

# Hockeyology



**"The Ultimate Guide  
to Fun & Success  
for Minor Hockey"**

nutrition • referees • agents • tactics • equipment  
injury • parents • players • coaching • off-ice • c  
managing • fundraising • skills • fitness • scouting •  
motivation • rules • management • fans • recovery  
volunteers • practices • mental preparation • teams  
shooting • skating • passing • associations

Part of the  
proceeds  
from each book  
go to support  
Minor Hockey  
Associations and  
Teams.

**Kevin Vincent Huhn**

# --- **HOCKEY-LOGY** ---

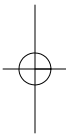
## **“THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO FUN & SUCCESS FOR MINOR HOCKEY”**

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**KEVIN V. HUHNS**

Fire 'n Idea Inc.  
Markham, Ontario





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## HELP US KEEP THIS GUIDE UP TO DATE

Every effort has been made by the author and editors to make this guide as accurate and useful as possible. However, many things can change, especially resources such as Web site addresses.

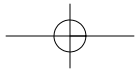
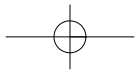
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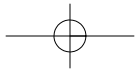
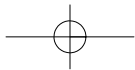
To all those who helped me in hockey, I am so grateful for the opportunities you gave me.

To you the reader, I appreciate your interest in *Hockey-ology*.

Divinely yours,



Kevin V. Huhn



## INTRODUCTION

Years ago, the NHL and Hockey Canada realized that there was a need to put more focus on minor hockey, so they both took independent action toward developing the grassroots of hockey. Their purpose was to make changes to the game by making it better and more fun for everyone involved. National campaigns were created to provide cost relief and support to communities and teams, as well as to refine training programs. A conference called Open Ice Summit was held in August 1999 with the purpose of examining the state of hockey in Canada. The participants came up with eleven recommendations, which included the creation of a mentorship program for coaches called The National Coach Mentorship Program (NCMP), developed by Hockey Canada.

The NCMP was designed with the concept of *training the trainer*. It allowed a coach to become the coach's coach. Although I had been coaching for quite some time and thoroughly enjoyed it, I felt that I was not giving enough back to the game. When I heard about the mentorship program for coaches, I thought, "Here is an opportunity to help others and give back." So with that in mind, I signed up for the training.

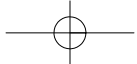
During a particular module of the NCMP course, the instructor explained that teaching players was more about people than skills. "I don't give a crap about the X's and O's. You can teach a monkey to do the X's and O's."

His point was that coaches needed to get a message across to their team clearly and with impact. I heard that and WHAM! It hit me. The picture was clear in my mind. Making the game better was not about changing the game or promoting it in a different way. It was about helping people to become better people. By bettering the people, the game would get better.

So I asked myself, "How can I better the game?" The answer was simple. I needed to share the wealth of knowledge that I had been given over the years. But how?

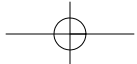
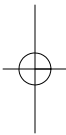
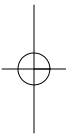
I started doing extensive research on various hockey topics. I looked for books, magazines, videos, Web sites, training programs and courses. Although I found specific information on some roles in minor hockey, I discovered that there were no resources that covered minor hockey as a whole.





So I decided to write a book that would address all the roles in minor hockey from different perspectives and at a high level. This book would be the starting point and a reference guide to help people who are involved in various minor hockey roles.

The game of hockey is all about people. My mission in this book is to better the game by bettering the people.





## CHAPTER 1

# WHAT INFLUENCES FUN AND SUCCESS?

“Influence is like a savings account. The less you use it, the more you’ve got.”

*Anonymous*

Flashing blades. Swinging sticks. Flying pucks. All of these elements are part of the action involved in the exciting game of hockey. This game involves toughness and finesse at the same time. It displays a collage of emotions, power and strategies. Players become involved in hockey for a variety of reasons, but the number one reason is fun. Whether you are on or off the ice when the puck drops, it better be fun or you will not be around the game for long.

Players skate, shoot, pass and stickhandle the puck through a maze of other players to get an opportunity at glory—scoring that winning goal. From a young age, players dream of being stars in the elite levels of hockey, such as the National Hockey League (NHL) or the Olympics. Coaches teach and set tactics that help those players to achieve their dreams. Parents watch in anticipation of their children scoring the winning goal or making the save of the game. Fans look for their heroes to weave their magic so that they can feel the exhilaration of the game.

But there is more. More? Yes, much more.

What about safety? What about rules? What about being recruited from minor hockey to junior or college and university hockey? How do all of these aspects contribute to making the game fun for players? Hockey has its ups and downs. In a game, there will be situations that you will have mastered and there will be others in which you will need guidance. How you define fun will be up to you. This chapter describes what influences the fun and success in minor hockey.

## THE PEOPLE

Although your hockey experience is your own, there are influencers that can affect your involvement. Most of these influencers are other people, such as another player or a coach. An influencer may also include someone who holds an administrative position in minor hockey, such as a league official, trainer, team administrator or recruiter.

### COACHES

One of the strongest influencers is the coach. A teacher shares his knowledge and makes us think. A leader gives sound advice and makes us feel important. A motivator inspires us to take action on what we deem important. Add up all these roles and you have a coach. A quality coach can teach, lead and motivate a group of individuals on a team to be the best that they can be. This one role has direct input into a player's skill development, involvement and growth.

### OFFICIALS

Another role is the official. An arbitrator listens to opposing sides in a situation with no bias. A police officer enforces the law of a governing body. A judge makes decisions based on the evidence presented to him. Add up all these roles and you have a referee. A quality referee enforces the rules of the game so that the players stay safe and enjoy fair play.

### TRAINERS

Injuries can happen at a moment's notice. The trainer is required to assess the situation and provide guidance for the player to get proper medical treatment. During a game, the trainer determines if a player can continue to play or not. Their first consideration is always the well being of the injured individual.

### RECRUITERS

Agents, scouts and general managers influence the growth and advancement of hockey. Their primary roles include watching, recruiting and selecting players for their teams. They evaluate the talent of players during one season and guide them to make certain choices of where to play for the

next season. Although agents are usually on the opposite side of the table from general managers, they both influence the development of players and the game.

## **THE SUBTLE INFLUENCERS**

Players, coaches, officials and teams are all influenced by the efforts of the league's administration and equipment manufacturers. League administrators influence a team's members and the officials through the enforcement of rules and by-laws. They also maintain public relations with the community, the media and the governing bodies of minor hockey.

Equipment manufacturers are also subtle influencers of the game. They position their products to players, parents, coaches and officials with advertising and promotions. They fabricate their line of products based on safety standards. They design the look and feel of the products to attract buyers at all levels. They toe the line between ensuring that the game of hockey is safe for all while making a profit for themselves and their shareholders.

## **PARENTS**

Parents are a major influence on their children when it comes to minor hockey. Their impact can be negative or positive, depending on their actions and comments. In the winter of 2002, Hockey Canada came out with a series of advertisements related to parenting and minor hockey. One of the ads showed a father on a golf course green as he prepared to make his putt. The son was watching from the fringe of the putting green. The father was in his stance, ready to putt when he heard his son say, "C'mon dad, now don't screw this up. This is for all the marbles." This particular commercial was intended to show how parents negatively influence their children in hockey.

Although I was impressed with the message, I was also disappointed that they showed only one half of the story. The positive involvement and support of parents is what makes minor hockey an enjoyable environment for their children and others involved. Getting up for early practices, volunteering their time to help the team, taking time off work for tournaments or fundraising—it is the parents' sacrifice of their time that allows most children to experience hockey to its fullest. Parents are a tremendous influence on

minor hockey because they bring a lot of knowledge and emotion to the game. They bring more than an objective point of view. They bring their responsibility to guide their child.

## PLAYERS

It may seem odd but the biggest influencers of hockey players are other hockey players. Whether players are on the same team or on opposing teams, they can be an influence on each other. It could be through comments voiced, physical size and/or skill level.

Consider the player who is smaller physically than his teammate or opponent. He may be intimidated and not rise to the challenge or be driven to prove that size does not make a difference. How he chooses to see the situation is what will influence his behavior.

## THE HOCKEY YEAR

Hockey is like a business. Although it is ongoing from year to year, it has a beginning and an end. This layout is another influencer in minor hockey. In business, the timeline is called a fiscal year; in hockey, it is called a season. For most minor hockey teams, the season begins at the end of August and ends around April.

Within this timeline, the season is divided into segments. These segments are called preparatory, competitive and transition segments. For the coach, knowing about the breakdown of each segment allows him to plan accordingly. For the parent, each segment will require attention and support for his or her child in a different manner. For the player, these segments will demand various levels of intensity in order to achieve the proper results.

The competitive segment consists of a series of competitions called games, including playoffs. The points accumulated through wins, losses and ties count toward the standings. From a fan's point of view, this is the highlight of a hockey season. In reality, the season has two other parts to it that are equally as important. They are preparatory and transition segments.

Preparatory refers to the portion that occurs before the start of the season. As the name implies, the preparatory segment allows both the players and

coaches to prepare for the upcoming season. On- and off-ice training camps, as well as exhibition games, are held during this time for the purpose of player selection, coaching groundwork and administrative tasks. No points are accrued for games played during this segment. The length of this segment can vary from team to team.

Transition refers to the post-season. Everyone experiences this downtime after the last game is played. The major point I want to stress here is to take a break. This is a great time for players to play other sports. Everyone needs some time off for rest and relaxation. The timeframe of each segment depends on how teams do during their season. In every season, there is a cycle and it requires you to participate in different ways.

Dividing the hockey year into three segments allows coaches and managers to properly plan for a fun and successful season.

## **TYPES OF GAMES**

Hockey games played during a season have varying levels of importance. The significance of a game depends on where you are in the competitive segment of a season and your role. The types of games played are exhibition, league and playoff.

Exhibition games are set up at the beginning of a season, with the purpose of preparation and evaluation. These games are set up as one-off games and in tournament style. Tournaments are a series of three or four games that are followed by a playoff to determine the tournament champion. For coaches and players, these games may be used as team building events or as a trip away. Tournaments are not limited to the beginning of a season. They can also be held during the middle or at the end of a season.

The games played once the season is underway are called league games. They are played to help the development of players, coaches and officials. Teams play these games to determine the best team based on a win-loss record and earn points accordingly. A point system prioritizes the teams by most points earned and then posts the results in standings. Whether or not you advance to the playoffs depends on the league rule of how many teams are accepted to advance.

The last sets of games are the most exciting. They are called the playoffs. These games usually cause the highest emotions and require the best play because teams are vying to capture the title of champions by beating their opponents in the elimination rounds. Coaches and officials are tested because the teams are excited, the fans are wound up and the natural reaction is to be caught up in this excitement. The tendency is to react to the situation instead of remaining calm. By thinking clearly, players can be more effective. They need to focus on what they can influence, such as their personal performance, not on what they cannot. If you are a fan, an administrator or a parent, enjoy it. This is where you'll see the energy intensify and the players' level of play peak.

## PRACTICES

Fun is a must in practices. Player participation increases, they feel engaged and want to make it real. They want to rehearse as if it were a game. I have run many practices and from time to time I would find myself trying to get a point across but the players would not be responding. They would look at me and ask, "Can we just scrimmage?" This would usually add to my frustration and I would respond with a comment like, "You just don't get it." The reality was that I did not get it. Practices can definitely influence the fun in hockey.

Regardless of the age group, players want practice to be fun. That is not to say that you cannot make players work hard. Anytime there is a game or challenge of some kind added to a practice, the level of intensity increases and the level of interest heightens. You will see the practice come to life.

Player improvement depends on practice. Tiger Woods practices 1000 shots before one shot is taken in a tournament. As a coach in minor hockey, you must consider the benefit of repetition for young players. That does not mean that you have to repeat the same drill for two hours; try to incorporate fun and variety for that same skill. A practice is the best place to try new ideas and have fun doing it. For example, you could do a series of five exercises that teach the same skill and keep the players' interest level high. If you are a parent, make sure that you encourage the value of practicing. Remember: "Repetition is the mother of skill."

## THE STRUCTURE OF HOCKEY

There are two separate governing bodies that influence and oversee the structure and administration of minor hockey within Canada and the U.S.: Hockey Canada and USA Hockey. These bodies are divided into regions or branches. These appointed regions or branches assign territories where leagues and associations govern where teams can play. In general, where you live will determine where you play.

The governing bodies in Canada and the U.S. set rules and responsibilities for the leagues. These leagues will take the branch's rules and modify them to meet the specific needs in their area. Specific rules and their application will be discussed in detail in a later chapter. Leagues are in charge of officials' schedules for games, training and updates. Leagues are responsible for teams' administration, such as getting appropriate documents processed, membership guidelines and the maintenance of statistics for their team members in all age groups. Leagues provide training in association with Hockey Canada for the betterment of the game's coaching and training roles. Financially, leagues survive with dues paid by teams and sponsorship support in order to maintain an office, staff and resources.

In the 2002–2003 season, there were 13 branches across Canada that had 489,036 players from the ages of five to seventeen registered in minor hockey. This does not include coaches and volunteers. An amazing 4.5 million Canadians were involved in hockey as coaches, players, officials, administrators or direct volunteers (this does not include spectators, parents and occasional volunteers).<sup>1</sup> In the United States, there were 600,000 players, coaches, officials and volunteers registered in minor hockey.

Teams are members of leagues and are based in the heart of your regional community. The structure of these teams will vary in how they are managed. Some teams are community-owned, some teams have private ownership and others belong to the high schools.

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<sup>1</sup>Source: *Hockey Canada & USA Hockey Inc. 2003*



## COMMUNITY-BASED TEAMS

First, let's look at community-based minor hockey. This is where the town or city assigns a board of directors and allocates funds to make sure that hockey is available to the community. Here you will find that there are teams for each age group (from ages five to seventeen). Each age group has a name as shown in the table below.

<i>NAME OF GROUP</i>	<i>AGE GROUP</i>
<i>Tyke/Mite</i>	<i>5 to 6</i>
<i>Novice/Mite</i>	<i>7 to 8</i>
<i>Atom/Squirt</i>	<i>9 to 10</i>
<i>Pee Wee</i>	<i>11 to 12</i>
<i>Bantam</i>	<i>13 to 14</i>
<i>Midget</i>	<i>15 to 17</i>

At each age group, there are various skill levels called calibers. These calibers are categorized as follows: AAA, AA, BB, CC, A, B, C, Select, Rep, House league. The general rule of thumb is that these calibers are based on ability. For example, the most skilled Pee Wee players would play for a Pee Wee AAA team, while the lower skilled players would play Rep or house league hockey. In Canada, no player is forced to play at the most elite levels. It is your choice to try out for a AAA team, provided that you are invited. Not all towns or cities have been awarded all calibers. You will have to contact your association or branch office for specific details.

## PRIVATELY OWNED ORGANIZATIONS

Next are privately owned organizations. They use the same principles as community hockey; however, their focus is usually on the elite levels such as AAA and AA. In most cases, there is one owner who funds the team personally.

## HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY

The last type of hockey team is somewhat different and does not have any ownership or community involvement. It does not work with the community hockey rules but rather with the Board of Education. This type is called

high school hockey. Most high schools will have two teams for the students to play on. One team will have students from grade seven and eight and the second team will have students from grades nine and up. The grade nine plus team is usually called the varsity team. Obviously, only those students attending a particular high school can play on either of the teams. All three types of organizations are run quite differently and have a different message in their mission statements. For example, a community-based organization is focused on making sure that the players have fun while developing. A private ownership organization is focused on wanting the players to have fun while having a quality product on the ice that is either profitable or financially stable. Most high schools run a hockey team as an extracurricular activity and focus on providing a great medium for students to stay in school and work hard.

## **PAYING FOR MINOR HOCKEY**

Financial budgets can influence the administrative side of minor hockey and are set on every team every season. The costs are broken down and fees are allocated to each player's family. Since I first stated playing minor hockey, the costs to play have increased at an enormous rate. As a parent, when your child decides to play on a team, I recommend that you ask to see the team's budget. Hopefully, it is not a closed book affair since you will be the one paying for it. As hockey becomes more specialized and the demand for sport-specific training increases, organizations are finding that volunteer coaches are becoming a thing of the past. I suggest that, as a parent, you should understand where your money is going.

## **ADVANCEMENT IN MINOR HOCKEY**

Recruiting can happen at the craziest time. Players may attend a team's spring or fall try-out and show how they can play to be selected. Players may also have been seen during the prior season's games, playoff games or at a tournament. Most teams will be looking to improve their talent for the following season and you could be the one they select to make them better.

Advancement in hockey is not just for players. Coaches, officials, managers and trainers will also be looked at for possible advancement. Team owners, management, coaches and league supervisors are constantly

searching for new talent. Although the process is less refined, the same holds true for these positions. Recruiters want to see how you respond to situations involving people interaction and game instances.

My wife has taught me that when you do a job, no matter how big or small, always do your best. In hockey as in life, you get out of it what you put into it. I always tell my players that they never know who is watching. Make sure that you play your heart out.

You will never get a second chance to make a first impression. Let your passion show when you play and your preparation will move you from where you are to where you want to be.

## IT COMES DOWN TO HAVING FUN!

Being aware that there are many influencers in the game allows you to understand what is expected of you and your hockey role. There will be things that will be out of your control and things that will be entirely under your control. Don't let those things out of your control get in the way of you having fun. Be the best that you can be and focus on what you can do to improve yourself and those around you. Minor hockey is about making friends, creating memories, getting good exercise, developing as a person and—most of all—having fun!



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## CHAPTER 2

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# RULES

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“The only real mistake is the one  
from which we learn nothing.”

*John Powell*

The rules of hockey go beyond the “Dos and Don’ts” of a game. There are on-ice rules and off-ice rules. Rules can serve as unwritten agreements between various groups. This chapter describes some of the not-so-obvious rules that dictate why we play the game the way we do and who is responsible for creating those rules. It is also about how rules in hockey ensure the game’s integrity at all age levels.



### WHY SO MANY RULES . . . ?



Some rules affect the people involved, some rules exist for specific equipment requirements and others regulate the behavior in a game. These rules vary from country to country and in some cases from level to level all over the world. The players’ safety and well being are the foundation for most rules. The governing bodies in hockey are usually the keepers of the regulations and rules in rulebooks.

Since rules are supposed to ensure the safety of those involved, people are required to ensure that the rules are enforced. The game is fast and full of emotions. It needs a non-biased person to make the right call. On-ice officials enforce the rules during a game and make sure that there is fair play for all. These rules are written and positioned as the law of the game by the hockey associations in charge. In Canadian hockey, the rules are written by Hockey Canada and passed on through all levels of hockey. USA Hockey governs in the United States.

Having an official imposing these rules can be frustrating at times. In the heat of battle, tempers rise and decisions made by players or coaches do not always agree with the way the game should be called. Both coaches

and players know before leaving the dressing room what they can and cannot do during a game. Having the right attitude is a key element in making a hockey game a great experience.

## PENALTIES

When the game is on, emotions run high. Emotions from anger to joy and aggression to fear can run through each team's players at some point during the game. A player can lose focus and hurt another line mate, coach or opponent. Since rules serve to protect everyone, it is necessary to have a punishment system to penalize the aggressor. This process allows the player to calm down, relax and take a time-out alone to reflect on his actions before continuing to play. When this does not work, the player can be removed from the game and given suspensions. In minor hockey, there is strong emphasis on skill development, which leaves very little room for rule breakers.

On-ice rules apply to coaches as well as players. In some cases, coaches can cause a team to be penalized. Through this behavior, they can influence their players to act or play the game in a certain manner. This may result in an aggressive style of play that can lead players to get penalties.

## RESPECTING THE RULES

When the rules are applied, they need to be respected. Over the years, I have been frustrated by the fact that many rules are subjective and lend themselves to opinion. On the ice, one man's view of an incident is not always the best one but, in the case of a referee, it is his game to call. The leagues empower their officials and it is our duty to work with them to ensure that the rules are followed. Evaluating a referee's judgment only adds frustration to an already intense game.

One of the most important lessons I have learned as a coach is to respect the officials. There have been a few instances when I got caught up in the officiating rather than the coaching of my team. In one game, I am embarrassed to say, I waved my glasses at the referee telling him that he could not see what was going on. This made me look bad in front of the officials, the other team and most importantly, my players. That experience taught me

that acting on that one moment of anger was not worth the repercussions of being thrown out of the game and the message I portrayed to the team.

Controlling your emotions during a game is a good way to reduce infractions and suspensions. It is a 'must' for staying focused. Learning to stay calm is an effective skill to master for all—players, coaches and officials. It will reduce friction and reduce the chances of uncalled-for actions.

## THE COACH'S INFLUENCE

The ethics that I discuss in Chapter 6 (Coaching) reflect what message a coach will deliver to his players. For example, some coaches preach, "winning at all costs." There are players who perceive this as "hurt the other team if necessary so that we can win." In minor hockey, a large part of respecting the rules comes from the coach. He must instill sportsmanship and respect in his team. This will allow players, especially the young ones, to learn how to play their best and enjoy it by not taking away the same ambition from their opponents.

## OFF-ICE RULES

Before any game is played on the ice, there are many rules in place to keep the game safe. Organizations and teams also have rules to follow. These rules include respecting their community, their owners or board of directors and those rules of the league or school to which they belong. A minor hockey organization has various people in different positions. The higher the caliber of hockey, the more positions there are to be filled. Management, scouting and coaching will require more than one person for each position. Suspensions or fines, instead of penalties, are used to enforce the rules for these positions.

Some rules that organizations have to follow involve administrative duties, such as properly filled-out player and personnel registration forms. They are also required to have coaching and training staff properly certified. Off-ice rules tend to be more strict and definite than on-ice rules, which are rather subjectively enforced by officials. Off-ice rules tend to focus on exactness of proper documents and signatures on forms.

## WHAT ARE THESE RULES?

Rules for on-ice or off-ice activities in minor hockey are laid out in detail by associations, regions and leagues. Standards for equipment worn by players, coaches, officials and trainers are spelled out. Ice surface measurements and facility requirements are identified. Rules pertaining to duration, scheduling and location of games are communicated in a variety of ways. What each country's governing body does to set rules is dependent on their local needs, laws and limitations.

## LEAGUE RULES

Mandates put on teams stem from the requirements put forth by league rules. Leagues set rules for teams and their personnel to ensure that the players receive proper attention and training. They enforce the rules by having disciplinary hearings, passing out suspensions and demanding financial commitments. Leagues also enforce the rules related to a team's logo and colors.

