

routine

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by [pigeonriot](#)

Summary

Shane had never really understood what made taping his hockey stick in a specific way so different from folding his pants a specific way. Why was the one something every hockey player had their own way about, but the other warranted teasing every time it was noticed.

Parts of Shane's pre-game routine.

Notes

i feel like I need to say that even tho i researched for this (or rather that the rabbit hole of how hockey players tape their sticks led me to writing this) ((my youtube history is fulllllll of hockey stick taping videos)) I am by *no means* an expert on anything hockey so I apologize if there are any inaccuracies

See the end of the work for [more notes](#)

Before every game, the first thing Shane did when he arrived in the locker rooms, was the tape-job on his hockey stick.

Just like usual, he was the first of his team to arrive. He enjoyed having a few quiet moments to himself, to not have to engage in any pleasantries, at least to kick off the part of his routine that was at the arena. Especially with taping, he liked to take his time, make sure that everything sat as it should, and not even a quarter inch up or down would throw off his game.

He steadied the brand-new stick between his legs, right side up, and popped the plug out of the handle, discarding it towards the bin.

He unrolled a bit of his white tape and cut an inch off to have a fresh start, without any tape strands. Then, he took care lining it up perfectly parallel to the butt end of the stick, starting at a corner at the back of the stick. He went around once until the beginning of the tape was covered again before adjusting his angle slightly to gradually go downwards the stick. As he went down, he pulled the tape tight to prevent wrinkles and kept it evenly spaced, just barely overlapping so that there were no gaps between the rows, but that it was still mostly an even surface. Enough grip for the stick to not slip out of his hands, but no irregularities that would irritate him.

He was definitely a lot more minimal when it came to tape compared to most players in the NHL. Other than most, Shane did not tape a knob on his grip at all. He had tried out different taping techniques back when he was a teenager but always preferred to keep his stick as light as possible, to have it as easily moveable in his hands as possible. A knob would only throw him off instead of keeping the stick secure. He had experimented with candy cane wrappings, but hadn't liked how it made the tape bunch up easier when stickhandling. The way he did his grip now was still the same way he had it when he was 17 and Shane didn't anticipate ever changing it up.

Shane made a face when, already a few inches down, he accidentally shifted the tape angle too much. Trying to fix it only caused a wrinkle. He peeled all the tape off again, threw it away, and started anew, repeating his actions. This time, he kept an even angle and tension, going down the shaft about eight inches before adjusting the angle again to horizontal, going around the stick once more to finish it off at around nine inches.

Shane cut the tape off with his scissors and stuck the end on so that he had a clean, straight edge. He used his palms to go over the tape again, making sure everything was sticking properly.

He got out his permanent marker, for the one flourish he allowed himself—at the base of his grip, he took care writing 'Yuna' on the tape. He knew he owed both his parents where he was in his life. His father had a lot of love for hockey, considering he'd played it since being a teenager, and well into his college years. But between the two of them, it was Shane's mother, most of all, who took the mantle of being hockey obsessed. Overall, Shane was certain he'd inherited his affinity for hockey more from his mother's than his father's side. Sure, his father was always supportive too, but Yuna Hollander always seemed to be at least five steps ahead of him. She had been responsible for getting Shane his first pair of skates

and encouraging him always, involving herself in every step of his hockey career—staying up nights to analyze old games, pouring over strategies with Shane, organizing brand deals, making spread sheets about league statistics. When Shane was unsure about something hockey-related, she already had multiple options and scenarios prepared for every possible decision. She loved pushing Shane and, when it came to hockey, Shane loved being pushed. He was surrounded with hockey players most of his time, but he felt like the only person in the world who loved hockey the same way he did was Yuna Hollander.

The name on the hockey stick was just Shane's small way of honouring her and to remind himself who he was here for to try to make proud. He liked to think he was managing quite well on that front.

Drapeau arrived, knocking against the top of the locker room door frame three times before entering, like he did before every game. They acknowledged each other with a nod, but then both minded their own business.

Shane turned his stick over so he could get started on the blade, making its backside face him. He played with a short blade, sacrificing some velocity for the better puck control, trusting his shot power to make up for it.

The locker room got rowdier the more people arrived. Shane didn't really participate in the conversations unless people talked to him directly. He just put his headphones on, his game playlist already selected.

Classical music drowned out his teammates talking about whatever the fans were saying online or doing outside the stadium right now. Especially with a game against Boston like today, Shane didn't need that kind of chatter.

For the blade, Shane used black tape and started about midway between heel and toe. He started at the backside of the blade, attaching the tape close to the bottom and then went around the blade with the tape pulled tight, inching towards the toe slowly, always moving half the tape width forward with each turn.

The hockey community was pretty much split on whether white or black tape would boost playing.

White could improve how visible the puck was to the player, as well as make the stick blend in with the ice more. But black could make it more difficult to differentiate stick from puck, maybe even confusing goalies where exactly the puck was. Of course you could also use tape in other colors, but that was much rarer. Small things like that mattered in a game as fast as ice hockey, and players had reached an impasse in that discussion, so it was more of a agree-to-disagree topic by now. Shane, for one, had chosen black tape early on in his career and it had never steered him wrong.

When Shane reached the part where the toe started curving inwards, he extended the tape away from the blade and created a flap, sealing it by pinching the tape with his fingers before going over the toe again and doing the same thing on the other side too. Another turn around the blade and he had covered the entire toe, extra tape around it making sure nothing of the toe remained exposed. He ripped off the tape from the roll and made sure the tape was

completely pinched together at the edge. Then, with his scissors, he took care cutting away the overhanging tape as close to the blade as possible.

