

# Learning from Losing - Part II



Richie G.  
January 2011

After playing hockey for close to 20 seasons, its hard for me to get excited.

But after getting killed our first two games in Ocean City, and then switching everything around and only losing 2-1, I couldn't wait to play with the Elves again.

I even drew a sketch

(<http://www.btsh.org/bruise/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/ElvesDefenseInitiative.jpg>) and put it up on the league's website. I excitedly told the rest of the team my plan for the New Elves Defensive Initiative (NEDI) and their reaction was 50/50. Some liked it, some weren't sure, and others absolutely hated it. Though hate may not be strong enough a word to describe their true feelings.

But I didn't care, I knew I was onto something and I was going to implement my plan. Unfortunately, the first game we played the defending champs. Greeaaatttt. But sure enough, everything ran smoothly, and we were up 3-0! But then my goalie gave up another long goal, and then we had a defensive lapse and it was 3-2. Normally I don't panic, but I knew that we had to win this game if we were going to win the championship. My team needed to see that this plan worked and beating the champs would be an amazing start.

Thankfully, our goalie played great the rest of the way and we hung on for dear life and ended up winning 3-2. I was rarely so happy after a regular season game. One of the naysayers on my team said, "Good game to me." I told her,

"Yeah it was." Then one of my teammates, I will call him Gil said to me, "I'm glad we won, but we can't win the championship with this system." I told him probably not, but I know we can't win it without it.

The next game would not get easier. We played the team in first place who had only lost one game all year. They had clinched first place for the 2<sup>nd</sup> consecutive season. Greeaaatttt!!! But if we were to win the championship, we would have to beat the best so might as well see what we got.

It turned out to be a great game. They outplayed us, but our struggling goalie Shaun played great, and we ended up winning 2-1. Shaun made a huge save as time expired to seal the victory. After the game, I was really pumped. Man this system was working! However one of our players, I shall call him Gillie, said to me, "We got thoroughly dominated. If it wasn't for Shaun we would have got killed. I can't argue with the results, but we aren't going anywhere with this system."

However the results changed, and changed drastically the next game. It was the last game of the regular season, and again we played the defending champions (Sky Fighters) and they absolutely destroyed us. We lost 6-1, and there was some talk about changing the system during the game to try and generate more offense. I would have thought about it, but I felt changing things up now would send a horrible message to the team, so I kept the system despite knowing it wasn't working this day.

The next week we had a fun scrimmage and one of our most sensible players Jerome said, "I guess we're done with the NEDI." Man...even Jerome didn't believe in this strategy. The playoffs was about to start and we needed to come together as a team.

The first round we played the Tuques. We were the 8<sup>th</sup> seed, they were the 9<sup>th</sup>. I felt we were better, but they were on a 7-game winning streak. I was nervous but it was a confident nervousness. The game couldn't have started better for me, as I scored my first goal of the season on my first shift. Jerome scored on the same shift and we were underway. The first half ended and we were up 6-1. I felt great. We had scored a ton of goals, only gave up 1, and clearly the NEDI worked.

Until the 2<sup>nd</sup> half. The 2<sup>nd</sup> half was all in our zone, and the Tuques were all over us. What was a laugher turned into a nailbiter as they made it 6-4. With a minute left they scored to make it 6-5, but luckily the ref took the goal away for a high stick. We ended up scoring an empty netter to win 7-4. I was happy we won, but giving up 4 goals under our new system wasn't good. In order for us to win the championship, we would have to win 3 more games. And play a lot better. The real work was just getting started.