Leagues also have rules to follow. These rules are set by associations above them and by the teams below them. Rules "set by the teams" are an example of the unwritten agreements referred to at the beginning of this chapter. One such rule or agreement states that a league is responsible to its teams for having officials and scorekeepers present at each game. It must assure the players' safety by holding games in safe facilities. Leagues are constantly trying to improve the game for their team members and staff by supporting programs that encourage safety, fun and fair play throughout their territory. In some instances, leagues will collaborate with other leagues to deliver a specific message. For example, it is common for professional leagues and minor hockey leagues to join forces and share their beliefs on how to play safe and have fun.

## ASSOCIATION RULES

Associations around the world are responsible to their members and also have rules to follow. As the governing body in a specific country or region, they are responsible for writing the bylaws that management and organizations follow on and off the ice. Rules for on-ice or off-ice needs are scrutinized and laid out in detail. Guidelines for coaches, officials and trainers are

under their jurisdiction. Rules that are applied in the games under their control are written and followed in a specific manner. They are responsible for respecting the community's needs and abiding by the governmental laws.

Although they seem to have more of a "thou shalt" position in hockey, associations do answer to ruling bodies and have rules imposed on them at an international level. In the case of the Olympics, the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF) dictates what is needed to play the game at that level. Associations such as Hockey Canada and USA Hockey must follow suit in order to be eligible for competition.

Rules at these levels are constantly being updated or changed. The main reason is to ensure safety, fun and fair play for those involved.

## INSURANCE COMPANIES

Governing bodies such as Hockey Canada and USA Hockey have someone to answer to other than those who play, coach, manage and volunteer. Insurance companies are significant influencers in the development of the rules they apply.

Every time a player steps on the ice to play a game, some of the rules that he must follow are based on the coverage by an insurance policy. For example, a Hockey Canada rule states that players must wear a helmet and face shield while on the ice. The primary reason, of course, is for medical coverage. If a player does not wear a helmet, then the insurance company will not cover costs related to injuries.

## THE LAW

The court of law is another influencer of the rules. The laws of the country, province, state or region supersede the rules of the game. Whenever there is intent to injure or a player commits severely violent actions, the matter might be taken to court. It is one thing to be knocked down during a game by another player; it is quite another matter to be attacked with a stick as if it were a weapon. In such a case, the league's disciplinary board and the local law enforcement will review the incident. The game is tough enough to play. Let's not add to it by letting it get out of control. Play smart and play safe.



## TABLE OF RULES

Below is a table listing some of the key rules, who they affect and what type of penalty or punishment can be involved.

<b>TERMS USED FOR PUNISHMENT</b>		
<i>Released:</i>	<i>A player is relieved of his duties or let go by the team.</i>	
<i>Hearing:</i>	<i>Can be either a league hearing or a court hearing.</i>	
<i>Suspensions:</i>	<i>A player or coach is suspended from a game or duties.</i>	
<i>Fines:</i>	<i>A fee is assessed for breaking a rule.</i>	

<b>RULES ABOUT . . .</b>	<b>GOVERNING BODY OF RULE (RULE ENFORCER)</b>	<b>TYPE OF PUNISHMENT</b>
<b>FOR PLAYERS:</b>		
<i>Safety</i>	<i>Coach / Team / League / Association / Law / Insurance</i>	<i>On-ice penalties / Suspensions / Hearings / Fines / Released</i>
<i>Equipment</i>	<i>Team / League / Association / Insurance</i>	<i>On-ice penalty / Suspensions/ Fines</i>
<i>Conduct on-ice</i>	<i>Coach / Team / League / Association / Law</i>	<i>On-ice penalty / Suspensions / Hearings</i>
<i>Conduct off-ice</i>	<i>Coach / Team / Law</i>	<i>Suspensions / Hearings / Released / Fines</i>
<i>Dress code</i>	<i>Coach / Team</i>	<i>Suspension / Fines</i>
<i>Age</i>	<i>League / Association</i>	<i>Suspension / Released / Fines</i>
<i>Eligibility/ Jurisdiction</i>	<i>Schools / Teams / Leagues / Associations</i>	<i>Suspension / Released</i>
<b>FOR COACHES:</b>		
<i>Credentials/ Certification</i>	<i>Team / League / Association</i>	<i>Suspension / Released / Fines</i>
<i>Game conduct</i>	<i>Team / League / Association / Law</i>	<i>Penalties / Suspension / Hearings / Released</i>
<i>Off-ice conduct</i>	<i>Team / League / Law</i>	<i>Suspension / Hearings / Released / Fines</i>

<b><i>RULES ABOUT . . .</i></b>	<b><i>GOVERNING BODY OF RULE (RULE ENFORCER)</i></b>	<b><i>TYPE OF PUNISHMENT</i></b>
<b><i>FOR COACHES : (CONTINUED)</i></b>		
<i>Dress code</i>	<i>Team / League</i>	<i>Suspension / Fines</i>
<i>Conduct with personnel</i>	<i>Team</i>	<i>Suspension / Released</i>
<b><i>FOR OFFICIALS :</i></b>		
<i>Certification/ Advancement</i>	<i>League / Association</i>	<i>Suspension / Released</i>
<i>Game conduct</i>	<i>League / Association</i>	<i>Suspension / Fines / Released</i>
<i>Fitness</i>	<i>League</i>	<i>Suspension / Released</i>
<i>Post-game duties</i>	<i>League / Association</i>	<i>Suspension / Fines</i>
<i>Equipment</i>	<i>League / Association/ Insurance</i>	<i>Suspension / Fines / Released</i>
<b><i>FOR TEAMS AND ORGANIZATIONS :</i></b>		
<i>Paperwork &amp; administration</i>	<i>League / Community / Insurance</i>	<i>Fines / Hearings / Suspensions</i>
<i>Recruiting/ Releasing staff</i>	<i>League / Branch / Association</i>	<i>Suspensions / Fines</i>
<b><i>FOR LEAGUES :</i></b>		
<i>Administration</i>	<i>Association / Law / Insurance</i>	<i>Fines / Hearings / Suspensions</i>
<b><i>FOR ASSOCIATIONS :</i></b>		
<i>Administration</i>	<i>Law / Insurance</i>	<i>Fines / Hearings / Law suits</i>
<b><i>FOR FANS :</i></b>		
<i>Conduct</i>	<i>Team / Law</i>	<i>Fines / Hearings</i>
<b><i>FOR FACILITIES :</i></b>		
<i>Specifications</i>	<i>Association / Team / Community / Player / Coach / Insurance / Law</i>	<i>Fines / Hearings</i>

## RECRUITING

Yes, there are even rules about recruiting. Going from one team to another or from one level of hockey to another requires players and coaches to be mindful of the precise steps to follow. If rules are not followed, then penalties can be issued. The coach can be charged with tampering, which would result in the league conducting a hearing and most likely suspending and fining that coach. The player might lose his opportunity to play for that team and also face a suspension. Whether you want to play for a particular team or you want to leave a team, it is a matter of following the appropriate steps.

Minor and youth hockey players who want to move from one team to another should consider doing it in the off-season to avoid disruption. This can be done by initiating the conversation with the coaching staff of the team you want to join. If the coach initiates the conversation, then he could be accused of tampering with another team's player.

If you decide that you want to move to another team, make sure that it is for one of the following reasons:

1. It is an opportunity to develop as a player.
2. It will improve your family's quality of life—less driving distance or financial demands.

Don't move just because you believe the win / loss record of the other team might be better. Some players look at the talent on the other team and base their decision on who is going to play for that team. You also need to consider who is coaching the other team. Find out what you can about their experience, their ability to teach and their philosophy about developing and playing players on the team. Unfortunately, many players end up sitting on the bench, watching from the stands or regretting their decisions at the end of the season. The grass is NOT always greener on the other side!

Coaches who want a player from a particular team need to consider what they want to achieve. Most coaches want to win during the season or do well in a particular tournament. Taking one player from another team is simply stacking the odds. It is not about bettering the game or bettering the

individual. Since minor hockey is not about winning games and trading players like it is in the junior and professional ranks, the purpose of recruiting players should be to provide an opportunity for those in the levels below to try out.

The definition of minor hockey as per USA Hockey and Hockey Canada is to have fun and develop. Teams in the national *Under 17* program of the U.S. and Canada are great examples of effective recruiting. They invite players from their respective regions to participate in camps. After an in-depth evaluation and interview process, a team of players is selected. Players and coaches are exposed to new challenges and opportunities. Winning and losing is a by-product of the development of these individuals.

## SCHOOLS

No recruiting rules are as strict as the ones imposed upon college and university hockey teams by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). The NCAA is a voluntary association of about 1200 colleges and universities that are devoted to the sound administration of inter-collegiate athletics. In order for students to play for a college or university hockey team, they must attend that school. If they cannot get into the school based on their grades, then they will not be able to step on the ice. Players who want to attend an institution must contact the coach and the school to determine their specific requirements. Coaches and recruiters need to know that a player is a quality student before they can accept him.

In general, to be admitted to an American college or university, there are four main criteria:

- The student/player must have a minimum ACT or SAT score.
- The student/player must never have been paid or compensated in any way to play hockey.
- The student/player must never have signed an agreement with an agent for the purposes of marketing his hockey services.
- The student/player must pass a series of drug tests.

These criteria may vary from school to school and from year to year. Players must decide at an early age on playing major junior or university

hockey in the U.S. Every season, players and parents must choose between major junior hockey and getting a hockey scholarship. My recommendation is to do your homework; players must maintain a 75% average in school and parents should call the NCAA and Canadian universities to learn about their recruiting process. Coaches must follow recruiting rules, so make sure that you know those rules and are aware of expectations. Both options have their benefits. Understanding what is best for your family should be your premise when making your decision. Follow the rules and it will be a happier hockey journey.

Whether rules are imposed by the governing bodies, the leagues or the team Head Coach, their purpose is to keep the game safe and fair so that everyone can have fun.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here is a list of Web sites where you can read about hockey rules in detail:

- [www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/officials/downloads.html](http://www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/officials/downloads.html)
- [www.usahockey.com/membership/main\\_site/main/annual\\_guide/0304\\_annguide//](http://www.usahockey.com/membership/main_site/main/annual_guide/0304_annguide//)
- [www2.ncaa.org/legislation\\_and\\_governance/eligibility\\_and\\_conduct/](http://www2.ncaa.org/legislation_and_governance/eligibility_and_conduct/)
- [www.universitysport.ca/e/pol\\_proc/index.cfm](http://www.universitysport.ca/e/pol_proc/index.cfm)

## CHAPTER 3

# EQUIPMENT

“[The body is] a marvelous machine . . . a chemical laboratory, a power-house. Every movement, voluntary or involuntary, full of secrets and marvels!”

*Theodor Herzl (1860–1904)*

Equipment has changed tremendously since the 1970s when I played. Players have more protection, goalies have become bulkier and even officials are wearing additional gear. Brand names such as Nike® and Easton® have emerged as big players in the world of distributing equipment to the consumer. In developing their product lines, equipment manufacturers consider safety as well as image. This chapter highlights the categories of equipment used for different roles and their effect on minor hockey.

## SAFETY AND IMAGE

The selection of equipment is usually based on the design. The equipment's look should be a secondary factor even though, in today's society, there is a keen desire to look good. Safety is the most important feature when it comes to on-ice equipment. Without safe equipment, players, coaches and officials cannot step on the ice. In order for equipment to adequately protect the wearer, it must fit properly. I have often heard parents say, “Well this will fit for a few years” and the piece of equipment is two or three sizes too large for the child. This size difference is counter-productive, as the equipment will not protect the player and it will hinder body movement. It could cause poor motion, which would then lead to an injury. When you are comfortable, you feel good. When you feel good, you play well. When you play well, you feel good. When you feel good, you . . . get the picture? All of this leads to building confidence, trying new things to improve and having more fun.

Players want to show their style or make a personal statement. Some like to go with the crowd and find out what is in style by watching television or reading magazines. Others like to make a statement and choose to invent their own look to stand out from the rest. In either case, your equipment is meant to protect you and should be properly fitted.

*A note to parents:* If the equipment does not fit well, it could be detrimental to your child's health—either by physical or mental injury. If a player's skates are too large, he will try to make a move, get his foot caught or lose his balance and fall. He will feel bad, start to lose confidence and eventually not want to try anymore. He may even quit the game. You need to listen to your child about how he feels in his gear.

*A note to players:* You need to speak up and tell your parents if your equipment is too big or too small. Make sure that you buy equipment that feels good when it is on and not equipment that just looks good. When you get new equipment, try it out in practice. You can simulate game situations without the stress of a game. Remember, you only have one body. Protect it properly and comfortably.

Tools of the game include more than a pair of skates, a stick and a puck. At the organized hockey level, you must ensure that your body is well protected. If you were playing pond hockey on a local rink with a bunch of kids from your neighborhood, there would be no need to be fully protected when most of them are skating in jeans and a jacket. However, if some children came to play pond hockey fully equipped, there would be a greater chance of someone getting hurt since the ones with equipment might forget that others are not as well protected. If you play pond hockey, then dress for pond hockey. If you play minor hockey, then dress for minor hockey.

In Karate, if you are a black belt, then you have learned an art that can kill another person. However, Karate is taught for self-defense purposes. You could hurt someone with this skill but that is not its purpose. Similarly, in hockey, you wear equipment to protect yourself from injury. You could hurt another player by hitting him with your elbow pad or glove, but that is not

its purpose. Protecting your body allows you to play with confidence rather than with the fear of getting hurt. Make sure that you protect yourself well. There is no second chance at being safe.

## PLAYERS

I frown upon trading safety for price. It does not mean that you have to buy the biggest or thickest piece of equipment to be safe. Nor does it mean that you need to buy the most expensive equipment. Playing with or buying equipment that is sized improperly is one way of neglecting safety. Whether you can afford it or not is not the question. You should ask yourself what it would cost if you did not make the correct decision in purchasing the appropriate equipment. Get the best fit and the best protection at the right price.

When I was playing bantam hockey, I needed a new pair of skates. My current pair were falling apart. The blade was coming away from the boot. Every time I pushed off with one foot to take a stride, I could feel the blade wobble under my foot. My dad took me to a store to shop but they did not have my size. The closest pair was two sizes too big. I did not say anything about it to my dad, nor did the salesperson do his job and check to make sure there was a proper fit. The desire to show off new skates and the peer pressure to fit in stopped me from telling the truth and I convinced my dad that these were fine and he bought them. It took a full season and part of the next season before I became comfortable and could keep my balance. Did I get hurt? No. I was lucky. Many times, players buy equipment that is too big or keep the equipment too long and this can cause bodily harm. What did this do for me? It hindered my development and affected my play. It diminished my confidence because I could not play well. I wasted a year in over-compensating for improperly sized equipment when I could have spent that year developing to get better. I would not try certain moves or take a risk because someone would find out that my skates were too big.

Pants, shoulder pads, gloves and shin pads that do not fit properly will affect basic skills as well as your self-confidence in performing the skill.

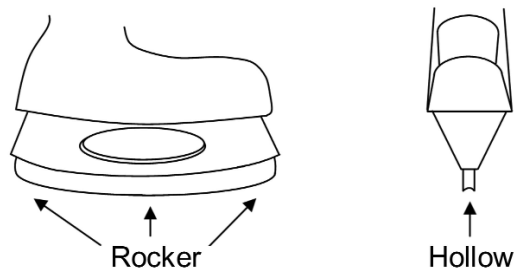


## SKATES

Skates are the most important piece of equipment for any player, goalie or official. Size and comfort are the two main components that will affect how you skate. Another important factor is how the blade is sharpened.

Wearing skates repeatedly will allow you to break in the boot part of the skate. Today, most skate manufacturers consider comfort and mold the skate with softer and less dense materials than previous versions. As a result, it takes less time to break in skates. They need to fit snugly and you should not feel your toes rubbing in the front of the boot. A rule of thumb is that the size of your skate is approximately one to two sizes smaller than your shoe size.

Different players have different preferences in the way the skate blades are sharpened. There are two points to consider when sharpening skates—the rocker and the hollow (see diagram 3–1). The rocker is the length of the blade from heel to toe. The hollow is the curve that runs across the blade from side to side. As the curve deepens, the blade gets sharper. When there is less curve in the rocker, the blade tends to be flatter. If it is flat, then there is more blade on the ice. This causes the skater to have more difficulty turning. A round rocker makes for tight turning.



**Diagram 3–1** Side view of the blade and boot      Front view

Some skaters have flat spots on their blades. This provides a resting spot for gliding. Most forwards prefer them in the front since they usually are on the balls of their feet. Most defensemen prefer the rocker in the middle of

the blade or slightly towards the back for a better backward glide. Flatter hollows are ideal for goalies because they allow them to easily move laterally in the crease (shuffle), without having the edges dig into the ice. A general rule of thumb for sharpening your skates is to get them done when there are burrs or nicks or when the hollow needs to be restored. Let an expert grind your blades. If skates are not sharpened properly, it can be an expensive mistake.

Wipe your blades after use and do not leave them in plastic or fabric skate guards. The dampness will cause them to rust, which in turn will rust the rivets and the blades.

## STICKS

Sticks are all about feel and choice. How a stick feels in the palms of your hands will affect you when you play. If the stick feels good, then you will most likely shoot well. The curve of the blade can affect the way you shoot. The length of the stick will affect your reach and shot. If the stick is too short, then you will be hunched over. You will have a sore back, your vision will be poor and you may fan on your shot. The tendency is to straighten up and this causes the blade to come off the ice. If it is too long, then the toe of the stick blade will be up and you will not have proper control of the puck. To determine the proper length, hold the stick on its toe, parallel to your body and measure the stick from your chin to the floor with your skates on or standing on your toes.

The weight of the stick is also important. If a stick is too heavy, then you will not feel the puck easily. It is probably stiff with little flexibility, which is more tiring for you and requires more physical force. With a stick that is too light, if you are very strong, you may lose some accuracy in your shot.

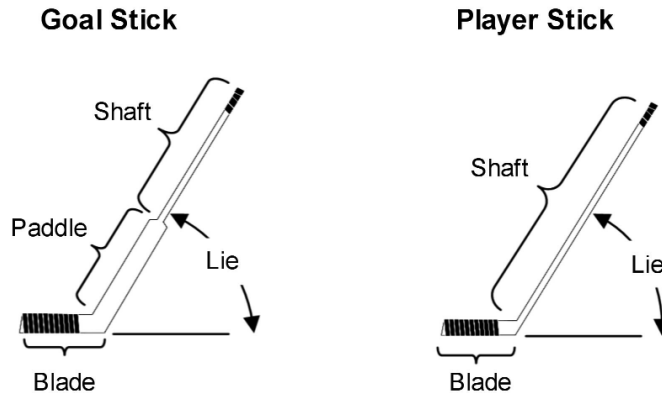
Prior to the 1950s, stick blades had no curves. The shaft and blade were all one piece of wood and players had very few options to fix them to their liking. The mindset back then was to play with the stick the way it was. Today, sticks are pieced together. The shaft and blade are glued together. Layers of fiberglass and wood are combined to create a reinforced shaft.

Blades are pieces of wood layered together and then attached. Once the two pieces are attached, cut to a specific pattern, coated with fiberglass or graphite strips, the blade is then heated and curved. A recent creation is the one-piece composite stick. It is made from a mixture of fiberglass and graphite and has no parts. The shaft and blade are one piece.

The brand, type and curve of the stick are personal choices for each player. Choosing the right stick is about being comfortable with it to control and shoot the puck. In order to accomplish this, the shaft must fit in the hands with the fingers fully wrapped around the shaft. Young players should use junior model sticks. Those sticks are designed with a small width in the shaft to allow for a proper grip. The stick length must be sized according to the player's height. That is achieved by cutting the shaft to reach a player's chin when he is on skates. Curves are a personal choice. A good rule of thumb is, "The younger the player, the less curve in the blade there should be." It allows for good puck handling skills to develop. As a player, you need to read and react in game situations. Being able to protect the puck from an opponent, pass to a teammate or shoot on goal is easier with a good grip on the shaft, an appropriate curve and proper stick length.

You cannot change how much a stick weighs and how it feels in the palms of your gloves. You will either like the weight and feel or you won't. When selecting a stick, make sure that you have your hockey gloves on. Don't go for a make because it looks good or someone you know uses it. Get a feel for it. Also, price does not equal quality of stick. Getting the most expensive stick does not mean that you will have the best stick. A good example of this is the one-piece composite stick. Its price is in the \$200 range but not everyone likes it or can play well with it. It is more flexible in the shaft and lighter than other sticks. It has the same design issues as a traditional stick—improper stick length, curve design and stick weight. You will not be comfortable playing with every stick. Take the time to find one that is right for you.

The other component that is important in deciding on the appropriate stick is the lie. The lie of a stick refers to the angle that the shaft makes from the ice surface when the blade is flat on the ice.



**Diagram 3-2** *Hockey Sticks*

In general, player sticks are made with a 5" or 6" lie. Goalie sticks are made with a 13", 14" or 15" lie. The difference is in the stick's purpose for both positions. A player's stance requires the stick in front or off to the side with two hands, while a goalie's stance is with one hand to the side. A quick check to see if you have the proper lie is to look at the wear of the heel and toe under your stick blade. If you wear out the heel, then the stick could be too long and/or need a higher lie.

A hockey stick is a trial and error piece of equipment. You need to try a few types of sticks to find one you like.

## GLOVES

Although hockey gloves can make you look cool, their purpose is to protect your wrist, knuckles and fingers. They are designed to protect your hands from getting cut, banged, slashed and hyper-extended.

Gloves can look either cool and sleek or powerful and rugged, depending on who looks at them. Over the past 10 years, the design of gloves has become softer with a shorter wrist protector. This allows for more of a finesse-type wrist roll movement. It also means that you are more susceptible to having your wrist bent backwards. Low wrist guards on gloves widen the gap from the elbow, leaving the arm open for possible slashes. The

least appealing is the conventional high-rise wrist glove with a stiffer grip. Some believe that it hinders the feel of the stick shaft.

When it comes down to it, protecting the hands is important and should not be overlooked based on look or feel. The most important part of the gloves is how the palm and fingers fit into the glove. It should not feel like you are wearing your big brother's winter gloves, nor should it be so tight that the blood stops circulating. Unlike other pieces of equipment, gloves do not have to be new to be considered good.

