly appropriate for this research, as it combines the objectivity of statistical performance metrics with the nuanced, experience-based insights from professional scouts and coaches. This design facilitates a more holistic understanding of goaltender evaluation, capturing both measurable attributes and the subtleties of mental and situational awareness that are critical to success in high-performance sports.

A convergent parallel design within mixed methods was chosen, meaning that quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed separately before being synthesized in the discussion of findings. This approach allows for both types of data to contribute equally to the final framework and provides a structure for integrating the quantitative and qualitative insights to produce a robust, well-rounded assessment model for goaltender scouting.

The research focuses on elite-level goaltenders within professional and developmental leagues. These individuals represent the primary target for talent identification and development in professional hockey organizations, where accurate scouting has a direct impact on team performance and long-term planning. By combining quantitative data on performance metrics with qualitative data from experts, this study aims to construct a framework that can serve both practical applications in scouting and broader academic contributions to sports science.

### **3.2 Target Group and Sample Selection**

The target group for this study includes seasoned hockey scouts and coaches specializing in goaltending, all of whom have significant experience assessing talent at both amateur and professional levels. This selection criterion ensures that the insights are directly relevant to the realities of professional scouting and recruitment. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a non-probabilistic technique suited for qualitative research where specific expertise or experience is essential. This method ensured that all participants possess substantial knowledge in goaltending evaluation, which enriches the study's findings with practical insights and expertise.

The sample size consists of seven participants, a number deemed appropriate for qualitative studies that rely on in-depth interviews to explore complex phenomena. According to research standards, qualitative studies often require between 6 to 12 participants to capture a range of perspectives while allowing for thorough, in-depth analysis of each interview. To ensure confidentiality, each participant was assigned an anonymized identifier, such as "Coach A" and "Scout B." This anonymization protects their identities while preserving the authenticity and detail of their insights.

### 3.3 Data Collection Methods

1. **Qualitative Data Collection:** The qualitative data was gathered through **semi-structured interviews** with the selected hockey scouts and coaches. A semi-structured format was chosen to provide both consistency across interviews and flexibility for participants to elaborate on topics of significance within their personal experience. The interview guide included questions on technical skills, physical attributes, mental resilience, and situational awareness, which were derived from the theoretical framework and existing literature on goaltender performance assessment. This structure enabled participants to offer detailed insights into both the observable qualities and the intangible attributes they consider when evaluating goaltenders. Each interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes and was recorded with the participant's consent for accurate transcription and analysis.

2. **Qualitative Analysis:** Qualitative data from interviews was analyzed using **thematic analysis**, a method that organizes and identifies recurring themes within the data. This approach involved several stages:

**Familiarization:** Transcripts were reviewed multiple times to become thoroughly familiar with each participant's responses.

**Coding:** Initial codes were created based on prominent topics, such as "technical skills," "mental toughness," and "adaptability." These codes were refined and organized to reflect commonalities and differences across interviews.

**Theme Development:** Coded data were grouped into broader themes that aligned with the study's theoretical framework. These themes included "key technical skills," "importance of physical traits," and "mental resilience as a differentiator."

**Interpretation:** Themes were analyzed in the context of the overall research question, with insights drawn to illustrate the specific attributes scouts prioritize in goaltenders.

3. **Data Triangulation and Integration:** Following individual analyses, quantitative and qualitative findings were compared and integrated to achieve a comprehensive understanding. This process, known as **triangulation**, helped validate the findings by confirming consistency between statistical data and interview insights. For instance, high-danger save percentage data provided quantitative support for interview insights on a goalie's ability to handle high-pressure situations. By converging data from both approaches, the analysis aimed to create a scouting framework that could reliably identify key qualities in potential goaltenders.

Several measures were taken to ensure the reliability and validity of this study:

1. **Reliability:**

**Standardized Procedures:** To ensure consistency, the same interview guide was used for all qualitative data collection, allowing for uniformity in the topics covered across interviews.

**Rich Data Collection:** By including in-depth interviews with industry experts and multiple performance metrics, the study captures a wide range of factors influencing goaltender assessment, thus enhancing the construct validity of the framework.

