

**Have a GREAT Shift...EVERY Shift**  
**Freshness vs. Fatigue - “Postponing Fatigue”**  
by Shawn Killian – Planet Hockey, Inc.



All great sports present complex challenges, and perhaps the most formidable opponent during physical activity is self-induced fatigue. It is unfortunate that most athletes allow something within their control rob them of significant performance and enjoyment.

There is a direct relationship between fatigue and performance level on the ice. Early in a game or for the first 15-20 seconds of a shift, we feel our best, but from that point on, performance decreases. This inevitable downward spiral can be slowed as skill and fitness levels improve.

The key to maximum performance and to extending your freshness and productivity during a shift is physical and mental EFFICIENCY. Throughout your shift, your heart rate will steadily increase as will your breathing rate. As this occurs your mind begins to cloud and your legs begin to feel heavy. However, the beauty is, through discipline and hard work, your fitness level and your skating proficiency can increase, thus providing you with efficient power output throughout each shift.

As fatigue (and your heart rate) increases:

- systems breakdown, team productivity decreases
- thinking “clouds” – slow & poor decision making
- legs feel heavy and sore
- back-checking, fore-checking and shift tempo slows
- poor (lazy) passing
- knee bend decreases & the probability of injury increases (you begin to skate more erect and you put yourself in awkward positions & situations).
- shots weaken and miss their targets
- your chance of taking a “lazy” penalty increases - let emotions flare or you stop moving your feet, relying on “clutching and grabbing”.

Fatigue is inevitable and there is an inverse relationship between fatigue (heart-rate) and performance. However, the secret of top athletes is to POSTPONE fatigue by being in top physical shape and by executing each movement as efficiently as possible. Wasted power production (low power output per stride) and/or a poor “hockey-specific” conditioning level will quickly increase your heart rate and will adversely affect your overall play and team contributions.

**WHAT CAN I DO TO POSTPONE FATIGUE?**

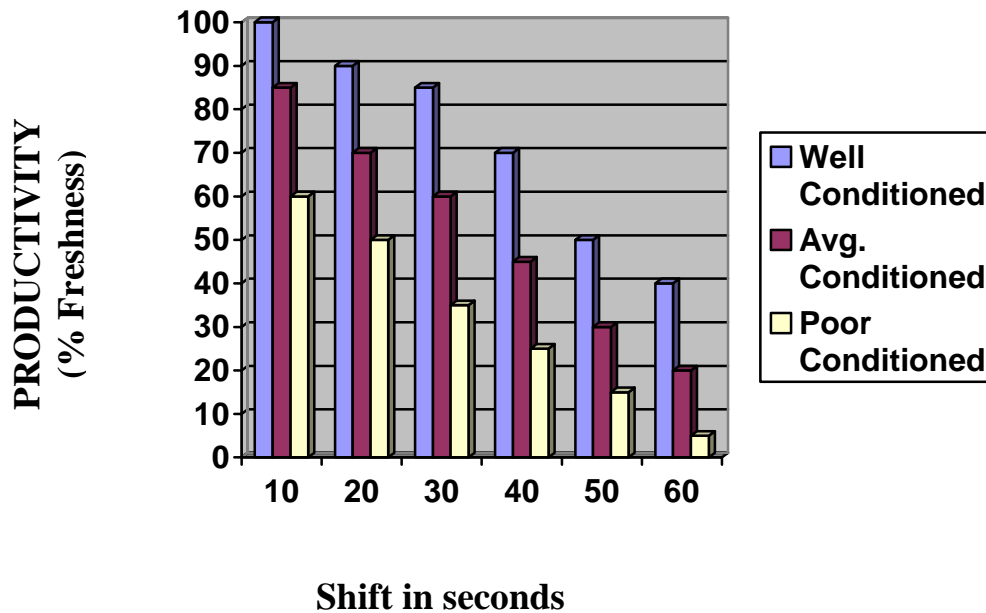
Each athlete is in control of their own personal fitness and skill levels. If you want to extend your productivity (freshness) throughout a shift, there are two things you can do:

1. Increase your basic conditioning level (endurance, stamina, strength & power)

2. Improve your technical skills (increase skating power ratio output)

Top “hockey-specific” conditioning levels and accomplished skating skills come only through many years of hard work. Practice how you want to play, with intensity and with a clear head.

In the meantime, try to take control of your heart rate and breathing through breathing techniques both on the ice and on the bench between shifts. Also, keep your head up at all times so that you can evaluate and assess each situation, making efficient decisions as to where to go and at which speed. Few players skate at 100% of their maximum capacity throughout a shift, but all great players think at 100% every shift. Lastly, incorporate intensity into every on ice practice and each off ice training session.



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This article was written by Shawn Killian, Director of Planet Hockey Skills Training. Planet Hockey teaches Skills Training Camps throughout the United States and abroad, including the Planet Hockey Ranch (resident hockey/outdoor adventure camp) in Colorado, TEAM Planet Hockey European Hockey Tours, and also produces instructional training DVDs & VIDEOS. For more information call 1-800-320-7545, Email [info@planethockey.com](mailto:info@planethockey.com), or visit: [www.planethockey.com](http://www.planethockey.com).