## HELMETS

Your brain is your most precious asset. Whether you are playing or officiating, when you are on the ice, protect your head. Make sure that you are properly fitted. The helmet is designed to reduce concussion possibilities and lower head injuries from sticks or pucks.

All players must wear helmets that are approved by national standards to play and be insured under the minor hockey association or their branches. Putting stickers on your helmet will void the warranty by most manufacturers. The glue could potentially cause a chemical defect in the plastic and cause it to break. Don't take chances with your head.

All minor hockey players must wear visors or cages to protect the face. It is important that the kind you choose is compatible with your helmet. It is a waste of money and time to buy what you like rather than what you need. If a helmet is too tight, then that is just as bad as if it is too loose. If you are a parent, do not buy for the future; buy for today. Make sure that the helmet is the correct size and it is tightened properly to fit the child's head. When you buy your helmet, always bring your visor with you or buy a new visor at the same time. The visor and helmet may not necessarily be compatible. The same applies in reverse. Bring your helmet when you are out shopping for a visor.

Goalies can wear a helmet and cage as well to be protected. After the age of 10 or 11, a player's preference might be to switch to a mask.

## SUPPORT CUPS

Jocks and jills are athletic support cups. For a boy or man, it is a hardened piece of plastic that cups the genitals and rests on the inner thighs and lower abdomen. For a girl or woman, the jill is more of a curved “V” protecting the pubic bone. These are fitted by size and comfort. It is a must-have and needs to be in perfect order. Do not scrimp and let your son or daughter play with a cracked one. And coaches, never let a player on the ice without one. I have seen players forget them at home and put socks in their underwear just to play. It is not worth the long-term health problems that can happen from an injury.

## PANTS

Hockey pants have a wide variety of makes and styles. Their purpose is to protect key areas of the mid section, primarily the kidneys, tailbone and inner and outer thigh. If pants fit properly, then they have a loose-to-comfortable fit. If they are too big, then the player’s shin pads may get stuck or the padded protection may move out of place. This can result in exposing areas of the body to injury.

Wearing small pants can be just as risky as wearing big ones. Many players show up each year to tryouts with pants that are too small. Parents use excuses: “Well, he grew so much that before we buy another pair, we want to see what team selects him.” Before stepping on the ice for try-outs, make sure that the pants fit properly. Not having the right size is just plain unsafe. Prevention is the best medicine.

If you are not interested in paying top dollar for new pants, consider buying used or second-hand ones from stores or classified ads in your local arena.

The proper sizing of pants is by waist measurement and length from the waist to the top of the knee. The pants are either tightened at the waist with a belt strap or held up with suspenders hanging over the shoulders. That is a matter of choice. If you choose suspenders, then make sure the

pants can slide up and down the waist. If you prefer a belt, then the tightness of that belt is a personal preference. As long as the pants don't fall while you skate, you will be fine.

## SHOULDER PADS

The design, form and shape of shoulder pads have changed over the years to be bigger and bulkier. They were designed to protect the shoulders, chest and back from high shots or accidental stick swinging. If they are too big, then they can hinder the player's movement. Shooting, stick-handling and passing become impossible if the player cannot raise his arms or twist his shoulders.

A correct fit allows the player to reach forward and still have his back and shoulders protected. He should be able to see and not feel like he is choking. Girls especially need to have a snug or comfortable fit for complete chest protection.

## ELBOW PADS

Elbows can be crushed if they are not protected. If you land with the elbow straight on the ice, it can lead to bad swelling or breakage. A properly fitted elbow pad allows the player or official to bend the arm freely. There should be no rotation out of your elbow pad. They need to be snug. Choose ones that protect your elbow and part of the forearm, especially if you have smaller gloves.

## SHIN PADS

Shin pads used to consist of hard plastic shapes sewn onto felt. Today, they have moisture wicking material, wrap-around flaps and molded forms for the left and right leg. In order to get the correct ones, you must try them on and flex your knees. You will find that the size of shin pads is based on length from knee to the top of your foot. This is one piece of equipment that can be a bit smaller in terms of length and still fit.

## **UNDERGARMENTS**

To wear them or not to wear them? That is the question! Whether it is uncomfortable or cool is not the answer. The answer is safety and health. There are four reasons why players should wear undergarments:

1. Most arenas are cold so undergarments serve as a warm layer and maintain body heat.
2. They prevent skin irritation from the rubbing of equipment such as shoulder pads, pants, and leg protectors.
3. They act as a layer of skin to help stop injuries.
4. They help to absorb sweat from the body.

Undergarments include long sleeve shirts, t-shirts, stretchy fleece pants, skintight spandex long johns, typical long johns and turtlenecks. This list is not all encompassing. Some of the materials used in these garments help to pull sweat away from the body while keeping a layer of air over the skin for sustaining the heat close to the body. It is imperative for the material to be soft and thin. It can become annoying and distracting to have a piece of fabric rub and irritate your skin.

“But we have to go out after the game.” Many parents let their children wear street clothes under their hockey equipment in order to save time for post-hockey activities. This is not wise. Do not wear jeans or dress pants under your hockey gear. In addition to not feeling soft to the skin, it can reduce circulation and cause irritation. After sitting on the bench for a while, players will be just as cold as if they were not wearing anything. Undergarments help to reduce skin rashes and lessen the risk of gashes.

## **NO EMBELLISHMENTS!**

Hockey is not a fashion show. Remove your jewelry before you step on the ice! This includes watches, rings, chains, earrings and anything else that might be dangling off of your body. Jewelry is not safe and can cause damage if you are struck the wrong way.



## GOALIES

Protective equipment for goalies has undergone drastic modifications in the last 20 years. The most apparent changes are the unique designs of leg pads, masks and upper body protection.

Facing shots from players, which can come at one hundred miles an hour, can be intimidating for any goalie no matter what his age. The puck, a one-inch thick and three inches round piece of rubber, can bruise muscles and even break bones upon impact. Goalies are often considered “off the wall” or a little strange to most teams. “Anyone who wants to get pucks fired at him has a screw loose upstairs.” That always made me smile. As a former goalie, I might have been crazy but I liked the challenge of having a split second to catch the puck in mid-air. It gave me immense satisfaction and a sense of pride when I made the save of the game. So hey! If you are considered different, you might as well look different.

For those players under the age of ten, consider acquiring second-hand goalie equipment from used equipment stores, postings in your local grocery store or classified ads. When the children are older, then you can be more selective and choose equipment that supports their style of play. Always keep safety in mind. Protect the body. Buy the best equipment, not necessarily the most expensive. Make sure that it fits, allows them to move freely and keeps control of their limbs. This will allow for excellent coverage of the net and good maneuverability.

Many times, I have seen goalies with pieces of equipment that are too big. Those goalies wonder why they are having a hard time saving the puck. You don’t buy shoes three sizes too big to get better balance, do you?

## GIRLS

Girls playing the game of hockey are generally fitted with the same pieces of equipment as boys. Some of the similarities would be gloves, helmets, pants, shin pads, elbow pads and skates. Key differences are in the shoulder pads and groin protection. For most girls aged 10 or under, the equipment is identical to that worn by boys, except for the jock. By the time girls

start forming breasts, they need shoulder pads that are designed with cup chest padding.

## EQUIPMENT IS NOT JUST FOR THE BODY

When we think of equipment, most of us think about what is worn by a player or goalie. What about the equipment to protect the fans? Professional, university and most junior levels have introduced the mesh netting in the goal zone to stop fast flying pucks from going over the glass and hitting the fans.

What about visual aid equipment? Over the years, coaches have become better teachers. They have learned to deliver their message with more impact. Tools such as video, white dry erase boards and cones are used frequently throughout all levels of hockey.

What about technology? Since the advancement of computers, people in administrative roles have been able to manage processes a lot easier. Software programs for scheduling, statistics and team management have helped to automate tasks. In addition, there is equipment designed to help the body such as trainers' first aid kits, weights and fitness equipment for off-ice conditioning. Documentation for mental training is also a type of "equipment" as it provides you with tools to train your mind. Being part of minor hockey involves more than showing up at the rink to play. A lot of preparation is required and the right equipment can make the outcome greater and the involvement more fun.

## RULES INFLUENCE THE WEARING OF EQUIPMENT

Rules regarding equipment have been put into effect to protect those who play and encourage fair play for everyone. For example, in minor hockey, players must wear a certified helmet with a face shield. In some regions, even the use of mouth guards is enforced. To assure fair play, goalie pads can only be a certain width and sticks have a maximum curvature in the

blade. There are specific rules for the size and shape of all equipment. Hockey's governing bodies know that the equipment is tested to guard against high-speed puck contact and skate slashes. They also know that there is no guarantee that players and officials will not get hurt no matter how many rules are in place. Safety and fair play rely heavily on having a good attitude.

## COACHES

Colors, cuts and styles are all part of how you want to appear on the ice. A picture of two typical hockey coaches was printed on an issue cover of "Coaching Journal" to show the evolution of appearance and dress. It showed how the coach of yesteryear has gone from a pair of mittens to hockey gloves and from the old green and black checkered lumber jacket and jeans to a color-coded tracksuit. Coaches today are conscious of what they wear. Their attire can affect their players' opinions even before they say a word.

Coaches need more than skates, a tracksuit and a stick. Equipment such as visual aids helps with the instruction of a lesson or the delivery of a message in a speech. Some people retain information better if they see it, others prefer to hear it and some must get involved to understand. Using all three ways of delivering your message will ensure that most, if not all, of your team will get it. Your voice, although it may be great, may not be the best medium for all situations to accomplish what you want. As a coach, wouldn't you want to increase your chances of getting your message across effectively?

Your job is to teach and develop the players on your team. So what equipment will help you to achieve that goal? Consider using a coaching whiteboard or chalkboard with a pre-printed outline of a rink surface. Use effective drawings to explain the steps for proper execution of a drill or exercise. "Pictures are worth a thousand words." During practices, a whistle is a necessity. Don't expect your voice to work the entire season. Besides, most players cannot hear through their helmets unless they stand

10 to 15 feet from you. When running an exercise or drill on the ice surface, you may want to incorporate cones, soccer balls, tennis balls and other props to challenge your players. Set up an obstacle course with broken sticks and chairs to take them out of their comfort zone and enhance the practice.

Consider investing in a video camera. As a team leader, it will allow you to de-construct a game play by play for your players and it can prove to be a great experience. It will allow your team members to see themselves in action. You will be able to highlight positive moves as well as areas to improve. The video camera can be one of the best investments in teaching equipment. Videotaping can provide an excellent outside perspective.

When you are getting ready for games or practices, equipment such as computer practice software, drill sheets and note pads make planning easy. Most coaches like to collect a library of drills, plays and strategies. But then, you have to decide where you are going to put all of them. Computers are great tools for data collection. If you don't use one, then you will need a lot of space for binders.

A less obvious but essential piece of equipment for delivering your message and values as a coach is your attire. You will project an image. Choose to project one that reflects your beliefs and the behavior that you want your team to model. Dress the part. During games at the elite levels such as AAA and AA, wear a shirt and tie as well as dress pants, dress boots or nice shoes. As we get to the higher levels, the look behind the bench becomes significant. So take that tie out of your closet and wear it to your games. At the younger levels, wear a team jacket and turtleneck to look clean and neat. Gaining respect as a coach starts with your look.

If you don't have the luxury of an equipment manager, you may consider a toolbox that contains screwdrivers, tape, wrench, nuts and bolts. You may also want a small propane torch for stick shafts to glue and unglue the blade from the shaft. This can be handy in an emergency. Make sure that you learn how to use them and know where to get them.

There's more to equipment than sticks and skates. It is frustrating to be in a situation where you need something and you cannot find the necessary tools. Use the right equipment when needed. You will become more effective as a coach.

## OFFICIALS

Officials wear a simple uniform—a sweater, black trousers and a helmet. It may seem as if they do not have much else on other than undergarments but the protection they wear beneath their uniform is tight to their body frame and helps to avoid bruising from flying pucks and sticks.

A girdle (short pant) full of padding like that of a hockey player is made to support plastic formed protection for the kidneys, thighs and coccyx (tail-bone). The hips and buttocks are covered with padding. At the lower leg, most shin guards are designed like a player's with a dome-shaped plastic piece for the kneecap and a shin casing for the front and side of the leg. There is very little equipment under the striped sweater. Because of their need for flexibility and comfort, most officials refrain from wearing any upper body equipment. Some officials wear elbow pads.

Officiating can be a rough job. Wear equipment that fits comfortably, and doesn't hinder any movement or motion, specifically skating. You too need to make sure that you protect your body parts.

## EQUIPMENT COSTS

Costs of equipment will vary from store to store and from manufacturer to manufacturer. Equipment quality and model types will dictate price. Without becoming broke, there are ways to make sure that everyone wears quality equipment.

For years, manufacturers such as CCM® and Bauer® were known as skate manufacturers. Companies such as Victoriaville®, Sherwood® and Northland® were known as the stick experts. Today, hockey equipment manufacturers offer complete lines. They make a full list of player gear and in some cases even officials and goalie equipment.

I recommend that you look at each piece of equipment individually when you are buying. For example, look at gloves and compare different brands. Check out the feel, look and quality of how they are made. Manufacturers would prefer that you dress in their complete line and they will market their products accordingly. Some pieces of equipment fit certain people better than others. Do not look at a complete line of products from a specific manufacturer and believe that you have to buy their complete line.

I like to use the age groups of “10 and under” and “11 and over” in most of my equipment examples. If you are in the younger group, look for what is in your budget, fits well and is approved by the Canadian Standard Association (CSA) or Hockey Equipment Certification Council (HECC). If you are older, then you may not have a choice with a budget (due to team restraints) but you should get what fits well and what is approved.

For the younger group, most new equipment can be purchased at local sport stores. You may also look at sport stores that sell used equipment to fully outfit the budding star. For the older child, in addition to the suggestions given above, consider going to pro shops, distributors or a manufacturer’s Web site. Sometimes you can get deals that are not limited to quantities purchased.

Alas parents, let’s not kid ourselves! Your growing athletes will usually want to have equipment that they have seen advertised or that are worn by hockey superstars. In reality, proper equipment should be about what feels comfortable. Furthermore, manufacturers must conform to standards before they can worry about what looks good.

Make sure that you look into being right sized no matter what level you play. Many injuries happen because players have equipment that is either too big or too small, not to mention the confidence of the player affected by improper equipment. Shop wisely!

Following is a list of products and price ranges by position:

## TABLE OF EQUIPMENT

<b><i>PLAYER EQUIPMENT</i></b>	<b><i>DESCRIPTION</i></b>	<b><i>BRANDS / LABELS / MANUFACTURERS</i></b>
<i>Shoulder pads</i>	<i>Shoulder, chest and upper back protection</i>	<i>Sherwood, Koho, CCM, Itech, Heaton, Ferland-DR, Louisville, Eagle, Hespeler, Easton, Mission, Bauer/Nike, Franklin, JOFA, Graf</i>
<i>Shin pads</i>	<i>Shin, knee and calf protector</i>	<i>Sherwood, Koho, CCM, Itech, Heaton, Ferland-DR, Louisville, Eagle, Hespeler, Montreal, Easton, Mission, Bauer/Nike, Franklin, JOFA</i>
<i>Gloves</i>	<i>Finger, hand and wrist protector</i>	<i>Sherwood, Koho, CCM, Itech, Ferland-DR, Louisville-TPS, Eagle, Hespeler, Easton, Mission, Bauer/Nike, Franklin, JOFA, Oakley, Vaughn, Graf</i>
<i>Elbow pads</i>	<i>Elbow and forearm protection</i>	<i>Sherwood, Koho, CCM, Itech, Ferland-DR, Louisville-TPS, Eagle, Hespeler, Easton, Mission, Bauer/Nike, Franklin, JOFA</i>
<i>Helmets</i>	<i>Head protector</i>	<i>Bauer, Jofa, CCM, Nike, Itech</i>
<i>Cage/shield/visor</i>	<i>Face protector</i>	<i>Itech, Oakley, Bauer, CCM</i>
<i>Jock/pelvic protector</i>	<i>Athletic groin protection</i>	<i>Philly Express, Trifilar, WSI, AandR, Itech, Jock Plus, Bauer, Protex, Hespeler, underGEAR, Pro Guard, Fox 40</i>
<i>Skates</i>	<i>Foot protection and foot apparel</i>	<i>CCM, Bauer, Nike, Mission, Easton, Graf</i>
<i>Pants</i>	<i>Hip, kidney, thigh and lower back protector</i>	<i>Bauer, CCM, Franklin, Nike, Easton, Jofa, Mission, Protex, Tackla, Sherwood, Louisville, Itech, Hespeler, Franklin, Graf, DR</i>

<b><i>Costs</i></b>	<b><i>NOTE</i></b>
\$30 to \$250 CAD	<i>There is no need to buy the highest price in the size range. Buy what is comfortable and fits like a loose jacket.</i>
\$30 to \$225 CAD	<i>The proper measurement is from the top of the knee to just above the ankle. The knee must go into the knee protection cap and the shin is wrapped with calf protectors.</i>
\$30 to \$299 CAD	<i>Be aware that there are different sizes in length. Some don't protect the wrists as much as others.</i>
\$20 to \$100 CAD	<i>These need to fit snug to the arm and not limit flexing of the elbow.</i>
\$35 to \$150 CAD	<i>The product should fit comfortably, not too snug. It must not have stickers put on them or it will void the warranty.</i>
\$25 to \$90 CAD	<i>All minor hockey players must wear full facial protection. All officials must wear a half visor.</i>
\$15 to \$70 CAD	<i>This needs to be fitted. Make a note that it cannot be returned after purchase.</i>
\$50 to \$700 CAD	<i>Skate sizes are 1—2 sizes smaller than street shoe sizes.</i>
\$35 to \$250 CAD	<i>Do not buy these too big; otherwise, protection is out of place on the body. If they are too small, there is limited protection for vital organ areas.</i>

Continues



<b>PLAYER EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BRANDS / LABELS / MANUFACTURERS</b>
<i>Stick</i>	<i>Tool for puck carrying</i>	<i>Sher-Wood, Koho, Bauer, CCM, Itech, Louisville-TPS, Vic, Hespeler, Montreal, Easton, Mission, Nike, Franklin, Tackla, JOFA, Christian, Graf</i>
<i>Under-garments</i>		<i>underGEAR, Under Armour, Bauer, Itech, Nike, Trifilar, WSI, Jock-Plus, Hanes, Fruit of the Loom, Fox 40</i>
<i>Neck/throat guard</i>	<i>Throat protector</i>	<i>Easton, Itech, Bauer, Protex,</i>
<b>GOALIE EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BRANDS / LABELS / MANUFACTURERS</b>
<i>Chest protector</i>	<i>Upper body (arms, chest, shoulders, stomach and ribs) protector</i>	<i>Victoriaville, Itech, Sher-Wood, Koho, Bauer, Brian's, Brown, Franklin, CCM, Heaton, Dr-Ferland, McKenney, Eagle</i>
<i>Leg pads</i>	<i>Mid and lower leg protection (foot, shin, calf, knee and lower thigh)</i>	<i>Brian's, Simmons, CCM-Heaton, Ferland-DR, Boddam, Louisville-TPS, Koho, Vaughn, Itech, Eagle, Hespeler, Franklin, McKenney, Brown, Sherwood, Bauer, Miller</i>
<i>Blocker</i>	<i>Hand wrist protector/stick holding glove</i>	<i>Brian's, Simmons, CCM-Heaton, Ferland-DR, Boddam, Louisville-TPS, Koho, Vaughn, Itech, Eagle, Hespeler, Franklin, McKenney, Brown, Sherwood, Bauer, Miller</i>
<i>Trapper</i>	<i>Hand wrist protector/catching mitt</i>	<i>Brian's, Simmons, CCM-Heaton, Ferland-DR, Boddam, Louisville-TPS, Koho, Vaughn, Itech, Eagle, Hespeler, Franklin, McKenney, Brown, Sherwood, Bauer, Miller</i>
<i>Mask</i>	<i>Head protector</i>	<i>Nxi, Franklin, Itech, Vaughn, Louisville-TPS, Koho, CCM, Pro Masque, Eddy mask</i>

<b>COSTS</b>	<b>NOTE</b>
\$25 to \$250 CAD	<i>A stick is about taste. There are three types—composite 1 pc, wood, 2 pc shaft and blade.</i>
\$10 to \$125 CAD	<i>This is personal preference. Wear something that is soft to touch, otherwise you may get skin irritations.</i>
\$10 to \$35 CAD	<i>Modifications to this piece of equipment are against the rules. Wear it as it comes.</i>
<b>COSTS</b>	<b>NOTE</b>
\$100 to \$490 CAD	<i>If the chest protector is too long, then it will choke as you go into your crouch stance.</i>
\$150 to \$2100 CAD	<i>Make sure that the pads follow the sizing rule (12 inch wide). You don't need to buy new.</i>
\$100 to \$400 CAD	<i>Your hand should fit in the glove comfortably so that you can grip your stick fully.</i>
\$100 to \$500 CAD	<i>Make sure that you have the right size and quality for the level you play.</i>
\$150 to \$1200 CAD (not including custom painting)	<i>A mask is all about show. A helmet and cage work just as well.</i>

Continues

<b>GOALIE EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BRANDS / LABELS / MANUFACTURERS</b>
<i>Helmet and cage</i>	<i>Head protector</i>	<i>CCM, Bauer, JOFA, Itech</i>
<i>Jock/pelvic protector</i>	<i>Athletic groin protection</i>	<i>WSI, Brian's, CCM-Heaton, Itech, Vaughn, Vic, JOFA, Koho, Ferland-DR, ProGuard, Bauer, Eagle, Fox 40</i>
<i>Goalie skates</i>	<i>Foot protection</i>	<i>Koho, Bauer, CCM, Graf</i>
<i>Pants</i>	<i>Hip, kidney, thigh and lower back protector</i>	<i>Tackla, Vic, Brian's, CCM, Itech, Mission, Easton, Louisville-TPS, Sher-Wood, Koho, Brown</i>
<i>Goalie stick</i>	<i>Tool for stopping shots along the ice</i>	<i>Montreal, Hespeler, Vic, Louisville-TPS Itech, Sher-Wood, Vaughn, CCM-Heaton, Bauer, Koho, Brian's, Christian</i>
<i>Under-garments</i>	<i>Clothes to wear under your equipment</i>	<i>underGEAR, Under Armour, Bauer, Itech, Nike, Trifilar, WSI, Jock-Plus, Hanes, Fruit of the Loom, Fox 40</i>
<i>Collar guards</i>	<i>Throat and neck protection</i>	<i>Itech, Vaughn, Brian's, Heaton, Koho, Sher-Wood, Ferland-DR, Bauer</i>
<i>Throat protector</i>	<i>Throat, neck and chin protection</i>	<i>Itech, Koho, Ferland-DR</i>
<b>OFFICIALS' EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BRANDS / LABELS / MANUFACTURERS</b>
<i>Shin guards</i>	<i>Shin, knee and calf protector</i>	<i>Power Guard, CCM, Bauer, Steven's</i>
<i>Jersey</i>	<i>Sweater of black and white stripes</i>	<i>Power Guard, CCM, SP Pro</i>