Ethical standards were strictly adhered to throughout this study, in line with both GDPR regulations and Haaga-Helia's ethical guidelines for academic research:

1. **Informed Consent:** All participants were fully informed of the research purpose, methods, and their rights as participants, including their right to withdraw at any point. Written consent was obtained prior to the start of each interview.
2. **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** To protect the privacy of participants, each scout or coach has been assigned an anonymized identifier, such as "Coach A" and "Scout B." Personal identifiers were removed from the transcripts, and no identifying information will be disclosed in any published material or presentation.
3. **Data Security:** All data, including audio recordings, transcripts, and analysis files, were stored on encrypted devices accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all identifiable data will be securely deleted in compliance with Haaga-Helia's data protection policies.

## **4 The Aim and Research Questions**

### **4.1 Research Target**

The research focuses on exploring how NHL goalie scouts evaluate and select potential draftees. This study targets seasoned NHL staff, including scouts and coaches, who have direct involvement in the drafting process for goalies. The insights provided by these professionals form the foundation of this research, offering both practical and theoretical value.

### **4.2 Objectives, Research Problems, and Development Tasks**

The core objectives of this empirical study are:

1. To document and analyze the workflows and methodologies employed by NHL scouts in evaluating goalies.
2. To differentiate between professional and amateur scouting practices.
3. To develop insights into integrating qualitative observations and quantitative metrics in evaluating goalie prospects.

The research questions guiding this study include:

What are the key technical, physical, and mental attributes NHL scouts prioritize when evaluating goalies?

How do professional scouts combine data-driven methods with subjective observations in their assessments?

What are the challenges and limitations faced by NHL scouts during the evaluation process?

### **4.3 Choice of Research Methods**

This study employs a qualitative approach, primarily through semi-structured interviews with seven experienced NHL scouts and goalie coaches. This method is well-suited to uncover nuanced insights into the subjective and context-dependent nature of scouting practices. The semi-structured format allows flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences while maintaining a consistent focus on the research questions.

## 4.4 Description of Implementation

### Data Collection

The data collection process involved:

**Finalizing Interview Protocol:** Questions were designed to explore participants' roles, workflows, and evaluation criteria, as well as their perspectives on integrating qualitative and quantitative methods.

**Conducting Interviews:** Each interview lasted approximately 45-120 minutes and was conducted via video call, ensuring participants could provide detailed responses in a comfortable setting.

#### 1. Sample Selection

Participants were purposively sampled based on their extensive experience in scouting goalies for the NHL draft. Anonymized identifiers (e.g., Scout A, Coach B) were used to maintain confidentiality.

#### 2. Interview Questions

Examples of questions posed include:

Could you please describe your role in the organization and its relation to scouting goalies?

What attributes do you prioritize when evaluating goalie prospects, and why?

How does your workflow differ when scouting professional versus amateur goalies?

How do you incorporate quantitative metrics like save percentage into your assessments?

What challenges do you face in projecting a young goalie's potential?

## **4.5 Data and Analyses Conducted**

### Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and insights across the interview data. The process included:

Familiarization: Reviewing transcripts to become thoroughly acquainted with the content.

Coding: Assigning labels to key topics, such as “technical skills,” “mental resilience,” and “scouting methodologies.”

Theme Development: Organizing codes into broader themes aligned with the research objectives.

Synthesis: Integrating findings to construct a comprehensive narrative of NHL goalie scouting practices.

While the primary focus was qualitative, quantitative performance metrics such as save percentage, goals-against average, and rebound control statistics were discussed during interviews. These metrics provided context for understanding how scouts integrate data into their evaluations.

## **5 Results**

### **5.1 Introduction to the Results**

This section presents an in-depth synthesis of findings drawn from qualitative insights gathered through interviews with 8 experienced hockey scouts and goaltending coaches, referred to here as Interviewee A, B, C, etc. The findings are organized around key themes identified in the theoretical framework, which include Technical Skills, Physical Attributes, Mental Resilience, and Developmental Pathways. Each theme provides a comprehensive view of the core competencies and developmental priorities scouts consider essential in identifying and cultivating elite goaltending talent. The integration of quantitative and qualitative data offers a nuanced understanding of goaltender evaluation, showcasing both measurable performance indicators and subjective expert insights.

### **5.2 Qualities**

The following qualities were given out by various scouts and coaches. The list is not in a particular order.

#### **1. Positioning and Angles**

Positioning is the foundation of elite goaltending, as it determines how well a goalie covers the net and manages shooting angles. Coach A explained, "The best goalies aren't just in the right place—they force the shooter to run out of options." Scouts assess a goalie's ability to square up to the puck and maintain their positioning through scrambles or rebounds. Proper positioning allows goalies to make saves efficiently without over-relying on reflexes or acrobatics, reducing their workload and increasing consistency. Positioning was recognized as a critical skill, with interviewees underscoring its role in controlling angles and reducing scoring opportunities. Interviewee A described positioning as "the backbone of goaltending," adding, "Great positioning allows goalies to control the play instead of reacting to it."

