Moving Hips in the Corner

By Susan Ellis

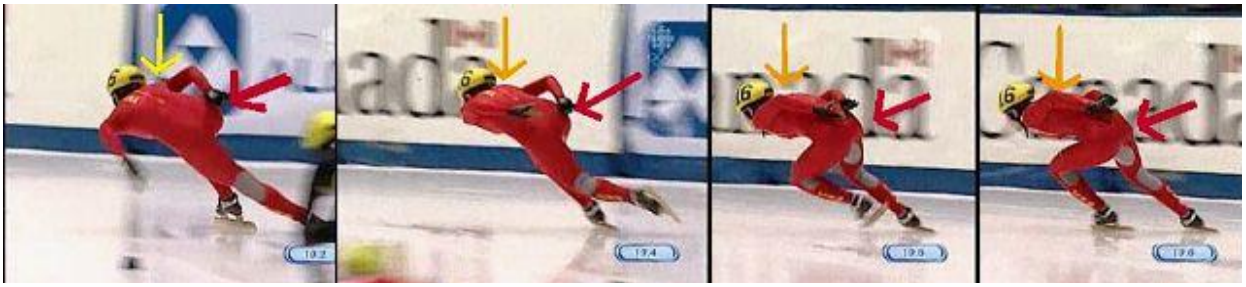
This article is the third in a 3 part series on moving your hips in to your push.

If you haven't read Moving Hips in to Push – February 2008 and Corners – Working the Right Hip on the Lay In – March 2008, you should do so before reading this article so you have a better base of understanding.

The ability to moving your hips both forward and in to the corner starts with the core muscles. This means pressing the ab muscles forward and in to be able to press the right hip in to the corner. Simply sticking your left hip in leaves the muscles on the right side of the abdomen loose and will create outward rotations of the upper body leaving you on your heels. Your ab muscles and outer hips muscles, especially on the right side must continually work to bring your right shoulder down and bring both shoulders and hips in to the corner at the same time. Some skaters make the mistake of trying to just twist the shoulders in to the turn. This leaves your right hip behind you and you will not be able to bring it forward in to the next push. It will simply swing over. And, you must also be careful not to simply lift your left shoulder just to bring your right shoulder down. This takes away the functionality of the left abdominals to help bring the rest of your body across. Your right hip will only come to a certain point and then be 'frozen' and not move across any further.

In the photo sequence above:

- The blue arrows point to Meng Wang's (500m world record) right shoulder. It stays down all the way through the right cross / left leg push.
- The red arrows point to the right hip moving across and forward as she pushes through the left.
- The yellow arrows indicate the drive of the right knee. As she crosses, she drives the knee toward her opposite shoulder. The higher the knee drive and the more it comes across, the longer you can delay the set down of the right, and thus, the longer the ride on the left. It means you can keep the pressure on the blade longer. On landing the right skate she continues to drive her right knee and hip forward to load the next push. Look at where her hip and knee are in the 3rd photo and see how far she drives them forward in the 4th photo. This is because she is continually using her hip and abdominal muscles to push forward.



In the above exit sequence Wang again uses her abdominal muscles to press her right shoulder down and bring her right hip forward as she drives her left knee forward and up to her chest. It should almost feel like your right lower belly is initially brushing across the top of your right thigh as you move your whole upper body and hip across and in to the turn. Again, look at the forward projection (body moving ahead of skate) Wang gets as she drives her hips forward.

By continually pressing through the abs, keeping the right shoulder down, and pressing her hips forward and in, Wang is continually building the pressure she puts in to the ice, right from set down of blade to finish of push. There should never be a time where your hips are not moving because once they stop, you stop building pressure.

Although you are contracting the ab muscles the rest of the upper body still needs to stay relaxed. Tension through the neck, back, chest and shoulders will prevent you from getting full extension through your hips and prevent your upper body from moving across with your hips.

It's especially difficult to get younger kids to grasp the concept of moving hips. One of the best ways to have them feel it is off ice, using Techni-cords, belts, or even doing it hand held. Then have them feel the same thing on ice holding their hand (hold tight, they'll generate a ton of pressure when they nail it!).

In summary, the keys are:
1. Keep shoulders and chest down, especially on right side, using abdominal muscles.
2. Hips continually move forward and in to corner, pressing through hips and abdominals.
3. Knee drive to chest is critical to continuing hip drive, extension and avoiding early set down.

AND, if you haven't been working on strengthening those abs you better get to it over the summer. You're gonna need them!