<b>COSTS</b>	<b>NOTE</b>
\$75 to \$300 CAD	<i>Make sure that the cage is HECC and CSA approved. Verify with your league if the style of cage you want is acceptable.</i>
\$25 to \$100 CAD	<i>This needs to be fitted properly. In most cases, it cannot be returned or exchanged after purchase.</i>
\$160 to \$750 CAD	<i>It is preferable to buy new due to hygiene.</i>
\$120 to \$450	<i>Do not buy these too big; otherwise, protection is out of place on the body. If they are too small, there is limited protection in vital organ areas.</i>
\$25 to \$250 CAD	<i>Never cut a goalie stick (you need every inch for reach and the stick is designed for balance). Buy appropriate lie to your stance (goalies who have a wide leg stance need a lower lie (e.g., lie 13)).</i>
\$10 to \$90 CAD	<i>Wear soft stretchy material.</i>
\$20 to \$100	<i>This must be big enough not to choke and small enough not to hinder neck movement.</i>
Up to \$60 CAD	<i>Modifications to this piece of equipment are against the rules. Wear it as it comes.</i>
<b>COSTS</b>	<b>NOTE</b>
\$65 to \$110 CAD	<i>Regardless of the age you officiate, these may save you from bruises.</i>
\$60 to \$150 CAD	<i>Some leagues may provide these. (mandatory piece of equipment)</i>

Continues

<b>OFFICIALS' EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BRANDS / LABELS / MANUFACTURERS</b>
<i>Protective vest</i>	<i>Protection for solar plexus, upper spine, shoulder blades and rib cage</i>	<i>Power Guard, Steven's</i>
<i>Elbow pad/ arm guards</i>	<i>Elbow and forearm protection</i>	<i>Power Guard, CCM</i>
<i>Helmet</i>	<i>Head protection</i>	<i>Bauer, Jofa, CCM, Nike, Itech</i>
<i>_ visor</i>	<i>Upper facial protection</i>	<i>Itech, Oakley, CCM, XCEL</i>
<i>Skates</i>	<i>Foot protection and foot apparel</i>	<i>CCM, Bauer, Nike, Mission, Easton, Graf</i>
<i>Girdle</i>	<i>Hip, kidney, thigh and lower back protector</i>	<i>CCM, Power Guard, Strike Force, Bauer</i>
<i>Black pant shell</i>	<i>Shell nylon pant to cover the girdle</i>	<i>Power Guard, CCM, Bauer, SP Pro, Stephen's</i>
<i>Under-garments</i>	<i>Clothes to wear under your equipment</i>	<i>underGEAR, Under Armour, Bauer, Itech, Nike, Trifilar, WSI, Jock-Plus, Hanes, Fruit of the Loom, Fox 40</i>
<i>Jock/pelvic protection</i>	<i>Athletic groin protection</i>	<i>Pro Guard, Top jock, Fox 40</i>
<i>Whistle</i>	<i>Mouth instrument to get the attention of the players</i>	<i>Fox, Acme, AandR, Bauer</i>
<i>Notepad</i>	<i>Small handbook to write down in a game</i>	<i>Official's Wearhouse</i>

<b>COSTS</b>	<b>NOTE</b>
\$75 to \$120 CAD	<i>This would depend on the age level you officiate - the harder the shots, the more chance of being hit there.</i>
\$20 to \$100 CAD	<i>You should have these at any level. If you fall on the ice, you may land on your elbow.</i>
\$45 to \$120 CAD	<i>Wear one of your choice. (mandatory piece of equipment)</i>
\$30 to \$80	<i>I recommend a clear protector instead of a wire cage. (mandatory piece of equipment)</i>
\$50 to \$700 CAD	<i>Get what is comfortable. You will be on the ice for the full game. Make sure that you get white laces. (mandatory piece of equipment)</i>
\$75 to \$180 CAD	<i>The higher the level of play, the greater the need for this equipment.</i>
\$60 to \$180 CAD	<i>Some of these models have built in girdles. (mandatory piece of equipment)</i>
\$10 to \$125 CAD	<i>Wear soft material that stretches. It will keep you warm in a cold arena.</i>
\$10 to \$40 CAD	<i>Highly recommended.</i>
\$5 to \$15 CAD	<i>Get what you like, preferably with a 2-finger grip. (mandatory piece of equipment)</i>
\$10 CAD	<i>Handy to keep in back pocket.</i>

Continues

<b>COACHING EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BRANDS / LABELS / MANUFACTURERS</b>
<i>Track suits</i>	<i>Your image and look on the ice</i>	<i>CCM, Kobe, Nike, Adidas, Puma, Reebok, Bauer, etc.</i>
<i>Skates</i>	<i>Comfort is key</i>	<i>CCM, Bauer, Nike, Mission, Easton, Graf</i>
<i>Stick</i>	<i>Demonstration tool</i>	<i>Sherwood, Koho, Bauer, CCM, Itech, Louisville-TPS, Hespeler, Montreal, Easton, Mission, Nike, Franklin, Tackla, JOFA, Christian, Graf</i>
<i>Whistle</i>	<i>A whistle that is loud so everyone can hear you</i>	<i>Fox, Acme, AandR, Bauer, Fox 40</i>
<i>Dry Erase/ Chalk Board Average size: 16" x 27"</i>	<i>This is a great visual aid to explain what you want and where players should be</i>	<i>Fox 40, Topco, Sportswrite, Challenger, Bauer</i>
<b>TRAINER EQUIPMENT</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>BRANDS / LABELS / MANUFACTURERS</b>
<i>Trainer's toolbox</i>	<i>Carry trainer's medical and first aid supplies</i>	<i>Fieldtex Products, Trainer's choice, HDCO and other medical supply manufacturers</i>

<b>COSTS</b>	<b>NOTE</b>
\$50 to \$200 CAD	<i>It is up to you to look the part.</i>
\$50 to \$700 CAD	<i>You better be able to skate in them.</i>
\$25 to \$250 CAD	<i>Get a stick you can use.</i>
\$5 to \$15 CAD	<i>It is preferable to get a whistle around the neck.</i>
\$20 to \$75 CAD	<i>Dry erase work well in the cold.</i>

<b>COSTS</b>	<b>NOTE</b>
\$35 to \$150	<i>There is no limit to how much equipment you can have. I recommend that every team have someone that can apply first aid. The number of supplies is up to your budget.</i>



Appropriate equipment in hockey is essential to play the game but protection is the most important reason. The human body is very precious. Protect its parts.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following is a list of Web sites from manufacturers who sell equipment. They can provide you with valuable information to help you make intelligent purchase decisions.

- [www.bauer.com](http://www.bauer.com)
- [www.briansmfg.com](http://www.briansmfg.com)
- [www.ccmsports.com](http://www.ccmsports.com)
- [www.donsimmons.com](http://www.donsimmons.com)
- [www.eaglehockey.com](http://www.eaglehockey.com)
- [www.eastonhockey.com](http://www.eastonhockey.com)
- [www.grafcanada.com](http://www.grafcanada.com)
- [www.hespeler.com](http://www.hespeler.com)
- [www.igloovikski.com/igloovikski.html](http://www.igloovikski.com/igloovikski.html)
- [www.itech.com](http://www.itech.com)
- [www.missionhockey.com](http://www.missionhockey.com)
- [www.nikehockey.com](http://www.nikehockey.com)
- [www.promasque.com](http://www.promasque.com)
- [www.sportbodybasics.ca/hockey/hockey\\_protectiveequip.html](http://www.sportbodybasics.ca/hockey/hockey_protectiveequip.html)
- [www.vaughnhockey.com](http://www.vaughnhockey.com)

## CHAPTER 4

# MANAGEMENT

“Spectacular achievement is always preceded  
by spectacular preparation.”

*Robert H. Schuller*

Managing hockey goes beyond selecting good players and hiring qualified staff. It also involves understanding finances, administering rules, applying procedures and dealing with people who are on the inside and outside of hockey. It requires a skill set that is similar to a business executive. Familiarity with topics such as budgeting, staffing, business development and cost containment are required to effectively run your hockey business. The purpose of this chapter is to show how management in hockey can influence the game and create success.

## KEY ROLES

Administrative responsibilities are primarily relationship building and paper-work. Some roles within minor hockey are:

- President—Makes decisions for the entire association, league or team.
- General Manager—Makes business decisions for hockey teams.
- League Official / Coordinator—Serves as the liaison between teams, players, parents and media. Provides information and updates. Administers policies from branches and regions.
- Marketing and Sales Director—Provides revenue, sponsorship and fundraising for teams.
- Referee-in-Chief—Makes decisions for league officials and supports the rules.
- Scout—Recruits young talent for teams.
- Agent—Serves as the player representative independent of any team or league to develop and promote players to teams.

- Tournament Coordinator—Serves as the liaison between teams, players, parents and the community with the tournament specifics.
- Volunteer—The community resident who helps a team, league or tournament by doing tasks for no money.

## DEALING WITH PEOPLE

Dealing with people is the primary function for most of these positions. General Managers (GMs) of teams deal with league officials, upper management, coaches, players, parents and, in many cases, the media. Some of the other positions deal with local community people, corporate executives and fans. Whether you are dealing with hockey related people or outsiders, all interactions need to be professional, courteous and sincere. This is a high profile game in the community and it deserves the respect from those involved.

## DEALING WITH PAPERWORK

When dealing with the paperwork side of managing hockey, the tasks can be long, tedious and very drawn out. Registering names, insuring for liability, setting budgets, verifying the facts, creating agendas, paying bills and filing make up the “to-do” lists season after season. These assigned routines make the game safe and fun for the players, coaches and officials on the ice as well as provide enjoyment for fans.

## STRUCTURE

There are two sides to successful hockey teams: hockey operations and administration. Hockey operations refers to all aspects required to play the game. Players, coaches, trainers, scouts and equipment fall under this section. Sales, office coordination, media relations and communication fall under administration. Managing these areas effectively requires a certain amount of money and expertise. Team owners know that they require a business and hockey savvy individual.

Hockey leagues and associations require administrative staff. They manage their staff and liaise with teams and the governing bodies who rule over them. They too deal with the media and community. They provide a

resource of information such as rules, registration guidelines and policies for those who play. In these roles, it takes more than knowing the game. It requires an understanding of how to handle multi-level relationships, being an effective communicator and knowing about forecasting, budgeting and fundraising.

## IT IS MEANT TO BE FUN!

How does all this help to make hockey fun? For years, I thought that hockey administration seemed more complicated than it needed to be. It wasn't until I understood the complexities such as insurance, rule enforcement and the cost to play that it all came together for me. There are three key aspects of hockey where strong management can improve the game for players, coaches, officials and parents. They are:

1. Insurance
2. Registration
3. Costs

### INSURANCE

Imagine that a player gets hurt while on the ice. If disability becomes a factor, then who is responsible? How will the injured person be taken care of? There are safety provisions in place for those who want to play.

If a boy is out playing pond hockey and he gets hurt, he will go home and get help. But what happens in the event of an extreme injury where he cannot move? Is it up to the individual or those around him to handle the repercussions? If the boy was hurt due to his own misfortune, then he needs to deal with it. However if someone else hurt him, then is there police involvement or a liability issue?

In organized hockey, there are insurance policies in place by Hockey Canada and USA Hockey to cover severe injuries and liabilities. Financial benefits help the individual and the family. Committees deal with the extreme violence exhibited by players and coaches. Maintaining and administering these policies requires resources and expertise. This is how we make hockey fun and safe.

## REGISTRATION

Parents, families and guardians enroll their children in hockey to have fun. They want to expose their children to other children of the same age while enjoying the sport.

Children of all ages enjoy playing unorganized hockey, otherwise known as pick-up. Some children are fully equipped and others are not. How much fun would it be if eight-year-olds had to play against seventeen-year-olds? Would the older children get bored or would the younger children be intimidated? Either way it would not be fun for anyone. Administrations keep all age groups together and make sure that everyone complies. Thank goodness for that. There have been situations where people have lied about their age in order to play with a friend or group. I can understand the exceptional player who wants to play in a higher age level, but not in a lower one. It makes for an unfair advantage, especially at the minor hockey level.

## COSTS

We live in a world where it costs money to do most things. Hockey is no exception to this rule. The game is played in an arena that is usually run by a community or private investors. These buildings take up space; land has value. Unless someone has deep pockets or is generous, the owners of these facilities are looking to make money or at least break even on their land investment. This money comes from those who use the facility. In most cases, an organization or community has to pay for the usage. Here is how management makes this possible:

- a) Costs are allocated to the individuals who use it by means of hockey registration fees.
- b) Leagues make scheduled timeslots for games.
- c) Local companies are offered advertising space to raise money and lower costs.

Knowing how to administer and manage these tasks will greatly increase the effectiveness of management in hockey organizations. These are not glamorous jobs; however, without them, we would still be playing only on the ponds.

## TEAM MANAGEMENT

Managing a team requires many people to do many tasks. In minor hockey and junior hockey, the largest tasks usually belong to the GM or team manager. Organizations rely heavily on the services of a general manager. In junior hockey and below, this role focuses on handling front office staff, league officials, media, parents and the hockey operations people. Sports management expertise is required. The person who fills this role needs to know how to deal with budgets, corporate sponsorship, negotiations of supplier contracts and process compliance with the leagues. The general manager's job is not easy and I have a high regard for good management in minor hockey.

Teams who are successful in minor and youth hockey are effective in management as well as in their play on the ice. They are able to get quality support from their people, their community and company sponsorship.

Team managers are usually volunteers. They help to organize tasks and work in tandem with the head coach to ensure that the off-ice season is run as smoothly as the on-ice season. Efficient managers make sure that player registration, document submission, fundraising, travel arrangements, equipment needs and communications are carried out and coordinated with the coach's season plan. Dealing with people can be a very tough job, which is why it is important to have a people-oriented personality.

To operate, teams need cash flow just like a business. Bills such as ice rentals, equipment, travel expenses and tournament fees all need to be paid. Someone needs to handle it and someone needs to raise it. Working in management requires you to acquire funds in multiple ways.

## BUDGET

Playing on a minor hockey team is becoming a greater challenge on the ice as well as off the ice due to financial constraints. Fundraising is the best way to lower a team's costs. During a few of my seasons as a coach, I was involved with teams that raised 100% of what was forecasted and returned close to half of the registration fee to parents at the end of the season. If you are a parent, I cannot stress enough the teamwork required to fundraise effectively. Following is a sample budget of items that a team can incur in a season. Use it as a guideline for your own hockey situation.

<i>ITEM</i>	<i>BUDGET (PRE-SEASON ESTIMATE)</i>	<i>DATE AMOUNT IS DUE</i>	<i>ACTUAL (POST-SEASON AMOUNTS)</i>
<i>Player registration with team (can include jerseys, socks, pants, ice time for games and practices, league fees and a team jacket)</i>	\$ 17,000.00		
<i>Individual player equipment bags</i>	\$ 570.00		
<i>Player sweater bags</i>	\$ 658.47		
<i>Jackets for coaches</i>	\$ 400.00		
<i>Goalie sticks</i>	\$ 144.78		
<i>Player hockey gloves</i>	\$ 1,684.50		
<i>Player track suits</i>	\$ 1,760.00		
<i>Sponsor names on sweaters</i>	\$ 352.50		
<i>Player water bottles</i>	\$ 92.00		
<i>Equipment repairs</i>	\$ 35.00		
<i>Extra game socks</i>	\$ 240.00		
<i>Player names sewn on sweaters</i>	\$ 285.00		
<i>Player practice sweaters</i>	\$ 345.00		
<i>Practice socks for players</i>	\$ 253.00		
<i>Additional training camp ice</i>	\$ 963.00		
<i>Additional weekly practice ice time</i>	\$ 5,382.10		
<i>Pucks &amp; tools</i>	\$ 173.00		
<i>First aid kit</i>	\$ 200.00		
<i>Printing of team annual program</i>	\$ 1,475.89		
<i>Photographer for team photos</i>	\$ 154.00		
<i>Off-ice conditioning with trainer</i>	\$ 4,012.50		
<i>Team building dinner</i>	\$ 700.00		
<i>Local tournament fees no. 1</i>	\$ 750.00		
<i>Local tournament fees no. 2</i>	\$ 750.00		
<i>Travel tournament fees no. 3</i>	\$ 350.00		
<i>Meals at tournament no. 3</i>	\$ 1,964.06		
<i>Bus for tournament no. 3</i>	\$ 3,285.00		
<i>Hotel for tournament no. 3</i>	\$ 4,837.35		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$48,817.15</b>		
<b>Budgeted cost per player (19)</b>	<b>\$ 2,569.32</b>		
<b>REVENUES (from fundraising)</b>			<b>\$24, 500.00</b>
<b>ACTUAL COST per player</b>			<b>\$ 1,279.85</b>

Any way you look at minor hockey, there is a cost to play. Whether the funds come out of your pocket or through your efforts to raise money, it should not be taken lightly. Make sure that your children are getting your money's worth with quality coaching and good equipment. This will be the foundation to their development and increase their value as players for teams as they get older.

A successful season is not about winning and losing. It is about having fun. Making an event run smoothly or explaining what is required from parents and their children will make many people happy. You cannot go wrong if you provide a kind, courteous and upfront policy with those around you.

## CHARACTERISTICS

Successful executives and managers tend to follow a pattern. Quality managers know the facts before they make decisions or pass judgment. They deliver their message clearly. They make themselves available to those around them. They are on time. They are respectful first and they always present themselves professionally. Make sure that you like talking to people, otherwise you will have a hard time handling this position.

## GETTING INVOLVED—THE SIX FUNDAMENTALS

If you want to get involved in minor hockey management either by volunteering or getting a paying job, then make sure you apply these six fundamentals to managing effectively:

1. **Know the facts**—Find out the whos, whats, wheres, hows and whens of events or situations. Ask questions and listen.
2. **Speak clearly**—When communicating with staff, parents or colleagues, be brief and to the point. People will tune you out if you go on and on and on and on and on and on . . . Get the point?
3. **Make yourself accessible**—Allow people to approach you and talk about what is on their mind. You may learn something.
4. **Be on time**—Reply to telephone calls in a timely manner. Arrive at meetings on time. Stick to an agenda if it is your meeting.



5. **Give respect**—Show others respect before you demand it from anyone. Do not ignore people. Even if you do not have an answer, acknowledge requests from people who call or e-mail you.
6. **Look professional**—As a representative of a team or organization, dress appropriately. Be aware of your hygiene—brushed hair, good breath, brushed teeth. It is not very pleasant to stand in front of somebody who should have taken a shower three days ago.

This is nothing new. It is all about being the best you can be. It is exactly what we try to teach our players. Why not do what you want them to learn? The best way to teach is to be the role model. Actions speak louder than words.

If you adopt these suggestions to your style, then you will have fun managing minor hockey.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following Web sites provide information on management and the business side of hockey.

- [www.eteamz.com/icehockey](http://www.eteamz.com/icehockey)
- [www.mapnp.org/library/mng\\_thry/mng\\_thry.htm](http://www.mapnp.org/library/mng_thry/mng_thry.htm)



## CHAPTER 5

# OFFICIALS

“Be not simply good; be good for something.”

*Henry David Thoreau*

The role of officials is an integral part of ensuring both the safety and fairness of the game. This chapter provides a perspective on how officials are more than individuals who skate up and down the ice giving penalties. It's not all black and white, you know!

## OFFICIAL ROLES

Officials in minor hockey are responsible for two main objectives:

1. ensuring that the playing area is safe for all
2. ensuring that the play is fair for all

To carry out those responsibilities, there are officials in both *on-ice* positions and *off-ice* positions. Officials are like the police—they enforce the rules and reprimand rule-breakers.

## ON-ICE OFFICIALS

The game is so fast and emotions fly so high that many incidents between teams occur due to the heat of the moment. Consequently, on-ice officials are needed to provide an unbiased outlook and watch the game with neutral eyes. They are responsible for ensuring fair play and safety for everyone on the ice.

The on-ice officials do more than watch the play and make calls. They ensure that all of the game's rules are carried out appropriately. Unlike tennis or other games with sideline judges, hockey officials have to skate with the play as fast as the players and actually become involved in tight situations to make a call. Officiating tasks are clearly defined and divided between two roles known as *referees* and *linesmen*.



The referee's responsibility is to watch over the entire game. He makes calls on penalties, signals goals and communicates with coaches and players. He is like the boss of a company—what he says goes.

The linesman supports the referee. The linesman ensures fair play between both teams on the ice and calls the game rules. Although the referee calls the penalties and goals, the linesmen can help the referee by providing input on what they see. They control the rough stuff between players. Consider him the silent watchman.

### **ON-ICE SET-UPS**

In minor hockey, there are two types of set-ups for officials: a 3-man system and a 2-man system. The 3-man system, which includes one referee and two linesmen, is utilized in elite calibers of minor hockey. The 2-man system is used in house league, rep and some select levels. In this type of system, both officials act as referee and linesman and both make calls on penalties, goals and game rules. They are able to do this without confusion because they each take half of the ice ("split" lengthwise) and are responsible for making calls in their section.

### **OFF-ICE OFFICIALS**

These roles are known as goal judge, scorekeeper and timekeeper. Their purpose and responsibility is to keep track of the game's outcome as it relates to the game time and the score. In many cases during minor hockey games, the timekeeper and scorekeeper are the same person. They sit in a designated enclosed area at the center red line behind the boards. Goal judges are usually used for games at the elite levels and will be positioned behind the glass of each net to identify if a goal was scored or not. In both cases, the off-ice officials are in constant communication with the on-ice officials.