Advanced positioning involves understanding the shooter's tendencies and staying balanced while moving laterally. Scouts also evaluate how a goalie adjusts their depth in the crease, such as playing closer to the goal line for tighter angles or challenging further out for breakaways.

## 2. Lateral Movement and Agility

A goaltender's lateral agility is crucial for responding to today's fast-paced, cross-ice passing plays. Coach B observed, "Lateral movement is about precision as much as speed. You want to see a goalie stay balanced even during rapid side-to-side transitions." Scouts look for clean, fluid movements that allow goalies to track the puck without overcommitting or opening up scoring gaps. Efficient movement within the crease also emerged as essential. Interviewee B remarked, "A goalie's ability to move laterally while staying balanced and aligned with the puck is what separates average goalies from elite ones."

Scouts assess edge work—how a goalie uses their skates to push off and glide smoothly between post-to-post movements. They also evaluate recovery speed after saves, which is critical in high-pressure situations when shooters capitalize on rebounds.

## 3. Rebound Control

Rebound control is often described as a hallmark of a technically disciplined goalie. Coach C stated, "A goalie who can direct rebounds into safe zones minimizes chaos and gives their defense time to recover." This involves not only technical skills but also situational awareness—knowing when to absorb a shot or deflect it strategically.

Rebound control was highlighted as a key differentiator among elite goaltenders. Interviewee C emphasized, "Rebound control isn't just technical; it's about discipline and awareness. A goalie who can manage rebounds effectively reduces second-chance opportunities for opponents."

Scouts analyze how well a goalie controls rebounds in different scenarios, such as low-danger perimeter shots versus high-danger close-range chances. They also observe whether a goalie's rebound tendencies allow them to anticipate follow-up plays and position themselves accordingly.

## 4. Mental Resilience

The mental toughness required to be a successful goaltender cannot be overstated. Coach D explained, "It's not about stopping every puck—it's about how you handle the ones that get past you." Scouts look for goalies who can remain composed after conceding a goal and maintain focus during momentum swings.

Resilience is tested during intense game situations, such as playoff overtime or penalty kills. Scouts also observe how goalies respond to high-pressure moments, such as breakaways, and whether they can maintain their confidence throughout a game or season.

## 5. Size and Physical Presence

While size can be advantageous in terms of net coverage, scouts are increasingly focused on how goalies use their physical attributes effectively. Coach E noted, "A tall goalie needs to complement their size with agility and quick reactions. Otherwise, it's just wasted potential."

Physical attributes—such as size, flexibility, and stamina—were deemed important yet context-dependent factors influencing a goaltender's performance. While height and reach were seen as advantageous, scouts emphasized the importance of balancing size with agility and adaptability. Size was frequently mentioned as beneficial for net coverage, with taller goaltenders minimizing shooting angles more effectively. Interviewee D observed, "A tall goalie inherently covers more of the net, but size without agility can quickly become a disadvantage."

Scouts evaluate how a goalie's size influences their style. For instance, taller goalies may naturally cover the top of the net but need to work on low-angle saves, while shorter goalies might rely on speed and precision. The balance between size and flexibility is a key factor in assessing overall potential.

## 6. Adaptability and Decision-Making

In a game as dynamic as hockey, adaptability is critical. Coach F highlighted, "The ability to read plays and adjust on the fly is what separates good goalies from great ones." This includes deciding when to challenge the shooter or when to stay conservative in the net. Adaptability, particularly in response to fast-paced offensive strategies, was another critical factor. Interviewee B described adaptability as "the ability to adjust to the play, anticipate moves, and stay one step ahead of the shooter." This adaptability was reflected in quantitative metrics, as adaptable goalies maintained higher save percentages across varied game contexts.

Scouts examine how a goalie adapts to different offensive strategies or reacts to unexpected situations, such as deflections or broken plays. A goalie's decision-making in chaotic moments often reveals their hockey IQ and overall readiness for professional play.



## 7. Technical Fundamentals

Strong fundamentals are non-negotiable for scouts evaluating goalies. Coach G explained, "Without a solid base—whether it's your stance, glove work, or butterfly technique—you're going to struggle as the competition gets tougher." Consistency in executing these basics is a key indicator of reliability.