Making sure everything was sealed off, he pressed his thumb along the edge, absentmindedly scanning the locker room. Each one of the Voyageurs was, in one way or another, occupied with getting ready for the game.

Miitka was on the ground, doing the stretches he preferred doing even before actual warm-up started. Andropov was watching something on his phone, probably a broadcast about the game. Comeau was sitting on the floor, head turned to the ceiling, eyes closed and meditating. Hayden, who was almost in full gear already and inspecting his gloves, was comfortably chirping back and forth with J.J., who sat in the cubby next to Shane. J.J. was occupied with his tape-job too; he was done with the blade and now doing his usual full-stick candy cane grip that went all the way down to the heel, the tape lines getting further and further apart the more down he went.

Shane had never really understood what made taping his hockey stick in a specific way so different from folding his pants a specific way. Why was the one something every hockey player had their own way about, but the other warranted teasing every time it was noticed. He liked to have things a certain way in all aspects of his life, maintaining a handle on the things he could control. The abundance of ‘strange’ habits each hockey player established for themselves made *sense* to Shane.

He guessed he could call himself lucky that, at least when hockey was concerned, he wasn’t the only one with *quirks*, for once.

Even Rozanov—who was an anomaly when it came to hockey player behaviour, sticking out like a sore thumb with his usual brash, never humble, approach and his lack of (as far as Shane had gathered) any pre-game routine—taped his hockey sticks the same every time.

Inverse to Shane, he used white tape for his blade and black for the grip. Just like Shane, he only taped the half of the blade, but he left the toe uncovered. He had a slightly shorter grip than Shane did, and added a thin knob at the top.

(That was not a weird thing to be able to recall, Shane maintained for himself. Studying his opponents was important, and tape was one of the easiest things to take note of.)

They had never talked about stick taping before, but Shane imagined Rozanov calling his technique boring. (Well, if they even got to that part—he would probably dismiss the whole conversation topic as boring before that.)

Shane grabbed his wax stick next, applying it to the bottom of the blade first, going back and forth with the wax to create a generous coat. Then, he went over the rest of the tape backwards from toe to heel, slowly and methodically so that everything was covered.

He didn’t like how the wax felt on his skin, so to make sure the coat was even, he took a small microfibre cloth and smoothed out any bumps.

Contend with his work, Shane twirled the stick around a few times before putting it to the side, focusing on getting dressed next.

He was glad the team's PR manager called him in for a pre-game press interview before he had put on any of his gear, as that would've pulled him out of the zone. This way, he could shake any of the questions levelled against him off his body and keep them away from his focus.

Today, the questions from NBC were standard—ones he had expected to be asked for a game against the Boston Bears and he recited his pre-planned answers, getting back to the locker room in no time. As much as dealing with the press was a chore, if it worked out as Shane had anticipated it to, sometimes—like today—it even helped secure his composure.

The way he put on his gear had less of a fixed order than his stick taping, but he worked from bottom to top, the other way around compared to his stick. It was just practical like that. The shin guards and hockey pants were easier to put on without a neckguard or shoulder and elbow pads hindering his mobility. By the time he pulled on his jersey and helmet, almost all of his teammates were fully dressed too.

Shane liked to keep his locker room speeches short. Motivating the team was the only part of the captain duties that did not come easy to him. He was good at talking to the officials and keeping the peace on the ice, at giving interviews, at commanding his team on the ice if it was demanded of him. Pep talks—not so much. But his team knew that and had his back—if they needed more rallying, the alternate captains readily took over, or the words of the coaches were enough.

Shane still liked to say a few words before warm-ups and then left the rest right before the game up to Theriault and the other coaches. Today, like for every game, his teammates signed off his speech by rapping their gloves against their cubbies.

Ready to head to the ice, Hayden turned to him with a reassuring smile. “We have this in the bag, buddy.”

Shane nodded, returning the smile before tilting his head to the side, their helmets smacking together in the middle before Hayden made to leave.

As his teammates walked past him, most of them followed Hayden's example, knocking their helmets together with Shane's, some patting him on the shoulder.

When he was the last one left, Shane indulged in his last habit before heading to the ice. This one, unlike the others, had involuntarily crept up on him over the past few years—He checked his phone.

And as he had expected, an all too familiar contact was at the top of his chats, with one new, unread message waiting.

Lily: Winner gets first blowjob tonight ;)

Shane could not stop the grin from forming on his lips. Without responding, he put his phone back into the cubby, and followed his team out of the locker room, itching for a win.

End Notes

other people write smut i write paragraphs on paragraphs about tape

besides going through all the hockey scenes in the show frame by frame taking screencaps of Shane's (and Ilya's) hockey stick, here are some of the references/research sources I used:

[TESTING THE NHL'S WEIRDEST TAPE JOBS?!](#)

[How To Tape A Hockey Stick](#)

[Top Hockey Tape Tips with Lowry Sports](#)

[The most UNIQUE tape jobs in the PWWL](#)

[The Proper Way to Tape a Hockey Stick](#)

anyways, please tell me what you think in the comments! :))

find me on [tumblr](#) <3

check out part two to this if you want to see what Shane and Ilya did after that game 🙏

edit: hudson's character decision to have shane write 'yuna' on his hockey stick??? had to edit this fic to include that detail because i sure had not caught that myself while pausing the hockey scenes dfdh i noticed there was something written on it in some shots but wasnt able to make it out gfhfjd

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