### **THE OTHER OFF-ICE OFFICIALS**

They are responsible for game management and work together with other officials. There are two types of off-ice officials: referees-in-chief and supervisors. Referees-in-chief are responsible for the management of on-ice officials and the integrity of the rules. They are appointed by a regional

association, branch or league to make sure that the on-ice officials carry out the games' rules. They are responsible for the quality of officiating across all levels of hockey that fall under their jurisdiction.

The referee-in-chief employs supervisors to carry out some of these tasks. Supervisors assist the referee-in-chief by managing and supporting the on-ice officials. They watch the referees and linesmen in games and provide proper input and development for them and the game. Regardless of the on-ice officials' certification levels, the referee-in-chief makes sure that the rules are carried out to ensure safety and fair play for all players. Supervisors are usually officials with extensive experience. They provide feedback through an evaluation process that serves a dual purpose: to watch objectively and provide valuable information for improvement and provide a means of giving back to the game. It is in the interest of most senior officials to help the up and coming officials. This allows them to share their experience and provide valuable insight for the growth of the game.

## CONDUCT

There are times when the look and feel of a hockey game are influenced by the way it is officiated. I have seen games where an official is determined to make a point and will react to the fans instead of making the calls. I have also seen games that flow so well that it feels like there are no officials. Like players, coaches and others involved in minor hockey, officials usually enjoy the game. Being effective as an official requires an appropriate code of conduct.

### BE CALM

Situations that have two parties at odds with each other require a third party who is composed and unbiased. Officials must remain calm and communicate effectively when dealing with two sets of biased fans, players and coaches. When these two sides clash, the official becomes the warden of safety and fair play in the game.

### LISTEN

Listening is the most important skill for officiating. You must be able to listen more than you speak. It is important to understand what players mean

when they speak to you and understand the coach's intentions. For example, during a game, when the coach opens the door to the players' bench, is it to delay the game to get his players rested, is it to ask a question, is it to rant and rave to rile up the other team or is it because he doesn't understand the call or the rules? If you have good listening skills, you will be able to understand what is going on in these types of situations.

### **BE CONFIDENT**

When you are on the ice, be sure of yourself. Even if you are not, don't let on. Nobody will know. Act as if you are confident and make the call.

Whether you make a bad call or not is not the issue. How you handle the situation is important. Remember that players and coaches want to play the game. Your job is to make it safe and fair so that they can play.

### **BE PREPARED**

Preparing to officiate a game requires a small amount of time. Referees are taught how to properly prepare by following a series of steps. These steps are also outlined in their procedures manual and include activities such as arriving at the rink ahead of time or going over duties with other officials.

When officials arrive at a rink, they may not know with whom they will be working. In the lower levels of hockey where there is usually a 2-man system, officials need to know what each person will do. They need to understand each other's expectations to maintain a harmonious officiating relationship. In the higher levels of hockey where there is a 3-man system, the referee will usually state his style and expectations of his linesmen. However, two of the most important preparation activities that are not emphasized but highly recommended are body preparation and facility preparation.

- ***Body preparation***

Before leaving for a game, pack water, fruit, a bagel or a muffin.

Working a game can be as strenuous as playing and you need to replenish lost nutrients. Your body needs to be hydrated, so drink prior to getting dressed (refer to chapter 12—Nutrition). Make sure

that you stretch properly. Your muscles need to be warm and stretched. Constantly going from a stationary position to a full stride is a strain on your muscles and joints. More injuries occur due to improper or no warm-up than as a result of accidents. Pulled hamstrings, twisted ankles and groin pulls are common injuries that occur from lack of warm-up. Wear appropriate equipment.

- ***Facility preparation***

Being aware of your surroundings can help you to perform your job properly. It is important to know the placement of arena attendants in case you need to call upon them during the game. Be aware of available emergency services and equipment. Always look for ice, board or glass damage that could be a detriment to the players' safety. Check the net for holes in the mesh. The official's ultimate role is to make sure that the game is played fairly and safe for the players.

## EQUIPMENT

Black and white striped shirts, helmets and half visors make up the outer uniform for on-ice officials. Elbow pads, shin pads and a jock are undergarment protection preferences (not obligatory equipment) for referees and linesmen. Many people wonder why players have to wear full visors in minor hockey and officials wear only half visors. When I asked an official about the half visors, he laughed and said, "How are we going to blow the whistle?"

Over the years, the game has become quicker and the players have grown stronger. Officials need to take care of themselves just as players do. It is recommended that they wear undergarment protection such as shin guards, elbow pads and a protective vest. This will provide protection from flying pucks or unpredicted falls. Lastly, one important and basic piece of equipment is needed to make the uniform look clean and consistent—a white pair of laces for the skates.

## PAPERWORK

Officials are not immune to paperwork. Although it is not as exciting as skating with future hockey stars, it is a necessary obligation to fill in certain

forms. When incidents occur, the game sheet can get quite full of ink. Post-game reports need to be compiled with all of the activities to describe the event and everything that led up to it. They can also serve as legal records if an event is ever brought to court.

Imagine a scuffle on the ice with five or more players. Tempers flare and one bad action leads to another. Hands start flying and players embrace as if they are ready to waltz. Who did what to whom and when? This is all key information that is needed when penalties are assessed. If it gets out of hand with extensive abuse by players, then this information needs to be reported to the league for other ramifications.

A post-game report must include:

- The date on which the game was played
- The number of the game (assigned by the league)
- The time and location of the incident
- The name and number of the player who committed the offense
- The name and number of the player who was the victim
- The details that led to the event
- The action taken (i.e., what was said, what penalty was assessed)
- Details of any injury that occurred

This kind of report should not take you more than a half hour to complete. In most cases, the report must be sent to the league within 24 hours from the end of the game. Follow this quick and easy process:

1. Jot down all the details you can remember on a scrap piece of paper without worrying about the order. At this point, you need a place to hold your thoughts until you can organize them.
2. Number your points in chronological order and transcribe them clearly on the back of the game sheet. Follow the order listed in the previous section.
3. In simple terms, write a description of the incident. Leave out your opinion of what the player's intentions were unless you heard him mention specifics.

4. Ask another official to read it for consistency and clarity.
5. Make a copy of the game sheet for your records.
6. Put everything together in an envelope and send it in with your name as the author of the report.

The clarity of this report is vital. During the review process by league officials, branch officials and, in extreme cases, officers of the law, what you write can affect the outcome for those involved. Make sure that you keep your sentences simple and to the point.

## SKILLS

Referees and linesmen need to skate well, learn the rules and know the procedures of managing a game. The procedures for carrying out the rules are explained in an officiating procedures manual that is given to officials during training. Understanding game strategies allows a referee to feel better about what may occur in a given situation. Anyone who becomes involved in officiating certainly does not need to be a hockey expert. Individuals who want to become referees or enhance their current officiating skill level can develop a better comprehension of coaching techniques and team tactics.

## TRAINING

There is a complete training process for officials in minor hockey. In Canada, for example, referees and linesmen must attend a school to pass a test for re-certification every year. Officiating a game that has speed, strength and emotional pressure is not a simple task. Becoming a top quality referee requires knowing the rules and understanding the procedures completely. You should also be in excellent physical condition and conduct yourself with respect.

## DEVELOPMENT

Development is about moving up in the levels of hockey. Officials can work a game at any level to gain experience. Unlike a coach who has to deal with the various maturity levels of his players or knowledge of the game,



officials call the game as they see it. The rules that apply at the Midget level also apply at the Tyke level. Whether a referee works a game in house league or elite hockey, he will need to call penalties and goals and ensure fair play.

Throughout the summer, referees develop their skills in refereeing schools. Clinics occur in the early part of the season. As in most jobs, assertiveness and confidence usually develop with experience and on-the-job training. Development also occurs through the advancement from league to league and level to level.

Raising your arm or blowing your whistle is a simple task. How you raise your arm and blow your whistle will show how much confidence and assertiveness you have in making the call. Most of us tend to act in a strong confident manner when we know our stuff and nothing can deter us from our position. If we are unsure and a little intimidated by others or our surroundings, we may not show the same level of certainty. As an official, you get one chance to make the call. Make it quick and make it clean. According to one of my "official" friends: "Our calls will be unfair in the eyes of some and just in the eyes of others. My advice is don't worry what others will think, just call what you see." Development for officials comes mostly from on-the-job training. Work as many games as you can. You will get better with time.

## COMPENSATION

Officials are paid. If you had to carry out the tasks of enforcing rules in hockey, would you do it as a volunteer? There is a price to ensure that individuals are properly taught the rules and evaluated on a continuous basis. Referees are paid as keepers of peace between two rivals. They receive their schedule a month in advance and make their own arrangements for travel. They are remunerated by the league or by the tournament in which they work, usually in a game-by-game format. It is unlikely to find a referee in a salary position (i.e., paid weekly or bi-monthly) until they reach the major junior, university or professional leagues. Refereeing can be a thankless job at times. Paying them is one way to keep them involved.

## GETTING INVOLVED

If you are interested in becoming an official, then here are some steps that you can follow:

- E-mail, write or call Hockey Canada, USA Hockey or your local hockey federation, branch or league and express your interest to the referee-in-chief or any league official.
- Sign up for training courses to receive the appropriate certification. It will also allow you to meet experienced officials from various professional, university and junior leagues and obtain some excellent tips from them.
- Once you have become certified, “Make the call!” The best thing you can do is get into a game and start officiating. This is the only way to gain experience. Your skills and confidence will develop with each game. Be aware that there is no good or bad game to officiate. All games at any level are good games to officiate.
- Get into shape. If you think that officiating a game is a leisure skate, think again. It can be physically demanding. In order to prepare, your body needs a good stretch, proper nutrition and quality exercise to help you achieve your goal of being a quality official.
- Make sure that you talk to other officials, as well as league and branch representatives, about procedures and opportunities for advancement up the officiating ladder.
- If you are an experienced official, then volunteer to supervise other officials in your area. The best way to improve the game is to share your experiences with up-and-coming officials.

The next time you watch a game, look at it as if you had to make the call. Watch the players and coaches on both teams. Consider what their reactions might be to your call. If you must call a penalty, then you are bound to make one team happy and the other one upset. Officials are not in the game to be the fall guys. They are there to enforce the rules. It is important to have respect for those involved in minor hockey. The game is played by players, not referees.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Check out the following list of Web sites where you can find more information on officials and officiating:

- [www.refschool.com](http://www.refschool.com)
- [www.hockeyofficials.com](http://www.hockeyofficials.com)
- [www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/officials](http://www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/officials)
- [www.usahockey.com/usa\\_hockey/officials/officials/home\\_officials//](http://www.usahockey.com/usa_hockey/officials/officials/home_officials//)
- [www.hockeyrefs.com](http://www.hockeyrefs.com)
- [www.afterthewhistle.com](http://www.afterthewhistle.com)

## CHAPTER 6

# COACHING

“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”

*William A. Ward*

Coaching hockey is one of the greatest jobs in the world. Whether you have been asked to be the head coach of a team or you have decided to be an assistant coach, your job is to guide and teach a group of players about hockey. This chapter is about understanding the role of a coach and learning how a coach can be effective in delivering his message.

Minor hockey is where it begins for most youngsters. From the ages of five to seventeen, boys and girls rely on a lead figure to guide them and teach them skills that will make them better players. These are the expectations that you take on as a coach, whether you consider coaching a pastime or a job. You will also bring along your own reasons for coaching, such as the desire to help others or the enjoyment of teaching and interacting with people. Whatever your reason, coaching is an art that requires skill. Do it because you enjoy it. Your enthusiasm will become contagious to your team.

## TEACHING

Learning the game of hockey is not an easy process, especially for a child between the ages of five and seventeen. The game is complex and the quality of teaching or explanation will either help a player to improve or hinder him from developing.

If you can help someone to achieve something or overcome a challenge, then you have taught that person. “If I catch a fish for you, then you will eat for a day. But if I teach you how to fish, you will eat for life.” Telling your players what to do gets the task done. However, teaching them to become better individuals makes them eager to learn more.

Teaching is more than demonstrating what you know. It is about asking questions and listening to the answers. It is about letting people learn and discover on their own. It is also about wanting to give unconditionally to those around you. Remember, coach hockey because you want to help, not because you have a need to speak. The results will be rewarding for both you and your players.

Still worried that you may not be needed unless you have something to say?

Think about this. Since you started coaching, has there ever been a season where you did not learn something about the game? If you are like most people in hockey, you probably learn every day. The best part is that your learning can come from anywhere and from all kinds of teachers. As long as there is the need to learn something, there is the need for teachers. As a coach, it is important to be able to teach effectively because the game needs to improve in order to grow. Since growing the game starts with growing the people, the game needs quality teachers.

As a coach, sometimes you get caught up in what you do or what you need to do. Before imposing your lessons on your players, find out what they want to learn. What do they want to improve? What do they want to get out of the season? What do they think you will be able to do for them? They will be more responsive to your teaching if they are interested. Be the teacher they need, not the coach you think they should have.

Some professional hockey players believe that their experience gives them the ability to coach and teach hockey but that is not necessarily true. Being able to play the game does not mean that you can teach it well. I am not suggesting that a former player cannot be a good coach. I am saying that it takes a different type of skill to be a coach than it takes to be a player.

Whether you are a coach or a coach-to-be, make sure that you understand and are clear about what it is that you want to teach.

## YOUR BEHAVIOR

I am a believer in Canada's National Coaching Certification Program's (NCCP) philosophy, which states that every coach needs to have a code of

ethics. When I took the NCCP's Theory Level III training (which I highly recommend if you are a Canadian coach), one of our assignments was to write our code of ethics. I had an idea of what they wanted but it was not until I read the definition in Merriam Webster's dictionary that I was able to put my code of ethics into my own words. Writing our own code of ethics was important in the program because it helped us to answer two questions about ourselves:

1. What do I believe in as a coach?
2. How should I act as a coach?

It was clear to me that the answer to these questions would come shining through in my decisions, my speeches, my tone and my body language. I realized that my behavior was controlled by my beliefs and values as a coach. If I changed my beliefs, then I would change my approach to coaching.

Hockey is a game that requires you to be in the right mindset to be effective. Remember, as the captain of the ship, you must know how to steer it because the players follow your lead.

## MY CODE OF ETHICS

Here is my own personal Code of Ethics. I live by these words when I coach any team. Merriam Webster's dictionary defines Code as "*a system of principles*" and Ethics as "*the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation.*" Nothing could be more succinct to define my basis of coaching. It became my own personal foundation for my behavior:

*"My system of principles requires a discipline to deal with what is good and bad, with moral duty and obligation."*

Then I broke it down to specifics for my conduct.

*My system of principles . . . [to me this means:]*

1. Be there in mind and body
2. Be helpful and fun
3. Be honest and fair

*... requires a discipline to deal with what is good and bad,  
... [to me, this means:]*

1. Listen effectively
2. Speak with integrity
3. Act professionally and responsibly

*... with moral duty and obligation. [to me this means:]*

1. Teach with a purpose
2. Guide with care
3. Empower for the future

Ethics are your primary trait as a coach. They will become clear in your behavior and will dictate how to conduct yourself. This is the most important thing to master while you are a hockey coach.

## COMMUNICATION

Communicate your message so that your players understand. This game is about people. Anytime you are presenting or speaking with people, think about how they are receiving your message. How you speak is vital to your players' understanding. It is not always *what* you say, but *how* you say it that can make the difference.

Have you ever asked someone, "How are you?" and the person harshly replied, "Fine!" while gritting his teeth? Did you really believe that this person was fine? Probably not. The tone of voice was not congruent with the words and it was an indication of a feeling that was, in all likelihood, something more negative than positive. The tone of your voice makes a big difference in how the meaning of your words is interpreted.

Body language is another means of communicating. Have you ever been given the 'evil eye'? How did it make you feel? Although there was no exchange of words, communication was still achieved through body gestures. Since 55% of your communication is body language, the best way to get a message across to your listener is to make your body speak effectively. When I took a course on Presentation Skills, the first thing we did was prepare a 5-minute speech that we presented to the class. The

instructor made a videotape of this delivery and analyzed our presentation and our manner of speaking. At the end of the course, we redelivered our original presentation to the class and we were taped again. The results were outstanding. The second taping showed how everyone in the class delivered with more impact the second time around. The biggest improvement was not in the content but in the presentation and delivery.

As a coach, you may not even be aware of the message your body is delivering when you are speaking. In addition to hockey skills training, consider taking a course on presentation skills. You will learn all about voice projection and tone. You will also learn how body language can influence the meaning of your message. You will learn to engage your players and drive home the message.

Coaches are not the only ones who can benefit from being aware of their voice tonality and body language. Players, take note! When you slouch, drag your feet or roll your eyes, the message to the coach is that you are not interested in what he is saying. Show your team spirit and enthusiasm with a smile, a nod and a pleasant demeanor. It will serve you well when things get a little stressful on the ice.

## MAKE YOUR POINT

“So what’s your point?” As a coach, this is a sure-fire way to know that you are not getting the message across. In your mind, you probably have a clear picture of what you want to communicate. The problem is that you have not been able to deliver this message to your players. It is easy to get frustrated when players do not follow what you are trying to explain. Your coaching staff may agree to follow your lead but will look at each other in puzzlement if they do not get your point.

Messages can be in the form of a drawing, written notes or a speech. Whatever form they take, the receiver of the information should be able to easily follow along. There is a simple way for you to accomplish this using the P.O.I.N.T. Strategy. You will become clearer in delivering your messages because you are now able to articulate your thoughts. The feedback you receive will confirm that your players understood the message. Your team and those around you will want to listen to you.



Regardless of the level of hockey you coach, the following strategy will teach you how to think before you speak. The message will be clearer in your own mind and it will come across that way.

## **P.O.I.N.T. STRATEGY**

The five basic steps to making your point are:

**P**lan, **O**rganize, **I**mplement, **N**urture and **T**rack it.

### **PLAN**

Make sure that you know exactly what you want. Write it down, talk it out or capture it in a format that works for you. Your plan can be as complicated as a season plan, as detailed as a practice or as simple as a pre-game speech. The key is that you must be able to see the result in advance.

In this first step, your goal is to write down everything that comes to mind. There is no specific order. Take into account the audience and the age group to whom you will present. Make sure that you understand the risks and responsibilities. Include the reasons behind the goals or outcomes. Remember that, as a coach, what you do affects the lives of your players. The basis of your plan depends on where you are, where you want to be and how you will get there. This will give you the start to making your POINT.

### **ORGANIZE**

Arrange all the steps that need to happen from your plan in a concise and chronological manner. Decide when you want things to happen and with whom. Put down who you need to call or meet. Find out what resources you have around you. Remember that a resource may be as simple as a page in a book. Whatever you want the order to be, ORGANIZE your list of tasks to clearly make your POINT.

### **IMPLEMENT**

Follow through on what you have just planned and organized. Many people are great at writing plans but they do not follow through. What is the point?

Designing a fabulous plan and putting it in a drawer is absurd and a waste of time. Businesses are also guilty of this and even go a step further by including contingencies. **YOU MUST IMPLEMENT YOUR PLAN TO SUCCEED!** Do what you said you were going to do.

If you follow through but your actions do not work or you do not get the result you expected, then change your plan. The worst thing that will happen is that you will learn something and that will contribute to your growth. Taking action to **IMPLEMENT** your plan is the heart of making your **POINT**.

## **NURTURE**

Empower and encourage your team. Think of giving information to your players as planting a seed. After you plant a seed, you don't just let it be and hope that it grows. You water it, add fertilizer to it, take away any weeds and make sure that it gets the proper lighting. You nurture your plant.

After you have “planted” information in your team, you must nurture it. Tell your team members that this will be a great experience and that you have confidence that they will be able to do this. Get them to provide you with feedback so that you know you have made an impact and that they comprehend what you are saying. This is about putting the organized plan into action and watching it become a reality.

It is all about growth. Nurturing is about growing your players and your staff. Enough cannot be said about being positive, being compassionate, recognizing effort and encouraging quality. In my 20 years of coaching, I have found that I get twice the output by using positive reinforcement over either negative or zero reinforcement. **NURTURING** shows that you care and supports you in making your **POINT**.

## **TRACK IT!**

Write down what happened, how you felt and what reactions you got. Unless you write things down, how will you remember these lessons? I suggest that you make journal entries, collect statistics, keep your practice sheets and write down game summaries. The more you keep track of things that relate to your **PLAN**, the easier it will be for you to assess

whether you need to make changes or whether you decide to use your PLAN again in the future. Keeping good notes allows you to track the success and make your POINT.

In order to make my POINT about how this strategy can be effective, let me give you an example using a pre-game speech.

*PLAN:*

*WHAT DO I WANT?*

I want the players focused on our game strategy. I want them excited and charged. I want to be brief and to the point. I want to be energized. In terms of risk, I want to make sure that I don't isolate my conversation to one or two players but that I address the whole team. In terms of responsibility, I want to make sure that the players know their positions and that my staff is clear on what we are doing. This is important because I want to be aligned with the Season Plan, I want the players to have fun and enhance their experience and I want to enjoy the game myself, along with the staff. For a pre-game speech, where I am is how I speak today, where I want to be is how I want my message to be understood and how I want to get there is what emotional state I will put myself in before I enter the room.

*ORGANIZE:*

*WHAT AM I GOING TO DO TO ACHIEVE IT?*

1. Define and write down the message I want to deliver.
2. Research the Internet to find an appropriate quote for my speech.
3. Consult with my staff and explain what I need from them.
4. Practice my delivery of the message in advance.
5. Do some mental visualization exercises to "see" the outcome in my mind.
6. Rehearse my mantra to get into the emotional state of feeling energized.
7. Get dressed in my blue suit, drive to the arena and arrive in advance.
8. Deliver the message.

*IMPLEMENT:**HOW AM I GOING TO ACHIEVE IT?*

This is where I follow the steps above, one by one, with the outcome of delivering the speech the way I visualized it. If the players are excited and charged, my staff is clear and I feel good, then my goals have been achieved. If the players stare at me with a quizzical look, then my speech did not have an impact. I can either make changes on the spot or learn my lesson for the next game.

*NURTURE:**HOW WILL I GET BUY-IN?*

I empower and encourage my team by asking for feedback right on the spot. Once I am certain that everyone got the message, I lead with the team cheer and send the team on the ice.

*TRACK IT:**WHAT IS THE RESULT?*

Right after talking to my players, I jot down how I felt, how the players responded and the coaches' point of view. I file this away for future reference.