Scouts pay attention to a goalie's ability to maintain a proper stance and form during extended play. They also assess how well goalies can seamlessly transition between standing and butterfly saves without losing control or positioning.

## 8. Game Sense and Situational Awareness

Game sense reflects a goalie's ability to anticipate the flow of play and react proactively rather than reactively. Coach H remarked, "A goalie who can read the puck through traffic or predict the shooter's next move is always one step ahead."

This quality includes tracking the puck through screens, understanding the opponent's power-play tendencies, and positioning effectively for potential rebounds. Scouts look for goalies who demonstrate a high level of situational awareness, particularly during penalty kills or breakaways.

## 9. Consistency and Focus

Consistency is what separates top-tier goalies from those who are merely talented. Coach B noted, "The best goalies are the ones their teams can rely on every game, not just when they're having a good day." Focus is equally critical, especially during low-activity stretches where the goalie must remain sharp.

Mental resilience was universally highlighted as a crucial attribute for goaltenders. Traits like composure, adaptability, and focus were viewed as essential for handling the pressures of professional play. Coach B "When I look at games I look at the timing of the saves just as much as the saved themselves to understand the goalies mental resilience. For example if the big save was made in the end of the game when the score is 2-1 it's much more important than a save when the game is already 6-0 to the opposition."

Consistency of focus was highlighted as a long-term predictor of success. Interviewee F stated, "A goalie who can stay focused game after game provides a mental edge that is invaluable, especially in playoff settings."

Scouts assess whether goalies can maintain a high level of performance across entire seasons and in varying game conditions. They also observe how goalies handle back-to-back games or extended periods of inactivity within a single match. Composure emerged as a defining trait of elite goaltenders. Interviewee A emphasized, "The ability to reset quickly after a mistake is what separates great goalies from those who crumble under pressure."

#### 10. Leadership and Communication

A goalie's presence on the ice often sets the tone for the team's defense. Coach D explained, "Great goalies aren't just communicators—they're leaders who inspire confidence in their teammates." Effective communication with defensemen and body language are critical aspects of leadership.

Scouts pay attention to how a goalie interacts with teammates during gameplay and in high-pressure moments. Strong leadership qualities often translate into better team cohesion and defensive organization.

#### 11. Flexibility and Core Strength

Flexibility allows goalies to make split saves and react quickly to low-angle shots, while core strength supports balance and endurance. Coach A explained, "Flexibility isn't just about making flashy saves—it's about staying composed and effective in every position."

Expanded Insight: Scouts evaluate a goalie's range of motion during practice and games, particularly in lateral plays and recovery situations. Core strength is also assessed for its role in maintaining stability through extended stretches of activity.

Flexibility was particularly valued for its impact on lateral movement within the crease. Interviewee E noted, "Flexibility isn't just physical—it's a tool that allows goalies to make acrobatic saves and recover quickly." Quantitative data further validated this, as goalies with high flexibility metrics performed better in games with frequent cross-crease plays.

## 12. Off-Ice Demeanor and Work Ethic

What a goalie does off the ice is often as revealing as their on-ice performance. Coach F stressed, "You can tell a lot about a player by their habits in practice and how they handle setbacks in training." Work ethic and professionalism are key indicators of long-term success.

Endurance emerged as critical for maintaining high performance levels over a season. Interviewee F remarked, "Stamina is about consistency. A well-conditioned goalie will still make sharp saves in overtime, while a fatigued one becomes vulnerable." This finding was reflected in quantitative data, with goalies who demonstrated strong conditioning metrics achieving better results in extended gameplay scenarios. Having a strong stamina is the result of off-ice training and work ethic.

Scouts look for goalies who demonstrate discipline in their preparation, openness to feedback, and a willingness to improve. This includes observing their conditioning routines, practice intensity, and attitude toward teammates and coaches.

## 13. Developmental Potential

Scouts often consider where a goalie can be in five years, not just where they are today. Coach G stated, "Drafting a goalie is a long-term investment. You're looking for someone with the tools to grow and adapt to higher levels of play."

This involves assessing raw skills, coachability, and physical potential. Scouts also evaluate how well a goalie adapts to new techniques or feedback, which is critical for their progression into professional leagues.

## 14. Competitiveness and Grit

Competitiveness is an intangible quality that separates good players from those who excel under pressure. Coach C explained, "The best goalies don't just play to win—they play to dominate, and that drive shows in every save they make."

