

Underwater Hockey is an interesting and unique game on several levels. While everyone brings their distinctive personality to their play, there are two basic types of players. You can play with strength or you can play with finesse. There are advantages and disadvantages to each, and each approach fits a particular body size and type. When you mix the different types of playing styles together, you can get a very interesting game.

STRENGTH PLAYERS

Strength in underwater hockey is exactly what it sounds like – pure physical power. Physically, the strong player is generally larger, heavier and more muscular than other players. This size renders them almost unstoppable when they are making a forward charge. With strength a player can easily force a puck away from another player, and they can move through opponents, effectively taking them out of the play. It can be difficult to stop a strong player, especially if they can build up forward momentum.

There are disadvantages for strength players, though. For example, a large framed, muscular body is difficult to get moving, and a lot of energy is used by the strength player to start a fast forward progression. Once moving forward, a large, muscular body is difficult to turn. So if a strength player runs into a situation where he can no longer continue charging forward, a turn or curl can be difficult and even awkward, opening up the possibility to lose momentum at best and lose the puck at worst.

Another disadvantage is the more muscular a person, the more oxygen they will need when expending energy, because they have to feed all that muscle. So generally speaking, strength players will have a shorter down time and consequently, may not be able to sustain as long of a drive as a less muscular person.

FINESSE PLAYERS

Generally speaking, finesse players are smaller and slimmer than their strength counterparts. Finesse players are fast – they have the uncanny talent to steal the puck off an opponent's stick quickly, they turn quickly, they handle the puck quickly, and while they might not have the ability to power through opponents, they can accelerate quickly, leaving the strength players behind. Once conditioned, the finesse players not only have good breath holding abilities, but recover quickly too. A top finesse player is the greyhound of underwater hockey.

A disadvantage of a finesse player is that stronger players can easily power through them.

DOES SIZE REALLY MATTER?

While finesse players are generally slimmer than strength players, being muscular does not negate the ability for one to be a finesse player. Both large and small players have the ability to learn superb puck handling skills. For example, while a small player will never be able to physically out power a large player, they can learn skills to out maneuver them. Larger players can learn fast puck handling skills to get them out of a jam if they don't have an initial burst of speed.

The more skillful the player, the less time spent battling an opponent to maintain possession of the puck, and the less chance of being assailed by multiple players, both of which require **a lot** of energy. Since this is a breath holding game, to be most effective one must conserve energy for making plays, not engaging in battles. The bottom line is regardless of playing style, the smart player will learn to play to their strengths but develop their weaknesses along the way. The equalizing properties of playing in water allow this to be more evident than in any other sport.