This is an example of how the P.O.I.N.T. Strategy can be applied to a pre-game speech. Remember that this strategy can be used for any aspect of the game, whether it is for parent meetings, post-game speeches, season planning, trips or fundraising. So, make your POINT.

## MOTIVATION

Motivation comes from the word motive—to initiate movement. If you want to coach, then you must be the initiator of movement. You must be able to demonstrate how you want your players to feel. In order to motivate others, you must motivate yourself first.

Motivating yourself means coming from a place of feeling good. When you feel good, you are able to look at a situation as an opportunity. You see a potential positive outcome before you take any action. If you are feeling less than good, you might say that the same situation is a challenge or a

problem. Seeing something as a problem is usually not a good feeling. However, do not despair. You can go from feeling bad to feeling good instantaneously if you choose to do so. All you have to do is move your body in an explosive motion.

### **TRY THIS!**

Stand up, with your arms hanging down by your side and, in one breath, sigh. As you do, let your shoulders drop and your head hang down. Make a straight face—not smiling, not frowning. Take a moment and think about how you are feeling. Without moving, imagine that you are going to the dressing room to get your players ready. In this state of mind, do you expect your team and staff to be charged up and ready to go?

Now from this state, you are going to make a movement. It must be fast and strong. You must use all your might. First, look up and put a big silly grin on your face. Leave it there for this entire exercise. Now straighten your posture by moving your shoulders back. In one explosive move, raise your arms to the sky as far as you can, trying to grab the stars. Open your fingers and stretch them. Keep that silly grin on your face. Bring your arms back to your side. Now you will do it again as fast as you can. Arms up. Arms down. Again. Arms up. Arms down. Faster. Again. Even faster. Silly grin. After doing this movement a few times, how do you feel? Think about walking into a room to talk with players when you are in this state. Will you come across differently than before when you came in with your head hanging down?

Players play the game to feel good too and are looking to you to be the motivator. Before you take a step toward motivating someone else, make sure that you motivate yourself first.

### **KNOWLEDGE IS HALF THE POWER**

Rules are what make up the “dos and don’ts” in a game. Skills are what make you a trained coach, but how you feel gives you the edge. It is the intangible source that gives you the advantage of being a quality coach, such as the feeling you get in a situation that directs you to do something seemingly unexplainable to someone else. Knowing the rules, understanding tactics and strategies and figuring out your team’s weaknesses and

strengths is knowledge taught from a textbook. Properly using your staff in practices and making your players work hard without burning out is more difficult for a coach to learn and even more difficult to teach to a coach. I have learned throughout my career that making gut or intuitive decisions can sometimes be more effective than a textbook answer. Let me tell you a personal story to describe my point.

It was my third season as a coach. We were in a tournament. It was during the day so the players took time off school for the games. We played our first game at 9:30 AM and lost. In this type of tournament, if a team lost a game, then it would play the next game for a chance at a consolation title. My head coach told the players that if they wanted to go back to school, then they could since our next game was not until 3:30 PM. Half the team went back with the head coach and the other half stayed with me to watch other games. Half an hour after everyone had left, the tournament convener advised me that there was a change in the next game's schedule. We were now going to play at 1:30 PM, which was two hours before our originally scheduled second game. I immediately called my head coach. Since he was a teacher at the school, he rounded up the players as quickly as he could but he knew that the best he could do was make it for halfway through the game. He told me, "Do what you can with what you have." And that is what I did. I was 20 years old. I had not been introduced to any official coaching training. My experience consisted of three seasons as an assistant coach for 14-year-old players. I was now faced with a team of 16 and 17 year olds comprised of one goalie and eight players, which was the minimum amount of players allowed by the tournament.

I was not aware of any defensive trap systems or tactics. My only thought was that I needed to have our players save their energy and then give it everything they had in the third period. Without knowing forechecking systems other than a two-man press, I created a one—four type of fore check. I made four of the players wait for the other team at the center red line and only allowed one to go in to the opponents' end. Today we call it the trap; back then it was about lasting three periods. That is all we did. At the end of the first period, we were down by two goals. Players were tired but confident that the strategy was working. By the end of the second period, we had tied the other team and played very cautiously in the third period. This forced a shoot out after regulation time. I had to give the names of

five players who would be shooters. I figured that if my first four forwards could not score, we had played the game with a valiant effort. My fifth choice was a defenseman, a player who had not had much ice time all year and was not known for his scoring ability. In hindsight, I took a chance. But I knew it in my gut. We won with our fifth shooter and the win allowed us to play in the consolation final the next day, which we ended up winning.

There was a situation where I had to think and act with what I knew at the time and, most importantly, trust my feelings. If you take nothing else from this book, I hope that you will always remember this message for your coaching career. Listen to your gut. The inner voice tells you what to do. No matter how much knowledge you have, if your inner voice tells you that something feels wrong, then it probably is, no matter what the textbooks say. Listen to it.

## DRILLS

Improving a player's mental and physical qualities depends on a few things. There must be clearly laid out goals or objectives. There must be step-by-step procedures. There must be a reward and measurable tools to show correction. Properly utilized drills break down a game into many situations to teach effective positioning, habits and results. For a player, it might be as simple as shooting, passing or stickhandling. It might also be as complicated as positional play strategies and special team tactics. Regardless of what needs to be accomplished, drills are very productive in accomplishing these goals.

As a coach, you must ensure that your team is prepared for any competition. Running players through drills involves more than saying start and stop. It begins with the design of a season plan. Your objective is to make sure that you encompass the many facets of teaching: complexity level, the objective, what is needed, the proper procedures and the time to accomplish the exercise.

Depending on your team's level, allow your players the necessary time to comprehend what is being expected of them. Have you ever drawn a

bunch of Xs and Os on a board expecting your players to complete the drill at hand with perfection and then became upset when they did not? Did it have anything to do with how you presented the drill?

If you are clear in your mind about what you want to teach, then you must explain and describe it clearly. Name your drills. Players can relate when their activities are identified by name. Explain the purpose of the drill. Use words that they understand, like “This will improve our ability to gain the opposing team’s blue line.” Why else do you practice if not to improve and learn? Draw the drills on a clean board.

Describe the drill starting with where you want everyone to be first. Then explain the first person’s task. So many times coaches start with the first person’s job to start the drill. Sure enough, when he has finished, somebody asks, “Where do we go?” Welcome questions from players. If you can have one or two questions ready, then it would help to break the ice for someone who is not sure. You want to stress the importance of the overall objective and how communicating with each other will help.

## **DRILL DESIGN**

Enhancing your skills can be as simple as learning to design your own drills. You have created a plan, implemented it and things are running smoothly. You are a successful leader of your team. How can you challenge yourself to improve? Design your own drills.

There are three key reasons why getting into drill design for your practices is important for your skill enhancement. It increases your thinking speed, improves your adaptability to situations and allows your creativity to flow.

Let me begin with the speed at which you process your thoughts. Take mathematics for example. If you are asked to add two plus two, you will not stop to count. You will automatically process the query and reply “four.” You are programmed for that response. However, if I ask you, “Does 9 go into 702 evenly?” you might have to take out your calculator or pen and paper, unless you know about “The Trick.” The trick is: if the digits of any whole number add up to 9 or a multiple of 9, then that number can be



divided by 9 evenly. Therefore, in our example of 702, when you add up  $7+0+2$ , the sum equals 9, which means that 702 can be divided by 9. Would knowing the trick have helped you to find the answer quicker? Absolutely!

How then does designing drills make you think quicker? When you design a drill, you will integrate the objectives you created for your Season Plan. You know that, at any given time in the year, there are certain key areas that you want to improve or develop. By designing or customizing your own drills, you will waste less time searching for the perfect drill in books or on the Internet and you will actually think of what it is you want to work on. That will help to increase your thinking speed.

The second reason is to increase your adaptability to situations. When you design your own drills, you will be able to think ahead. Instead of trying to memorize a drill that you want to teach, you will think of ways to create the appropriate drill for the specific situation. Have you ever had a practice where things do not go according to plan and time is wasted? One of your goalies does not show up or some of your forwards were called up to play for your affiliate team. Or maybe a member of your coaching staff is late to a practice. In all of these cases, your original plan no longer applies. If you copied a drill down, then you may have to go with something else or that drill will not be executed to plan. By designing your own drills, you have trained yourself to think of what is important for that practice and what pieces of equipment or resources are needed. You can adapt or redesign what you have. You may even be able to do it without writing it down. The best part of all is that you will stay on track with your plan—your roadmap to success.

Lastly, designing your own drills will enhance your creativity. When we create in life, we are at our best. Whether we cook a gourmet dinner, build a birdhouse or sketch a portrait, we come to life when we create.

The game is fast enough. Slow it down by speeding yourself up. Learning to adapt to situations will reduce stress and keep you on course. Design your own drills and enjoy the miracle of creating.

## DRILL APPLICATION

In a practice, drills are where players can be creative, make mistakes and eliminate their fears. It will increase confidence and provide a greater fulfillment in playing.

You need to consider how you will correct players' mistakes as well. This can be the one thing that makes or breaks the players' quality of learning and level of experience. If you can have more than one coach on the ice with you, it allows you to talk with the players. When you talk with them, keep it positive and always ask the player how he can make it better or different. The game is about options and decisions. You may not be able to perfect a drill for every player but you might be able to teach the ability to make better decisions.

## COACHING DEVELOPMENT

Development as a coach is an ongoing process. You are shaped by each season that you are involved in the game. By offering variety to your players, you deliver a message that you care, you are open and you are in the present and not stuck in the past.

We have all seen or heard about the coach who is stuck in his old ways. The game of hockey keeps changing and evolving. Your job as a coach is to continue to make it fun, educate the players and enjoy the process. Keep it in perspective for those around you and they will always come around for your guidance. To further your knowledge and skills, I recommend that you register with Hockey Canada's Coaches' Club ([www.coachesclub.net](http://www.coachesclub.net)). To register and benefit from a wealth of information, go to the [www.hockeycanada.com](http://www.hockeycanada.com) Web site. It is full of tips and information that will hone your skills.

As a coach, you are expected to teach specific skills, expand the understanding of situations to players and demonstrate how respect for each other will influence their lives in a positive way. It is an immense task and one that only a few people dare to attempt. With each passing season, the experiences can make you a better coach and a better person. Plan well, execute well and praise yourself for a job well done. May your whistle always blow loudly.

## COACHING COACHES

Ever since I started playing hockey, I believed that having someone to cheer me on and give me input would help me to improve. A quality coach will help to make an athlete better. They will challenge them, discover what makes them tick and get the best out of them. Mentors can offer guidance to coaches and help them be the best that they can be. Finding a mentor can be as easy as speaking with another coach or as formal as participating in Hockey Canada's Mentorship Program.

Mentoring in hockey allows a coach to have a coach. If you are a coach, a mentor helps you to deliver your message. He will make sure that your message is clear. He provides feedback on what is working and what needs improvement. Hockey Canada has developed a certifiable mentor program for coaches. It is comprised of certified coaches across the country who want to give more of themselves as coaches by helping other coaches get better. The idea is to have coaches help each other without the fear of job security. It is completely confidential and designed to provide feedback about the coach to the coach.

My most trying year in coaching was one where I had been challenged over the rules that I had set for the year. One particular rule stipulated that no other sport could be played during our hockey season. Our goals were set high—winning a national championship. I believed at that time that the players needed to focus on hockey. The players were sixteen and seventeen years old. They liked their high school sports as well. Our team was a community team. Having a mentor that year saved me some grief. He told me that flexibility in my rule might relieve a lot of stress in the long term by having parents and players feeling less restrained. I decided to change the rule so that the players could play other sports but not on game day. For the majority of the team and parents, it was a great concession. For two players, it was not acceptable. They walked off the team and played with their other team. I felt that I had done the right thing in modifying my rule for the health of the team.

My mentor did not make my decision but he did show me that there could be consequences and that I should look at all the alternatives. I do not

think that any of us as coaches believe that we have all the answers. But sometimes we may think that we do and get stuck on what is right rather than what is important.

If you are a mentor, then guide your coach. Ask your coach questions that will allow him to think about what he wants to accomplish. One of the best ways to see if you are a good coach is to be a coach for someone else. As a mentor, you will be challenged and you will be expected to be the answer in any given situation. You will be looked upon as a confidant and trusted with personal feelings. When I was a mentor, there were times where my protégé-coach looked to me to have all the answers. It took a lot of willpower to hold back from putting on my coaching hat and saying, “Do this and this.” Instead, I worked through the situation with him and asked him questions to bring out his concerns and feelings. That way, he was the one who came up with the solutions, with a little guidance from me.

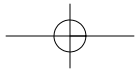
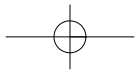
## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following Web sites provide useful information to help coaches in their role.

- [www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/coaches/index.html](http://www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/coaches/index.html)
- [www.usahockey.com/usa\\_hockey/coaches/coaches/home\\_coaches/](http://www.usahockey.com/usa_hockey/coaches/coaches/home_coaches/)
- [www.eteamz.com/icehockey/](http://www.eteamz.com/icehockey/)
- [www.hockeycoach.com](http://www.hockeycoach.com)
- [www.ahcahockey.com/](http://www.ahcahockey.com/)
- [www.playbetterhockey.com/coachinghockey.asp](http://www.playbetterhockey.com/coachinghockey.asp)
- [www.heycoachsoftware.com](http://www.heycoachsoftware.com)

The following books are excellent references to learn more about coaching.

- “The Hockey Handbook” by Lloyd Percival
- “Coaching” by Dave Chambers
- “The Hockey Coach’s Manual” by Michael A. Smith





## CHAPTER 7

# INDIVIDUAL SKILLS

"I skate to where the puck is going to be,  
not to where it has been."

*Wayne Gretzky*

Individual skills are associated with a player's physical movements. These skills are specialized and allow individuals to play at an optimum level in hockey. In this chapter, we will discuss the basic skills for players and goalies as well as the factors that affect skill development.

## THE BASICS

The three basic skills that will aid or impede the performance of players and goalies are skating, shooting and passing. In addition, players should also be concerned with puck handling skills; goalies should be concerned with goaltending skills. Although they can be mistaken for skills, taking a face-off, blocking shots and body management are known as Individual Tactics. These topics will be covered in Chapter 9.

It is very important for hockey players to master the basic skills of skating, shooting and passing. These basic skills are also important to coaches, scouts and fans. Yes, even fans! Imagine that you are watching a game. One particular player is always falling, missing shots or fanning on passes. He seems to be out of his league. It becomes annoying to watch the game because this player interrupts the flow of the game. Making occasional mistakes is acceptable but repeated displays of poor skill levels make fans nervous about the player getting injured or causing injury to others.

Players should master the basic skills because they are the ones performing. It allows them to be successful and enjoy the game. To coaches, the basic skills are important because they need to specifically teach them to players; therefore, they need to thoroughly understand the skills' biomechanics (or make-up). For scouts, seeing the basic skills in action allows them to analyze a player's performance level and decide what can be corrected and what makes them a potential prospect.



## SKILL #1—SKATING

Skating is the most important skill in hockey. If you cannot skate, then you cannot play. Skating can be either in motion or stationary. There are two types of motion skating: forward and backward. There are two states while stationary: stops and starts. Motion skating involves different techniques such as pivots, turns and crossovers. Stationary techniques include T-push starts and V-break stops.

Skating forward is critical because 80% of the game is played with the players skating in the forward direction. The other 20% involves backward skating in situations such as when a goalie moves back to protect his net, when a defenseman is attacked or when a player moves into position.

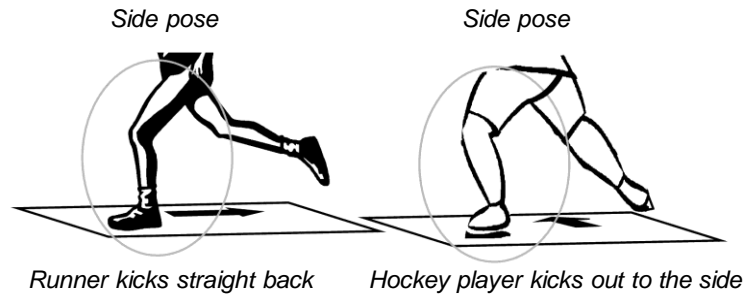
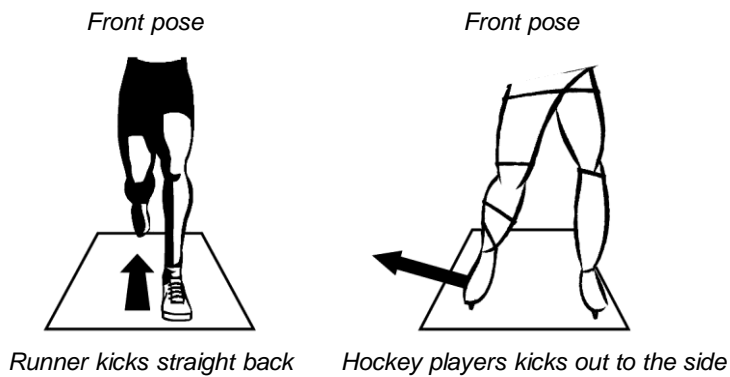
### HOW DO WE SKATE?

The simplest way to teach forward skating is to compare the movement to that of a runner (diagrams 7-1 and 7-2). When a person runs, his body, legs and arms move in the same linear direction as if following an imaginary line. While one leg is always under him as a support, the other kicks back to propel him forward. That makes up one portion of his stride. The other portion consists of the arm movements. In skating, the leg motion is similar to that of the runner. One leg is under the body to act as a support while the other kicks to the side to propel him forward. It is impossible for a skater to kick straight back as there is no traction because of the skate blade. I would like to emphasize the importance of the support leg.

To understand if you are skating effectively, try this exercise:

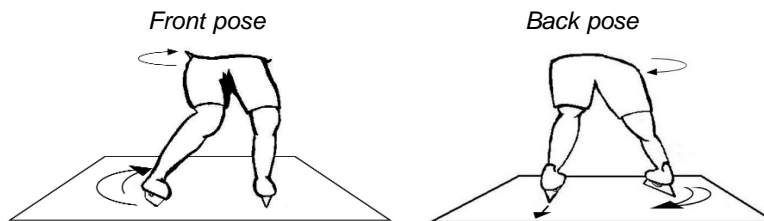
1. Stand straight with your feet side by side.
2. Bend your knees slightly over your toes (you will feel a slight tightening of the leg).
3. Lift one leg toward the back so that your whole body rests on the other leg.

This is how it feels when you are on the ice taking a forward skating stride. The support leg helps you to maximize your power and speed in your stride. The following diagrams illustrate the proper positioning of the leg.

**Diagram 7-1****Diagram 7-2**

*Note: The difference between the runner and the hockey player is the leg on the kick back. The runner kicks the leg back in a straight line while the skater pushes it out to the side.*

Backward skating involves moving in the direction that your back is facing. It uses a different technique to move. Where forward skating requires a linear outward push, backward skating requires a semi-circular inward push. (Diagram 7-3). Defensemen and goalies must master the skill of backward skating.

**Diagram 7-3 (backward stride)**



For both forward and backward skating, balance and body positioning are important.

## SKATING TECHNIQUES

### *PIVOTS*

Pivots are used to go from forward skating to backward skating and vice versa. These movements are made by leaning on a leg, opening the shoulder of that same side and rotating the upper body 180° so that your legs follow and change direction and you continue skating. A defenseman must learn to master this skill at an early age since he is frequently in the situation of skating backwards and then turning forwards. Young players will usually develop the habit of pivoting one way (left or right) more than another. To be a mobile defenseman, it is imperative to pivot both ways.

### *TURNS*

Turns are used to change direction, like a car or bicycle. If a player is skating straight and wants to turn, he will turn his shoulders, head and hips while leaning in the direction that he wants to go. There are two types of turns—the wide lazy turn and the quick sharp turn. The wide lazy turn is used to create space or take away space (for example, forechecking when he does not have the puck or drawing an opponent to him when he has the puck). The quick sharp turn is used for a transitional play (for example, your team loses the puck and the players need to go from an offensive mode to a defensive one).

### *CROSSOVERS*

The crossover technique is used to turn. The feet and legs cross over each other while the head and shoulders turn in the direction that you want to go. For example, if you want to turn left, move your right leg over to the left side of your body. When you skate forwards, the leg that remains under your body to hold your balance (in this case, the left) is the direction in which you will go.

## STATIONARY SKATING

In addition to mastering skating, players also need to excel at starting and stopping (the two stationary states). Most coaches include some starting

and stopping exercises in their practices. Regardless of age, becoming adept at starts and stops will make a skater more effective. There are different techniques for starting and stopping. Let's start with "Starts!"

### *STARTS*

Out of comfort, players will usually take to one technique over another. It is best for players to learn many techniques so that they will be confident about going from a standstill to motion in any given situation. There are three different "starts":

- **T-Push:** Used to move forward in a particular direction when speed is not the focus but balance and force are important (for example, being held along the boards and wanting to push forward).
- **Cross Hop:** Used to move 90° in a hurry (for example, a forward lined up at a face-off wants to go into the opponent's end quickly).
- **Chop-Chop-Chop:** Used when an explosive start is needed from a standstill (for example, wanting to go after a loose puck).

### *STOPS*

In addition to balance and stability, stops are dependent on using the edge of the skate blades. By angling the edge of the blade, it will create a sharp edge that will cut into the ice, resulting in resistance to the ice surface and causing the player to eventually stop. A good analogy is driving a car. If you were to brake suddenly, the car would slowly come to a stop even though the wheels may have locked. Because of the momentum, it is impossible for skaters to stop on a dime. Therefore, stopping will be steady and over a distance. Here are a few examples of "stops":

- **2-foot stop:** Turn skates to either left or right, push down with your knees, lean to left or right and dig your edges into the ice.
- **1-foot or toe drag:** Drag your foot or toe behind you and slow down.
- **1-leg backward stop:** Only in backward skating—one leg stays under the body and the other leg pushes backward and digs edges into the ice.
- **V-stop:** Only in backward skating—toes fan outwards, body leans forward and outside edges grip the ice.

As a player gets older, the power or force exerted will grow and so will the pushing force required to stop and start more quickly. Players need to

learn to master the art of balance and footwork. It will make playing the game of hockey so much easier.