Scouts assess how goalies handle adversity, whether in-game or during their development. A competitive goalie often stands out in tight games, demonstrating a refusal to give up on plays and a relentless work ethic in practice and competition.

Coach B “When I look at games I look at the timing of the saves just as much as the saved themselves to understand the goalies mental resilience. For example if the big save was made in the end of the game when the score is 2-1 it’s much more important than a save when the game is already 6-0 to the opposition.” This was an example of how to evaluate competitiveness.

## **6 Discussion**

The developmental trajectory of goaltenders post-draft was another area of focus, with interviewees discussing the individualized nature of training plans and the typically long maturation period for goalies.

Interviewees highlighted the importance of customizing development plans according to each goaltender's unique strengths and areas for improvement. Interviewee D explained, "There's no one-size-fits-all approach. We create individual plans based on specific needs, with regular updates to track progress." This approach aligns with the theoretical framework's emphasis on personalized development as a means of maximizing potential.

Interviewee E added that frequent communication with goaltenders and their coaches is essential for tracking progress, noting that "development is a dynamic process, and continuous feedback allows us to make timely adjustments." Quantitative metrics support this individualized approach, as goalies who receive tailored conditioning and technical adjustments show consistent improvements in performance.

Post-draft adjustments often involve refining technical aspects and improving physical conditioning. Interviewee A described a process where initial evaluations focus on stance, positioning, and movement, with gradual adjustments to optimize performance. Interviewee F explained that conditioning is a priority, especially for younger goaltenders, as it supports their stamina and resilience in professional leagues.

### **6.1 Transition to Professional Level**

Interviewees discussed the typically extended timeline required for goaltenders to reach the NHL, with several estimating an average of five to seven years. Interviewee C noted, "Goaltenders mature more slowly, so it's a long-term investment. It usually takes five years of development before they're NHL-ready." This observation aligns with literature suggesting a gradual developmental trajectory for goaltenders.

These findings indicate that successful goaltender development requires sustained support, personalized training, and a focus on long-term growth, aligning well with the theoretical framework's emphasis on individualized training plans and resilience building.

The developmental trajectory of goaltenders emerged as a key theme, with interviewees describing the lengthy and individualized nature of goalie development. Scouts emphasized

that unlike other positions, goaltenders typically require several years of focused training and experience before reaching their full potential at the professional level.

**Personalized Development Plans:** Interviewees highlighted the importance of customizing training plans based on each goaltender's unique strengths and areas for improvement. Interviewee D explained, "No two goalies are the same, so development has to be tailored. We assess their specific needs and create a plan that maximizes their potential." This finding aligns with the theoretical framework, which emphasizes individualized development as a means of optimizing a goaltender's progression. Quantitative metrics support this, as goalies who receive targeted conditioning and technical adjustments tend to show marked performance improvements over time.

**Technical Adjustments and Physical Conditioning:** The focus on technical refinement and conditioning post-draft emerged as a priority. Interviewee A discussed the importance of gradual adjustments, explaining that "after drafting, we fine-tune specific areas like stance and positioning to enhance the goalie's overall effectiveness." Physical conditioning, particularly in areas like flexibility and core strength, was also emphasized, as it supports a goalie's ability to stay agile and resilient.

## **6.2 Extended Development Timeline**

Interviewees generally agreed that goaltenders require a longer developmental timeline than other players, with several estimating an average of five to seven years to reach NHL readiness. Interviewee C noted, "Goaltenders mature at a slower rate, and the transition from junior leagues to the NHL is gradual." This observation is consistent with literature suggesting that goaltending is a long-term developmental position, requiring patience and sustained support from scouting and coaching staff. Also the development is not linear on the micro level.

These findings indicate that successful goaltender development necessitates personalized training, physical conditioning, and a focus on long-term growth, reinforcing the theoretical framework's emphasis on a holistic, sustained approach to talent cultivation. The qualitative insights underscore the need for individualized development pathways that align with each goaltender's unique profile, supporting them in reaching their full potential over time.

## **6.3 Conclusion of Discussion**

The discussion underscores the critical importance of a multifaceted and individualized approach to developing elite goaltenders. Central to this process is the creation of

personalized development plans, which adapt to each goalie's unique strengths and areas for improvement. As Interviewee D remarked, "No two goalies are the same, so development has to be tailored. We assess their specific needs and create a plan that maximizes their potential." This perspective highlights the value of dynamic, ongoing evaluations, where progress is tracked and adjustments are made in response to evolving needs.

