

Check Your Butt!

By Susan Ellis

Recently, while conducting a clinic in Columbus OH, we were challenged with skaters coming to their toes while doing on-ice drills. Coming to the toes releases the pressure in to the ice almost instantly and does not allow you to fully access and use those wonderful butt muscles for a powerful push. How many skaters and coaches are frustrated by the release of pressure before the end of the push and not having a simple way to make corrections?

We always try to feel what the skaters feel to see how we can best make corrections. In doing this I made what I think is a truly enlightening discovery! We termed it the **Elaine Principle!** It's so simple, but once understood it can quickly allow anyone to do a self-analysis and make corrections immediately. I think the best way to understand is to experience it for yourself.

- Put yourself in a basic skating position. Now bring your weight forward all the way to your toes. You will probably need to press your shoulders forward and down to accomplish this.
- Repeat and notice the direction and position of the hips, as the weight is moving forward.
- This time, put yourself in a basic skating position and focus on tucking your butt or keeping your hips under you. In the correct position you will notice that your weight is on the back part of the balls of your feet. Now try and bring your weight forward while ensuring that your butt stays tucked the whole time. (Do not lift your heels to bring the weight forward.)
- Repeat.

I think you will notice a couple of key things:

- As you tuck your butt, your ankle angle closes and your knees move in front of your toes.
- As you attempt to bring the weight forward your body acts like an accordion, with the ankle, knee and chest angles actually closing.
- As the angles close you feel an increase in pressure under the balls of your feet.
- If the weight moves past the balls of your feet you will have felt your butt release from under you.
- Repeat the first example, moving the weight forward to your toes without keeping your butt tucked. You will notice your ankle and knee angles actually open and your chest angle closes as the weight moves forward. (release of pressure)
- Repeat – ensuring your butt stays tucked.

Now that's a beautiful thing.

Thanks Elaine for allowing us a more clear understanding of the value of our butts!

So if you come to your toes, or release the pressure before the end of the push, the first thing to do is: Check Your Butt!!