## SKILL # 2—SHOOTING

Shooting, which involves the release of the puck from the blade of a stick in the direction of the goalie, is the second most important skill. The game is played at such a high speed that every player needs to know how to shoot a puck at the net at any given time.

### THE “AIM, READY, FIRE” STRATEGY

You have heard of “Ready, Aim, Fire?” When I coach, I stress the “Aim, Ready, Fire” approach:

- In the **Ready-Aim-Fire** Approach, a player prepares himself comfortably, takes a look at the target and makes his move.
- In the **Aim-Ready-Fire** Approach, a player needs to know where his target is first. Then he prepares himself and makes his move.

There are two reasons for this strategy. First, you don’t have a lot of time so you want to give yourself as much advantage as possible over your opponent. Second, decreasing the gap (the Aim) between the Ready and the Fire will increase your time to react. If you already know where the net is in reference to your stick blade (Aim), then you have a few precious seconds to position yourself (Ready) and make your move (Fire).

Since the puck can come to you at any time, knowing where the net is increases your chances of making your moves effective. It is a useful habit to get into since the natural tendency is to watch the puck and not your target.

### TYPES OF SHOTS

The most successful shooters have learned what I believe to be the key to shooting—deception. When you can hide your intent from the goalie, you gain a second on his movement and catch him on his heels. In order of importance, here are the types of shots used and taught:

- Wrist shot—With the shoulders perpendicular to the target, do a sweeping motion with the stick from the back foot to the front foot while rotating the wrists.
- Snap shot—With the shoulders perpendicular to the target, do a sweeping motion with the stick from the back foot to the front foot while quickly snapping the wrists to release the puck.
- Backhand shot—This is similar to the wrist shot but in the opposite way. With the shoulders perpendicular to the target, do a sweeping motion with the stick from the front foot to the back foot while rotating the wrists.
- Slap shot—Rotate the upper torso away from the target with a maximum amount of follow-through towards the target. (There is a slapping of the puck at point of impact with the stick to the puck.)
- Flick shot—With shoulders parallel to the target, do a quick snap of the wrist with the toe of the stick's blade under the puck.
- Lob shot—Similar to the flick shot but with added strength to lob the puck as high as possible and as far down the ice as possible.

The slap shot is the first one that all young players want to learn or improve because they see older players doing it and know that it will make the puck go harder.

The most effective shot (the wrist shot) is the toughest shot for a goalie to stop because contact with the puck is not instantaneous and the goalie can only tell once the puck is in the air. Until the puck is released from the blade of the stick, the goalie cannot determine the puck's direction. The player's follow-through is the movement of the stick after making contact with the puck. If the player follows through high with his stick, the puck will go high towards the target. If he follows through low with his stick, the puck will stay low. This deception is strategic in becoming an excellent shooter.

The next most effective shot is the backhand shot. It requires balance in the legs and feet and an opposite sweeping motion to the wrist shot. Again it is deceptive because no one knows where the puck is going until it is released. As a player develops wrist strength, he will be able to flick and lob the puck in the air more effectively.

## SKILL #3—PASSING

Passing and receiving a pass are skills that, when done well, will leave your opponents far behind the play or out of position. I always tell my players that the puck on the ice moves faster than a player, so “pass it if you want the other team to give you room to skate.” Passing the puck requires precision and timing just as shooting. Both skills need to hit a target. In the case of a pass, the target is another stick. The release of the puck from the stick is similar to shooting. There will be a snap in the wrist or a sweeping motion. There can also be a flick or backhand pass. A pass is only effective if it hits the target and is received by the intended teammate; otherwise, the puck is given up to the other team.

Quality passing takes two players: the giver and the receiver. Wayne Gretzky, hockey’s all-time greatest player, had an incredible ability to make the perfect pass. However, in order for his passing to be effective, his line mates had to be able to receive the pass. What good would it have been if he was able to make the pass but his teammates never picked it up? It takes two people to make a good pass. Passing and receiving go hand in hand.

### TYPES OF PASSES

Effective puck reception starts with the wrists. Sweeping motions allow for cradling of the puck as it hits the blade. Another technique is getting the puck in the feet and aligning the blade so that the puck bounces forward to the blade of your stick. A fundamental skill is being able to read the boards. Pucks are often bounced off the boards. Knowing where the puck will go gives a player the upper hand in completing a pass. Another skill is being able to pick the puck out of mid-air and guide it to your stick for control. Improving these skills will improve the quality of any player’s game.

Puck movement is a crucial part of the game. It may even allow you to skate less since a puck hit hard enough will travel faster than any skater will.

## BIOMECHANICS OF SKILLS

Biomechanics of a skill are important for one reason. If you are a player, coach or scout, then you know that for each skill, there is a wrong way and a right way to execute that move. For every skill, there are five phases of motion as defined by Canada's National Coaching Certification Program (NCCP). A skill will be technically wrong if one of the five phases of motion is off but can still be executed suitably. Here are the five phases:

1. Preliminary movement—This is the “get ready” stage.
2. Backswing—This is preparing to apply the force.
3. Force—This is focusing strength for impact.
4. Contact, critical instant—This is the most significant moment—the instant of making contact.
5. Follow-through—This is what happens after the critical instant.

Let's take the slap shot as an example of how the five phases are applied.

1. Preliminary movement—The feet, hips and shoulders are aligned to be perpendicular to the target and the stick is positioned at a comfortable distance from the torso.
2. Backswing—This is the take-away (wind-up) from the puck with the stick, using the hands, arms and shoulders, and rotating the upper body. The weight transfer is from the front foot (closest to the target) to the back foot (from the smallest muscles to the largest muscles).
3. Force—The hips and shoulders rotate toward the target as the weight is transferred to the front foot. The stick moves in an arc toward the net (from the largest muscles to the smallest muscles).
4. Contact, critical instant—The stick makes contact with the puck.
5. Follow-through—The force in the body is released toward the target. All the weight is on the front foot. The shoulders and hip continue to rotate toward the target and the arms push toward- the net.

Once you break down a skill in this manner, you are able to correct the mistakes and make adjustments. Regardless of the player's hockey level, skills can always be improved by breaking down the movement into specific motion phases. There are exact points that can be corrected to master a skill.

Coaches need to understand the biomechanics of the various skills in order to correct the techniques appropriately. There is nothing more detrimental to proper development than improper teaching.

## THE COACH'S ROLE IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Teaching is the coach's main function. Part of teaching includes explaining skills and correcting players through proper feedback. The coach develops a player's individual skill by bringing the player to a level that is comfortable enough for him to be effective and challenging him to have the desire to improve.

Demonstration of proper technique is vital. Evaluating step-by-step progress is essential to every player. Players want to know how they are doing. As the coach, you must be clear and concise with what is expected.

## EQUIPMENT AFFECTS SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Performing any of these basic skills requires you to be fully geared up on the ice with specific equipment. If this equipment does not fit correctly, then it can hinder movement and cause injury.

In Chapter 3, we discussed specific equipment requirements. In this section, I want to highlight the effects and benefits of proper equipment on skill development.

As I mentioned earlier, skating is the most important skill in playing hockey. If you think that a good pair of skates is your only worry, then think again. Other pieces of equipment can affect skating. Poorly sized pants, shin pads and athletic supports are the cause of many injuries and bad habits.

Pants that are too big get in the way of shin pads, which affect the stride by preventing the legs from coming together for balance and push.

Oversized shin pads result in poor leg flexibility. Oversized athletic support causes discomfort, rubbing and limited leg motion. Even more importantly, if any of these items are too small, then injuries are more likely to occur when parts of the body are left unprotected.

Improperly sized upper body equipment can cause poor shooting and passing. Gloves that are too big prevent a good grip on the stick and offer very little feel for the puck. Oversized shoulder pads prevent follow-through on shots or passes and expose the body to cuts and bruises. If the helmet is too big, it will float over the head and affect vision. If it is too small, it will cause headaches and leave the face open for injury. Proper skill development relies on the player's physical form as well as on wearing the proper size of equipment.

## AGE AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Age is a major factor in skill development. So many times, I have seen parents yelling at their child to perform a skill a certain way. What these parents don't realize is that developing a skill takes time—that is why it is called developing. An 8-year-old cannot possibly have the same dexterity, quick thinking or experience as a 12-year-old. Developing means growing, improving and strengthening. Individual aptitude can be developed using many resources such as a coach, other players, books or the Internet. Developing a player to maximize his skills takes time and patience. So parents, please allow your child the necessary time and space to develop at his own pace. Remember that playing hockey is all about fun.

## CYCLE OF DEVELOPMENT

Skill development happens in stages for different age groups. For young players, the first stage is balance and agility. They begin to understand what they need to do to stand up on skates, move around and hold the stick. When their strength increases, so does their balance and agility. This then leads to an increase in confidence and a willingness to try more.

As the player gets older, the next stage of skill development is power. Power requires a maximum force in a short amount of time. Players may realize that they are becoming stronger and have more balance but they still use their old habits of slow movements. They need to adopt an



explosive quick movement. This happens by maximizing the amount of force they apply to the skill. Skills such as skating, passing and shooting are more effective with powerful bursts of energy than slow steady motions.

Lastly, in the mid-teenage years, the skill development stage is endurance, which is the ability to sustain repetitive movements over longer periods of time. A good example of this is being able to skate forwards then backwards, receive a body check, make a pass and then take a shot over a period of 90-minute game versus only a fifty-minute game.

This cycle continues for every skill (skating, passing, shooting, stickhandling, goaltending) that is taught.

1. Strengthen the body.

Result—better balance and agility

2. Do the skill quicker with more force.

Result—increase confidence

3. Do it more often.

Result—greater stamina

It takes time but if the coach is aware of this process and the player knows that it will take time to improve, then the development of a player is a wonderful occurrence to watch.

Progression steps occur throughout the development of any skill.

1. The player gains confidence by applying the skill in isolated instances.
2. The player applies that same skill under more pressure.
3. Eventually, he applies his skill at game speed.
4. Finally, the player adopts the skill in a game.

Remember, skill is simply a focused and precise body movement. "Repetition is the mother of skill." Keep practicing. Keep practicing. Keep practicing.

## THE PARENT'S ROLE IN SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Show support to your children. Tell them that their happiness is important. Playing the game is all about enjoying the game and what they are learning. Ask them what they have learned during their practice or game. If they can explain it to you, then they understand it. This is more effective than telling them that they did not do something a certain way. Avoid reprimanding them or showing disapproval about their game. Your children will feel encouraged and loved when you do not pass judgment.

## PRACTICES

John Wooden said, "Perfect practice makes perfect." Development is an ongoing process. Even professional hockey players learn as they grow in their hockey careers. Some say that it is not until they get to professional hockey that they truly grasp an individual skill.

Practicing was one aspect of hockey that I never personally liked as a player. At 16 years old, if given a choice between working on skills in a practice or playing a game, I would have said, "Let's play!" I did not know anything about body motion or the correct biomechanics of a skill. It was not until I became a coach that I realized the importance of practicing and honing skills.

In Canada, there are approximately 1.5 million games played and 2 million practices scheduled every season.<sup>2</sup> Practices are a valuable time to work on individual skills. They allow you the opportunity to perform the skill's proper motion and repeat it often enough until you can turn it into a habit.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following Web sites are good sources to learn more about hockey skills.

- [www.playbetterhockey.com/hockey-secrets.aspx](http://www.playbetterhockey.com/hockey-secrets.aspx)
- [www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/players/index.html](http://www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/players/index.html)
- [www.usahockey.com](http://www.usahockey.com)

<sup>2</sup>Source: Hockey Canada

- [www.hockeywebs.com](http://www.hockeywebs.com)
- [www.safehockey.com](http://www.safehockey.com)

The following books and video provide information on hockey skills (and skating in particular).

- “The Hockey Handbook” by Lloyd Percival
- “Laura Stamm’s Power Skating” by Laura Stamm and Herb Brooks
- “High Performance Skating for Hockey” by Steve Cady
- “Skating, Balance and Power” by Hockey Canada (video)

## CHAPTER 8

# GOALTENDING

“You won’t go far unless you know where  
the goalposts are.”

*Arnold H. Glasgow*

Goalies are a special breed. From the very young to the very experienced, the people playing between the pipes have a unique way about them. I have heard all kinds of descriptions for goalies such as, “He is a loner” or “He’s a strange one” and always figured that people referred to the position rather than to the personality. In the past 20 years, goaltending has expanded from a simple rubber stopper to an acrobatic sixth player with aerodynamic color-coded equipment. Years ago, it was about *being able* to stop the puck. Today it is about *how* to stop the puck.

## STYLES OF PLAY

Styles of play for goalies are more interesting than actually being able to perform the basic skills. Perfecting the “butterfly” style has become the focus for many young goalies today. Unlike a player who needs to perfect the basic skills of skating, passing and shooting before he can decide what style of player he wants to be, the goalie wants to be a butterfly goalie and then work on how to skate or pass the puck. In most cases, if the child is encouraged to play a certain style without learning the basics of skating and passing the puck, he can actually hinder his development. As he gets older, he will have a harder time doing the basics, like skating and making stick saves, which are the two most important skills needed to stop the puck.

There are two ways to stop a puck. Either you are up or you are down. That is, you are on your feet or you are not. If you are not on your feet, then you are on your knees, your stomach, your side or your back.

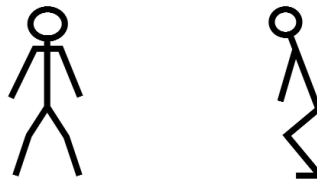
In the last 15 years, there has been a lot of hype about the butterfly style for goalies. So much so that goalie manufacturers like Bauer developed leg

pads that flexed specifically for the butterfly-style goalie. In the eyes of some young goalies, looking like the pros is more important than being effective on the ice with their team.

## PROPER POSITIONING

Looking good in your pose is not important; it is about whether you can stop the puck. First, you must master the positioning or stance. It is important to have a good solid stance, where weight is equally distributed on both feet. You should not be leaning more to the front than to the back. Make sure that your knees are slightly bent and in a tuck-type position with your buttocks down over your heels. This will force you to lean over your knees somewhat with your chest and allow your arms to drop comfortably to your sides. Turn the trapper or catching mitt open to face the puck. Turn your stick hand or blocker over so that the back of your hand faces the puck. You should feel loose in your shoulders and neck. This is the basic stance.

If you were to take off the external ice gear, then you would see that the goalie's ready position is much like that of a baseball, basketball, football, tennis or volleyball player (Diagram 8–1). Being ready to react to a situation is important no matter what the sport.

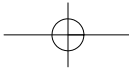


**Diagram 8–1 (Stance):** Front view

Side view

## READY OR NOT!

Many coaches, instructors and trainers show a stance in a variety of ways with a variety of reasons. There is only ONE reason: so that you can be in the best position with your body to react to any given situation. The stance allows you to have your muscles slightly contracted and loose. It allows



you to move in an explosive power motion. As a goalie, you will be ready to make a save or move quickly.

Once you are in the ready position, you need to stop the shot and make the save.

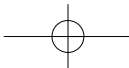
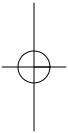
## STOPPING THE PUCK

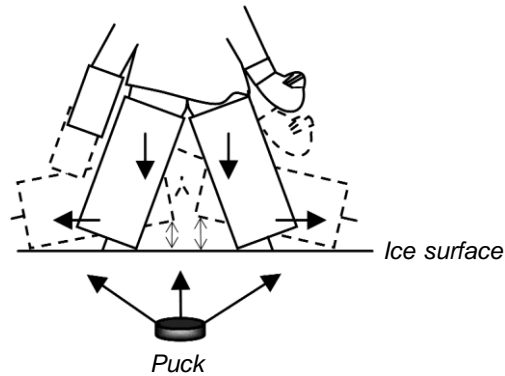
What is a save? I am not sure who came up with that particular term but it does sound better than “a stop.” I suppose that it wouldn’t be as effective for a commentator to end his play-by-play description with “What a stop!” A save is stopping the puck from going in the net.

### STICK SAVE

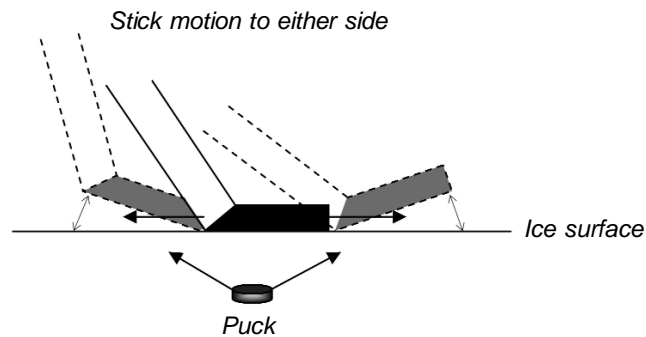
The most important save a goalie can master is a stick save. A stick save is stopping the puck while it is sliding along the ice surface. It may sound boring but 80% of the goals scored in minor hockey are along the ice. For the fans reading this, there is still a 20% chance of watching your favorite goalie make the flashier saves, snaring the puck out of mid-air with the mesh of the catching mitt while doing the splits.

Although it may always be exciting, goals are most frequently scored along the ice for a few reasons. First, the puck weighs 67 ounces, so gravity plays a role. Second, the sticks of players have a blade on the end to control the puck along the ice surface. Lastly, there are more goals along the ice because of how a goalie moves. Whether it is up or down, side to side or merely the movement of the arms, how a goalie moves his stick and his body will determine if it is a save or a goal. Imagine that you are the goalie in the net facing out to the rest of the ice surface. If the puck is approaching either side of you along the ice, then you have to decide how you will move. You can either move your legs in a down and out motion or shuffle your feet to get in front of the puck. If you choose to go down, then you must keep your pads facing the puck so that you have the maximum net coverage. Diagram 8–2 shows how the movement works.



**Diagram 8-2**

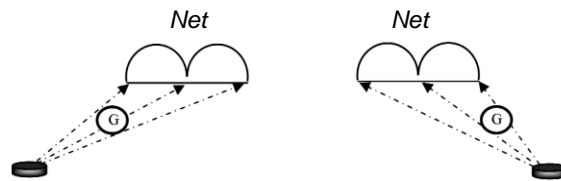
If you choose to shuffle across, then you will move your feet by sliding on the ice and keeping the pads facing the puck. Another option is that you can move your stick as in Diagram 8-3.

**Diagram 8-3**

The distance from the ice surface to the blade increases the further it goes out to the side. Making any save depends upon the speed of movement and the placement of the equipment. However, for shots along the ice, it also depends on covering the opening from the goalie, the equipment and the ice level. It is not easy to be in position and flatten the stick blade on the ice. It takes strength and focus to close the gap so that the puck does not go in the net.

## ANGLES

Angles play a big role in goaltending. There are two schools of thought on this. One is to play the center of the puck and the other is to play with an open side. The center of the puck refers to you being square to the front of the puck and in the middle of the net. The open side allows you to take away the outside of the net and forces the player to go to the other side, which is where you want him to go. The diagram below shows alignment of the Goalie with the puck.



**Diagram 8-4** A) Center of the puck B) Open side

In diagram 8-4 A), the goalie positions himself in the middle of the puck with an equal amount of opening on either side of him. In diagram 8-4 B), the goalie takes away one side of the net forcing the player to go to the other side. In both cases, the effectiveness relies on the goalie's reaction time and anticipation to make a save. Since the player has the puck, the odds are in his favor. Your job as a goalie is to steer the player where you want him to be.

By applying the above strategies, the goalie increases his confidence, keeps loose and agile on the balls of his feet and develops great anticipation. Most good goalies make the first save. Great goalies make the second and third saves. Stance, movement and positioning are the basics in making a goalie successful and improve the odds of having fun.

## PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Goalies prepare just like any other player. They have rituals, dressing routines and mental thought patterns that get them in the playing routine. Goalies warm up differently than other players when they are on the ice.



A goalie needs to feel the puck by getting many shots. A player only has to skate around and maybe stickhandle with a puck. Most minor hockey teams have little prep time so I suggest that you have a good pre-game routine.

Stretching before a game or practice allows you to have quiet time. It allows you to think about what is ahead and how you should be. Once you get out of your street clothes, stretch with your goalie partner. Carry a tennis ball in your bag. Throw it against a wall and catch it to get your hand-eye coordination going. Once you are warm, usually within 10 to 15 minutes, start getting dressed. Make the equipment fit you. Flex, work it and move in it. When you step on the ice, it will be too late for modifications.

Once you are dressed, sit down and do some mental visualization of you in the net. You took a picture of it while you were in the rink; now is the time to use it. See yourself making a save, staying calm and being focused. Associate the smells of the rink and the noise. The more senses you can incorporate with your vision, the more real it will be.

This routine will help you at any level in any rink. It will become a habit and allow you to achieve your goals while in goal.

## EQUIPMENT

In the 1970s, the leg pads and gloves were tan brown leather. The pads were stuffed with horsehair and weighed 40 pounds when they got wet from the accumulation of ice. The gloves made of the same colored leather had the same look as today. The face protection was quite simple—a piece of fiberglass that made you look like Jason from the movies “Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>.” If a helmet was preferred, then it was a bowl-shaped helmet with a shiny chrome cage. Comfort was not a priority in the design. It is not enough that today’s gear protects the young athlete; it should also have a look or style to instill fear in your opponent.

Goaltending involves more than just looking good in bulky equipment. It is about style of play, balance and reaction skills. The puck is being shot faster than ever before. In some cases, it has been clocked at greater than 100 miles an hour. Moving your body with external equipment can be a

challenge. Equipment manufacturers have designed and redesigned their products to accommodate goalies. Through lightening the weight and improving the absorption of the puck's impact, manufacturers have helped to evolve the art of goaltending.

## COACH'S ROLE

Goalies are quite different from players. First, they have no line mate or partner that they can talk to when there is a break in the action. Most of the time, they talk to themselves to stay focused and execute their role. As such, you need to help them prepare and be the best they can be for you and the team.

This can be achieved in your practices. Make sure that drills are designed with game-like situations for goalies. Teach them to read and react to a situation and not just to be a puck stopper. Here is what I typically see. A coach designs a practice that encompasses a warm-up skate, shooting drills and a scrimmage. The goalies are expected to skate and stretch on their own while the coach explains the first drill. The coach blows his whistle to start the drill. Players come down and shoot the puck usually aiming for the corners of the net. In these instances, there are no objectives for the goalie other than to stop the puck. Those first few shots should be designed to warm up the goalie, which means the shots should be on him. This way, he will get a feel for the puck right away, which will build his confidence and allow him to step up to the challenge of each shooter. Giving them goals and objectives in a practice helps goalies to focus. For example, in a specific drill, an objective might be to make the first save. Another objective might be that 90% of all shots on the ice must be stick saves.