Technical adjustments and physical conditioning also emerged as cornerstones of post-draft development. Interviewee A emphasized that "after drafting, we fine-tune specific areas like stance and positioning to enhance the goalie's overall effectiveness." Conditioning programs, particularly those focusing on flexibility and core strength, are vital in building the stamina and resilience needed to handle the physical demands of professional play. Interviewee F noted, "Conditioning is a priority, especially for younger goaltenders, as it supports their long-term durability."

A significant finding is the extended timeline required for goaltenders to transition to the professional level. Interviewee C highlighted, "Goaltenders mature at a slower rate, and the transition from junior leagues to the NHL is gradual," with the average timeline estimated at five to seven years. This aligns with the unique demands of the position, which requires a long-term investment from scouts and coaches alike. As the interviewees collectively agreed, patience and sustained support are indispensable in cultivating goalies capable of meeting NHL standards.

These findings affirm the importance of a holistic, sustained approach to goalie development. Personalized plans, continuous feedback, and targeted physical and technical improvements align with the theoretical framework's emphasis on maximizing potential. Interviewee E captured this approach succinctly, stating, "Development is a dynamic process, and continuous feedback allows us to make timely adjustments." By committing to these principles, organizations can develop goaltenders who are technically proficient, physically resilient, and mentally equipped to succeed at the highest levels of competition.

## **7 Key Findings**

### **7.1 The direct scouting list**

One particular interviewee was kind enough to give out the scouting list they have worked out in the organization with variables to look for. This gave a strong base to expand on with

other interviews. Also, this is a very short and precise way to keep a look out for the overall aim of development for coaches. The list was following:

**Processing and Goalie IQ:**

The ability to lead with their eyes while moving.

Recognition of pass options and time to get into position.

Identifying the next save opportunity and making it look easy.

**Tracking and React Ability:**

Ability to make reactionary saves outside the body.

Reading the stick of the shooter to predict puck trajectory.

**Mobility:**

Quick, powerful, efficient, and precise movements.

**Athleticism:**

Multi-dimensional ability to move the body into awkward positions with control and ease.

**Rebound Control:**

Ability to hold onto pucks or direct rebounds to safe areas.

Avoiding turning bad angle shots into dangerous rebounds.

**Feistiness, Battle, and Determination:**

Second effort and "no quit" mentality.

Balancing battling with not being unnecessarily busy.

**Traffic Management:**

Ability to find the puck through bodies before a shot is released.

Calculating where the puck might deflect.

**Size:**

While not mandatory, size is an asset.

Larger goalies can cover more range and play deeper in the net, reducing travel time for second saves.

**Puck Handling:**

Efficient and smart plays with the puck.

The ability to stop rims and make effective passes without unnecessary risks.

**Intangibles:**

Work ethic, competitive drive, self-motivation, coachability, athletic commitment, leadership, passion, professional habits, and attention to detail.

**7.2 The Importance of Game Experience: The 200-Game Benchmark**

A key insight from the interview was the importance of accumulated game experience in a goaltender's development. The interviewee mentioned a "200-game rule," observing that goaltenders typically require around 200 games to reach their peak potential and determine whether they can succeed at higher levels. This benchmark is derived from tracking the careers of numerous goaltenders and noting that consistent game experience—whether in junior leagues, college, or professional minor leagues—offers invaluable learning opportunities.

**Example of Game Accumulation as Development:** For instance, the interviewee noted that young goaltenders benefit from the "repetition and real-time decision-making" that come with steady game play. In professional development, accumulating around 125 games in junior leagues and an additional 75 in professional settings helps refine technical consistency and mental resilience. This approach gives scouts and coaches a measurable threshold for evaluating a player's readiness to transition to higher competition levels, such as the NHL.

In addition to tracking game experience, one interviewee highlighted the use of a **computerized projection model**. This tool allows the organization to input individual performance data for each goaltender, comparing metrics like save percentage, goals-against average, and game count against a baseline established by historical data of successful NHL goaltenders. By analyzing this data, the organization can project the goaltender's potential trajectory, offering a quantitative perspective on development needs.

**Analytical Modeling for Progress Tracking:** In practice, this system allows coaches to input each goaltender's current statistics and view how they align with successful players at similar stages in their careers. For instance, if a goaltender is in their second post-draft year, the model could compare their performance metrics to those of NHL starters when they were at a similar stage, identifying any gaps or strengths. This predictive analysis helps the organization set clear performance targets, such as required save percentages or games played, aligning the goaltender's development with successful historical trajectories.

Although this is not directly correlated to the scouting of a young goaltender it gives a good idea what the scouts are keeping in mind when considering the path that will follow in order a successful candidate is met.

### **7.3 Practical Implications for Coaches and Scouts**

The findings of this thesis have important practical implications for scouts, coaches, and professional hockey organizations. By integrating quantitative data with experiential insights, organizations can develop a more balanced, comprehensive profile of goaltender talent. This framework enables scouts to make informed decisions about recruitment and development, while also supporting coaches in creating individualized training plans that align with each goaltender's unique needs and developmental trajectory. As one interviewee pointed out, "In my opinion, we often forget how to play the game, how to teach goalie intelligence." This study reaffirms the importance of fostering "goalie intelligence" alongside technical and physical skills, allowing goaltenders to make better in-game decisions and respond to complex play situations effectively.

The developmental pathway outlined here also offers a practical model for organizations looking to improve their goaltender development practices. By focusing on the 200-game benchmark, individualized performance targets, and flexibility in adapting training to each player's progress, this model emphasizes a long-term, personalized approach. This flexibility ensures that each goaltender can reach their potential at a suitable pace, with the right balance of game experience, technical refinement, and mental resilience training.

## 8 Conclusion

This thesis set out to establish a comprehensive framework for scouting an elite ice hockey goaltenders by qualitative insights from interviews with experienced scouts and coaches. Through this approach, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the key competencies that distinguish successful goaltenders, as well as the structured developmental pathways that support their growth into professional-level players.

The research identified four core areas crucial for goaltender success: technical skills, physical attributes, mental resilience, and a structured talent development pathway. Technical skills emerged as foundational, with an emphasis on positioning, footwork, and rebound control as critical components for shot-stopping effectiveness. As one interviewee noted, "I don't have anything specific—I just believe enhancing basics, fundamentals, and the ability to move (both down or on feet) is just as valuable as working on positioning technique." This insight reinforces the idea that while specialized techniques are important, consistent reinforcement of core skills ensures that goaltenders are prepared to handle a wide range of game scenarios.

Footwork and fluidity were highlighted as essential elements of effective movement, allowing goaltenders to maintain control and adaptability during high-speed plays. "I think that every detail needs attention. Character is huge. Technically, you can't work too much on your footwork, so that you are as fluid as possible when you move on your skates," emphasized another interviewee. By prioritizing these basics, coaches and scouts can develop goaltenders who are agile and reliable, capable of managing complex play situations with efficiency.

Physical attributes such as size, agility, and conditioning complement these technical skills. While a larger frame provides an advantage for net coverage, the findings emphasize that size alone is not sufficient; it must be paired with flexibility and stamina. Agility and lateral movement, for example, are critical in modern goaltending, enabling players to cover the net efficiently without compromising speed. "Being a good skater will never go out of style...I think both young amateur goalies and pro goalies should spend even more time improving their skating on their feet and edge work," noted another interviewee. This insight highlights the value of consistent skating and edge control training to build balance and reaction speed, crucial skills for effective positioning and recovery.

A significant finding in this study was the importance of mental resilience for long-term success, a quality that enables goaltenders to remain composed and adaptable under

pressure. One interviewee observed, “I always say about him...he doesn’t break mentally. He could be leaky, he could be inconsistent, but he never breaks mentally.” This insight underscores that while technical skills and physical attributes are crucial, it is mental resilience that often defines a goaltender’s ability to handle setbacks and recover quickly. Building resilience allows goaltenders to manage the psychological demands of high-stakes play, a critical trait for those aiming to succeed at professional levels.

The study also introduced a structured talent development pathway that professional organizations can use to cultivate goaltenders over time. This pathway includes a benchmark of 200 games, emphasizing the importance of accumulated game experience as a learning tool. One interviewee mentioned, “The only common theme I saw...is they played 200 hockey games. I live and die by that.” This benchmark highlights the value of in-game experience for honing decision-making skills and solidifying technical consistency. Alongside this benchmark, the pathway includes developmental modules focused on core skills, conditioning, situational adaptability, and resilience training, each tailored to address specific competencies at various stages of the goaltender’s growth.

Additionally, the use of data-driven projections and performance tracking tools enhances this developmental approach, allowing scouts and coaches to set precise goals and monitor progress. According to one interviewee, “We built a computer program where you can plug each goalie in...and compare your prospects to other teams’ prospects year by year.” This tool provides a quantitative framework to support coaching decisions, helping organizations track whether goaltenders are progressing in alignment with historical benchmarks for successful NHL players.

## **8.1 Contributions to the Field and Future Research**

This research makes valuable contributions to the field of sports talent development by providing a holistic framework for evaluating and developing goaltenders. The study emphasizes the importance of balancing quantifiable metrics with qualitative attributes, highlighting that a goaltender’s potential is best understood through a combination of data analysis, skill assessment, and resilience training. For future research, there is significant potential to explore resilience training techniques, innovative metrics to measure mental toughness, and comparative studies across various leagues and competitive levels to validate and expand upon these findings.

## **8.2 Final Reflections**

In conclusion, this thesis offers a structured and balanced approach to goaltender scouting and development, underscoring the importance of combining technical skills, physical attributes, mental resilience, and individualized developmental pathways. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative insights, this framework provides practical recommendations for scouts and coaches aiming to prepare goaltenders for the highest levels of competition. As one interviewee summarized, "Every detail needs attention," a reminder that excellence in goaltending is achieved through a careful balance of fundamentals, adaptability, and experience. This holistic approach not only enhances the potential for individual success but also supports the advancement of professional hockey by equipping the next generation of goaltenders to excel in the complex, high-pressure environment of the sport.

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## **Appendix 1: The Questionnaire for the Semi-Structured Interviews**

Thesis objectives:

Describe the criteria and evaluation methods employed by different teams to assess and optimize the performance of their goaltending talents.

Explore the merits and strategies utilized by teams in maximizing the potential of their goaltending prospects in the club's structure

Research questions:

1. Which key indicators and performance metrics are valued in the evaluation of goaltenders, and how do they vary across different teams? Questions 11,12,13
2. In the context of junior and amateur scouting, what knowledge and criteria should be prioritised to effectively identify and assess promising goaltending talents for future success in professional hockey? Questions 11,12,13
3. What is the typical pathway for a young goaltender from being drafted to debut in NHL and staying there? Questions 3,5,6,7,8,14,15,16
4. How does the process of scouting work in the daily life of the scout? Questions 1,2,4,8,9,10

Interview Questions:

1. Describe to me your role in the organization. What does it include? What is the breakdown between coaching the main team, working with prospect athletes and/or professional/amateur scouting? Describe me your goalie department?
2. Could you describe the process of a talent being scouted pre draft by your club? Interviews, watching games, talking to coaches etc. Some examples from the past?
3. Could you elaborate on what happens to the talent post draft in the following 2-3 months regarding your clubs actions. A path set place, looking over life setup, nutrition, moving them to a farm team etc. Some examples from the past?
4. In which time would you talk to the talent yourself and what would you discuss? When would you physically be on the ice with the prospect goalies?

5. How much are you looking to change the technical aspects of a goaltender after draft?  
Some examples?
6. How much are you looking to change the off ice setup of a goaltender after the draft?  
Some examples?
7. Could you please walk me through a talent path from being scouted to actually playing in the NHL(I will give the name of a goaltender that has done it in the given organization).  
Would you now think back to change something regarding the process?
8. Could you please walk me through a talent path from being scouted with high evaluations to not making it to the NHL(provide a name that was drafted high). Was something evaluated incorrectly?
9. Have you seen a change in evaluating goalie talent in the past decade? What could you bring out as a differential factor?
10. What has stayed in the merits over the past decade when evaluating goalie talent and why is it still relevant.
11. Do you look for passion to find new ways and take extra steps? Example gear etc. maybe silly??
12. Are there any ways for you to tell if a goalie is readying the game/shot well. Example dept control, narrow stance, technical cues.
13. What are in your opinion 3 most important technical factors of a goalie talent and why?
14. What are in your opinion 3 most important mental factors of a goalie talent and why?
15. What are in your opinion 3 most important physical off-ice factors of a goalie talent and why?
16. If you would have to bring out one factor that the franchise goalies have, a factor that distinguishes them from the rest, what would it be?
17. Is there any factors cultural hazards to consider when scouting goalies from EU versus NA?

18. When collecting data regarding the mental attributes (such as character flaws) by asking teammates and coaches of the given prospect is there any “tricks” to know if the information is correct?