Goalies are not targets. In most cases, neither the coach nor the rest of the team speaks to the goalie. Yet in a game, this is the one guy that everyone relies on to save the game. Make sure that you have drills that teach or reinforce goalie skills. Make sure that you communicate with the goalies at least once per practice. Get their opinion on how things are going. Maybe they want more shots on them. They may also be able to provide you with quick statistics like 1 in 5 players are hitting the net. It may also allow you to create a relationship that is not as tense as it is in a game.

There are many books, videos, Web sites and hockey schools that claim to have the answers to being a better goalie. Understanding the basics of skating, the stance and positioning in the net will be a great asset. The style may change over time but the most important skill is to increase reaction time. A goalie must be constant with his emotions. Goaltending is 10% skill and 90% mental.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some Web sites that are focused on the art of goaltending.

- [www.kazlaaz.com/goalies/tips/goalie-tips.html](http://www.kazlaaz.com/goalies/tips/goalie-tips.html)
- [www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/players/goalie.html](http://www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/players/goalie.html)
- [www.goaltending2000.com/index.html](http://www.goaltending2000.com/index.html)

Another great reference is the book, "Hockey Goaltending for Young Players" by Francois Allaire.



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## CHAPTER 9

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# TACTICS

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“A spoonful of honey will catch more flies  
than a gallon of vinegar.”

*Benjamin Franklin*

Combining individual skills with making quick decisions based on different situations can be intimidating and cause you to pause for a split second. That is enough time to be beaten or moved off the puck by an opponent. Players face these scenarios every shift during a game. To be effective in hockey, you need to have strategies in place to handle these situations. A tactic is just that—a strategy. This chapter discusses these situations and the types of tactics that can be used.



### WHAT ARE TACTICS?

Tactics involves adding mental decision-making to an individual skill. For example, checking is a tactic because you must decide how you will use your skating skill to approach your opponent and check him off the puck. It combines skating forward with decision-making to know where you want your opponent to go to contain him.

If you need to make a decision about a situation, then it is a tactic. There are two kinds of tactics: defensive and offensive. Defensive tactics are used when your opponent has the puck; offensive tactics are used when you or your team have the puck.

Players do not have a lot of time to think when they are in a situation. Therefore, they need to know ahead of time what they should do. They need a strategy prior to being in a situation.

### READ AND REACT

Although you may have a strategy for a situation, the opponent may or may not have one. They may take a knee-jerk reaction to a situation. For example, you go left and they go right. Some defensemen can only pivot

one way and some forwards always make the same head fake in a one-on-one situation. In these instances, you may find that you do not have to do anything. You will see the other player actually making the first move, which will leave you open to do what you want.

Getting the opponent to commit first is a great strategy or tactic. For example, a defenseman in the offensive zone is standing on the blue line in the middle of the ice. He gets the puck and begins to wind up to shoot it. The opposing forward skates towards him to stop him from shooting by sliding into him to block the shot. The defenseman fakes his shot and stops in his wind-up. He stickhandles the puck around the sliding forward and creates an opening to shoot on net. By getting the forward to commit first, the defenseman turns a bad situation into a good one. He did not panic. He did not rush his action. He stayed in control. It takes practice and confidence to play like this.

Coaches should teach players how to watch a game and their opponents while on the bench. Getting them to watch with a purpose and look for situations will help them to understand what the other players are doing. This will allow them to prepare a tactic to achieve a better outcome in the similar situation. It is a great way to improve the ability of creating tactics.

## POSITIONING

Your body placement will determine if you are successful or not in achieving the desired outcome of your tactic. Balance is critical. Whether you have the puck or not, your balance on skates will determine your next move. It is like walking. Unless you are planning to take one-foot jumps, your second step needs to be with the other foot. When you are in a situation in hockey like angling or going one-on-one with your opponent, you require good balance to execute effectively. If your weight is on the wrong foot or if you are leaning too far forward, then you will not be able to carry out your next move. Ideally, you want to be on the balls of your feet with your knees over your feet. You need to make sure that you are slightly bent at the hips, with your chest up and arms almost 90° bent at your side. This is how you get potential power to lunge, spring or stop in an instant. By the way, this is the same stance as the ready position in baseball, basketball, soccer and football.

In order to be successful, you must master the basics. I cannot stress this enough. If you are a coach, then teach your players to position themselves well. They will always be square to their opponent and be ready to make the next move.

## COACH'S ROLE

If you are teaching tactics, then you need to understand that players will have a limited time to decide before reacting. So prepare them for the outcome that you know is best for a situation. If you want to teach offensive tactics for penetrating the opposing blue line, then you may want to show the player to use the boards to get the puck by the defenseman. The main points to teach would be:

1. creativity
2. puck protection
3. adjusting skating speed

If you do not emphasize those three tips, then the player may skate in a straight line and wonder why he keeps getting hit by the opposing defenseman. You may also want to add head fakes or delays. Keep in mind that designing an individual tactic involves taking a skill and adding the decision-making process to control a situation.

## INDIVIDUAL OFFENSIVE TACTICS

Offensive tactics are dependent on your team having the puck. The purpose is to keep your opponent away from the puck. Your creativity and anticipation need to flow. You need to use your puck handling, skating and balance skills to make a move or pass. You are in control. If you are a coach, then be clear on what you are preparing your players for in a situation. Remember that it is not about being wrong or right; it is about thinking while playing. More often than not, coaches will tell their players that they made the wrong decision instead of teaching them what options they have. The result might not be favorable for you or your team but teaching a player to be creative and think on his feet makes for greater player awareness and instills confidence at the same time. If they learn something, then your teaching is effective. If you get upset because they made the wrong

decision, then perhaps your teaching methods are not working. This is minor hockey and development is the focus. Teach the players to think for themselves in the offensive mode.

The tighter the situation is for the player, the greater the pressure will be on that player. This means that there is a small amount of space to work and very little time to make a play. If the player is able to let his creativity flow while in this situation, then there is a good chance that he can handle pressure. He will be playing in a quick thinking mode and be able to perform instead of panicking with the puck.

As a player, the more creative you become, the more relaxed you will be. In a creative mode, most people feel good and inspired and have a sense of accomplishment. By being relaxed, your mind will be clearer and more capable of making split-second decisions. As a coach, since your role is to get the best out of your players, then you will want to encourage offensive tactics in practices. It is a surefire way to create fun for all.

### TABLE OF OFFENSIVE INDIVIDUAL TACTICS

The following table identifies some of the individual offensive tactics that you can use. Learn these and you will become a more effective player while on the offense.

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>TACTIC</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<i>Scoring</i>	<i>Screening the goalie or potential pass receiver</i>	<i>Obstructing the view of the puck.</i>
	<i>Tips</i>	<i>Deflect the puck's direction on net.</i>
	<i>One-time shooting</i>	<i>Winding up and making contact with the puck without stopping it.</i>
	<i>Walk-out / Wrap-arounds</i>	<i>Player comes from behind the net with puck and quickly jams the puck between the goalie's skate and the post.</i>

CATEGORY	TACTIC	DEFINITION
One-on-One	Escapes	Moving or getting the puck to open teammates using give and goes, spin-offs, quick foot movement or chipping the puck past an opponent.
	Evasive moves	Getting out of tight situations by using a soft shoulder, head fake, tight turn or delay.

## INDIVIDUAL DEFENSIVE TACTICS

Defensive tactics rely on positioning and timing. Since you do not have the puck and your opponent does, then you better be in the right place at the right time to either take it from him or separate him from it. For example, angling is a defensive tactic that will require you to apply an individual skill such as skating forward with the ability to make a decision for the question "Where along the boards do I want to direct my opponent in order to separate him from the puck?" Trying to match your balance and speed with an opponent can be quite difficult. Add to this having to make a decision and you can become uncertain and intimidated by the situation. You might decide to just give up. It would be wise to create strategies for handling an opponent with and without the puck prior to being in the defensive situation.

If you are a defenseman and an opposing player has the puck in your zone, then you would isolate him to the outside (along the boards) so that he could not make a pass to his teammate in front of the net. You would then angle him off the puck as he approaches the boards, which would eliminate him from creating a scoring chance. You would share this with line mates and they could set up tactics for how they would handle their play while you were performing your tactic.

If all the players did this, then all the individual tactics happening in one shift would add up to a list of strategies and a system for how a team would play in its own zone. This is known as team tactics, which we will be discussing further on in this chapter.



### TABLE OF DEFENSIVE INDIVIDUAL TACTICS

The following table identifies some of the individual defensive tactics you can use. Learn these and you will become a more effective player while on the defense.

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>TACTIC</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
<i>Checking</i>	<i>Contain</i>	<i>Keep an opposing player to a limited area.</i>
	<i>Pressure</i>	<i>Force the opponent to make a quick decision by skating at him with direct speed.</i>
	<i>Pin</i>	<i>Stop a player along the boards from moving with the puck.</i>
	<i>Pinch</i>	<i>(Typically for defensemen) Leave the opponent's blue line and enter the zone to check the opposing player with the puck or go get the puck.</i>
	<i>Gap control</i>	<i>The distance to manage between two players in a one on one situation.</i>
	<i>Angle</i>	<i>Approach an opponent on an angle to the boards to stop him or separate him from the puck.</i>
<i>Block Shots</i>	<i>2-foot slide</i>	<i>Stop a shot by stacking the legs and aiming them at the blade of the shooter.</i>
	<i>1-knee block</i>	<i>Stop a pass or low shot by covering a hole between the skates with one knee and gloves.</i>

### CHECKING

The idea of checking is to contain the opponent. Checking in hockey requires tactics because making contact with another player requires timing, good decision-making skills and basic hockey skills. Whenever checking is involved, it means that you are on the defense. When you don't have the puck, you can be on any part of the ice.

Good checking is defined as restricting or directing a player with the puck to an area so that you can contain him or remove the puck from him. Notice that I said checking. I did not say hitting. Hitting is usually used in a negative manner. There are great checks and nasty checks. Nasty checks lead to penalties and, in some cases, injuries.

Body checking in minor hockey is a hot topic. Some people want it banned, others say to keep it in. In reality, checking is a tactic that requires a player to defend a part of the ice against an opponent. It is not about knocking the player down or pushing him away. It is about containing an opponent to keep him from attacking or setting up an attack in open territory.

Let's look at some examples of good checking for each of the zones on an ice surface.

If you are a player in the offensive zone and your opponent has the puck behind his team's net, then you will try to force him to the outside (along the boards) or corner. This will remove his chances of making a good pass to one of his teammates.

If we look at the neutral zone, and the other team has the puck, then you may skate beside an opposing player. If he does not have the puck, then you can make it difficult for his teammate to pass to him cleanly by getting in between him and the passer. If he has the puck, then you can make it difficult for him to make a play by taking away passing options and steering him to an isolated area near the boards.

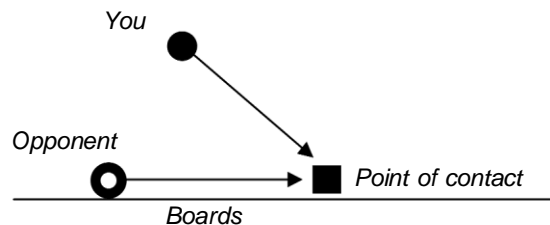
Lastly, if you are in your own zone, then you want to restrict the opponent to the boards, corner or behind the net. This will limit the chance to set up a scoring opportunity.

In each of these cases, you are in a one-on-one situation. How you read what your opponent will do, where you want him to go and how you are going to get him there are elements that you need to encompass in developing a good strategy.

## ANGLING

Angling is another form of checking and it is a one-on-one tactic that needs to be part of a player's development. It is done by guiding the opponent to a specific area on the boards in an angled motion with the purpose of moving him off the puck or stopping him from making a play with the puck.

Think of a triangle. Imagine the three points of this triangle as being you, the opponent and a point of contact on the boards where you and the opponent will meet. You and the other player will move closer to the point of contact (Diagram 9–1). You must time your skating by adjusting your speed and positioning your body while holding your balance to be ready for contact. The point of contact is where you will stop, strip your opponent of the puck or contain him from the rest of his teammates.



**Diagram 9–1** Angling

When teaching angling, the key items to point out are the speed in approaching the opponent and the body position in making contact with him. Many times, the one thing that makes checking successful is the distance between the two players. When the defensive player is too far away, he tends to jump to try to make contact. If he is too close, then he can be called for holding and it may hinder his ability to read the situation. This is where decision-making comes in. To be successful, you must decide where to be and when. As a player, you have the skills; you need to learn strategies to react effectively in a given situation.

## BLOCKING SHOTS

Blocking shots is also a defensive tactic. A player reacts to another player shooting the puck by getting in the way during the wind-up stage. In this

case, timing is everything. You need to make sure that while the opponent is in his wind-up or back swing you are going down to take away any opening. Blocking the shot can be performed in two ways: two-foot slide or one knee down on the ice.

Forwards typically would practice the two-foot slide in order to take away the shot of a defenseman setting up at the blue line. A defenseman would practice the one-knee down method to stop a pass or a low shot coming from a player in the corner towards his team's net. Whichever method you choose, it is about timing and body positioning. If you are in the right place at the right time, then the shot will not hurt. In fact, done correctly there will be no shot but rather a break in the follow-through of the player.

This is something for coaches to teach with a great deal of progression. I recommend the use of tennis balls to start and simulate a player winding up to shoot. The ability to make a decision quickly is the difference between the shot getting through or the shot getting blocked.

## FACE-OFFS

A drop of the puck between two players to start the play in a game is what makes up a face-off. So far, I have talked about tactics that have you with or without the puck. In the case of face-offs, neither team has the puck. This is like other situations in a game where if you get the puck, you have control. Becoming a good face-off player takes great hand-eye coordination, timing, positioning and the ability to read situations. It is a tactic because you still need to make a decision about what you will do concerning an opponent.

There are three ways to approach a face-off:

1. Draw the puck behind you.
2. Push it forward.
3. Tie up your opponent.

Being a good draw "man" takes more than knowing only one way. Each zone for face-offs requires some quick assessments before deciding what to do. For instance, in the neutral zone, if a team is down by a goal late in the game and time is of the essence, the center may choose to push or

shoot the puck as far as he can to allow his teammates to go as fast as they can down the ice to pressure the opponents.

There is no one perfect way to take every draw. This is up to each player to know his opponent and be aware of the game's situation.

In the statistics chapter, I explain the importance of tracking wins and losses of players' face-offs. If you can be a face-off expert and have a 65% win average or better, then you are among the best in the world. Most face-off artists in minor hockey are between 50% and 60%.

## TEAM TACTICS

So far, I have talked about players' skills and individual tactics. We are now in the most complex part of the game - the team tactics. It is the most complex because it relies on the players' minds and attitudes. Whereas a player's skill is determined primarily by body movements, tactics require decision-making abilities. They also depend on speed required to make these decisions. They need to be carried out in a short amount of time with the right outcome in mind.

Deciding how a team will play against an opponent depends on the strategies set out by a coach and his staff. How players play together with and without the puck is related to the tactics they choose. These combined styles of play are called team tactics.

Team tactics direct players on how they should play as a group during a game. The execution of these strategies is dependent on the players' abilities and willingness to adapt to their style. If you are a coach, then I strongly suggest you speak with your staff and players prior to deciding on how your team will play. You will first want to find out about their current level of knowledge about tactics. Then you will want to determine if they are ready to buy into your ideas and systematic approach to the game. Think of it this way: if you have to steer a sailboat in the water, it is much easier when the wind is at your back than if it is in your face. So make sure that you get your players and staff on your side first instead of trying to force them into a way of playing that will get everyone frustrated, including yourself.

## TWO SYSTEMS

Only two systems are played during a game. Either your team has puck possession or it does not. This is no different from individual tactics. If your team has the puck, then you are on the offense. If it does not, then you are on the defense. What you do when you are on the offense or defense is applying tactics!

Consider team tactics as steps to play against another team's weaknesses and strengths. You identify their ability in the basic skills of skating, passing and shooting as well as their decision-making ability in any given situation. Therefore, when we look at how the opponent plays, we need to understand it in an offensive and defensive manner. We need to look at when these tactics are used and we need to know who is filling what role. Coaches need to look at a situation and decide what will happen, by whom and at what point. During key moments in a game, effective use of tactics can mean a goal for or a face-off opportunity.

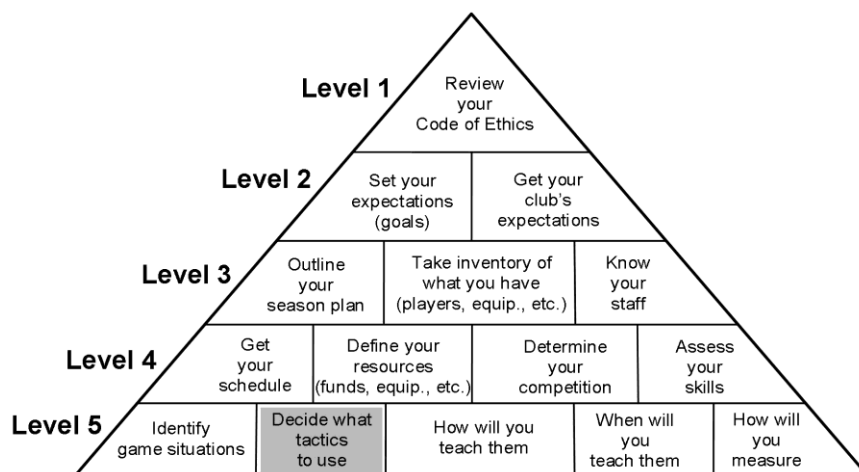
## USING TACTICS EFFECTIVELY

What outcome do you want to achieve in a situation? This should be the guiding question when deciding to use a strategy, not the other way around. Many times, coaches hear about a tactic in the form of an attack or specific zone coverage from another coach. They try to figure out a way to adapt it into their program with their team. They add it to practices and expect flawless execution after one or two times. However, they end up with player confusion and coaching frustration. New team tactics are not easily incorporated. They must be fit into the planning and communicated effectively. Then they must be practiced repeatedly.

## THE PYRAMID OF A COACH'S STRATEGY

The pyramid below illustrates the importance of proper deployment of team tactics. There is more to selecting a tactic than drawing it on a board in a practice. It starts with you as an individual. The levels outlined are from a coach's perspective. It starts with your Code of Ethics. Level 2 is where you set expectations for yourself and the organization. At levels 3 & 4, you assess who and what you will work with and what you need to do in the season. It is at that point that you will be able to understand what you need

to teach and when you need to teach it. Level 5 is where team tactics enter the picture. It is surrounded with a process in order to be successful.



### ***Coaching Planning Pyramid***

Use team tactics as a process and you will be able to teach with a purpose and measure success. Jumping immediately to using a tactic before you know your purpose will only lead to frustration for you as a coach and for your players.

## **OFFENSIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGIES**

Here are some of the key team tactics that you can incorporate in your season with your team.

<b><i>CATEGORY</i></b>	<b><i>TACTIC</i></b>	<b><i>DEFINITION</i></b>
<i>Scoring Chances</i>	<i>Attack triangle</i>	<i>Setting up 3 players to form a triangle in the opponent's zone during a rush attack, offering 3 options for the puck carrier.</i>
	<i>Cycling</i>	<i>Controlling the puck along the boards in the corner by having three players create a 3-man circle rotation by passing along the boards into the corner.</i>

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>TACTIC</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>
	<i>Odd man situations</i>	<i>Puck control between players in 2 on 1, 3 on 1, 3 on 2, 4 on 3, 4 on 2, 4 on 1, 5 on 2, 5 on 3, 5 on 4 situations.</i>
	<i>Even man situations</i>	<i>Puck control between players in 2 on 2, 3 on 3, 4 on 4, 5 on 5 situations.</i>
<i>Special Teams</i>	<i>Man advantage</i>	<i>Defined as power play opportunities with a 4 on 3, 5 on 3, 5 on 4, 6 on 3, 6 on 4, 6 on 5 situation, as a result of the opposing team getting a penalty.</i>
	<i>Shorthanded</i>	<i>Defined as penalty killing situations with a 3 on 4, 3 on 5, 3 on 6, 4 on 5, 4 on 6, 5 on 6 alignment; it comes as a result of your team getting a penalty.</i>
<i>Zone penetration</i>	<i>Attacking the blue line</i>	<i>Getting the puck over the opposing team's blue line and keeping control for an attempt at scoring.</i>
	<i>Regroups</i>	<i>Controlling the puck usually in the neutral zone, by passing it and preparing for another attack at the opposing blue line.</i>
	<i>Break outs</i>	<i>Starting in team's own zone with the puck and trying to get into the neutral zone—called controlled, semi-controlled or quick break-outs.</i>

Success depends on the distance between players, the options available, the time left during the game and the other team's abilities to defend against you. Even when carefully laid out and practiced flawlessly, it is not guaranteed that team tactics will work every time. It will, however, increase players' awareness with respect to opportunities.



## DEFENSIVE TACTICS AND STRATEGIES

Here are some key team tactics that you can practice with your team.

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>TACTIC</i>	<i>DEFINITION</i>
<i>Coverage</i>	<i>Defensive zone</i>	<i>Contain the opponent in your own zone.</i>
	<i>Neutral zone</i>	<i>Steer the opponent, transition to positional play, back check into position.</i>
<i>Special Teams</i>	<i>Power play</i>	<i>Pressure the opponent by out manning them.</i>
	<i>Shorthanded</i>	<i>Contain the opponent to non-scoring chances.</i>
<i>Forechecking</i>	<i>Pressure</i>	<i>In the opponent's zone, a type of approach to the puck carrier and his line mates.</i>

Defending in hockey is not pretty but, to be effective, it takes the efforts of everyone on the ice. The skills that are required include anticipation, patience and hard work. Unlike offensive tactics, defensive ones need to be well thought out in advance. As a player, you need to learn discipline and trust with your teammates to be a quality defensive team.

## PLANNING AND MEASURING

Having a plan for a tactic makes it easier for players to understand. Make sure that you adopt measuring tools for players to understand the fruit of their efforts. In the Statistics chapter, there are several examples of data that can be measured throughout a game.

Keeping track of how you are doing with a specific tactic makes it worthwhile for everyone involved. It will prove that it works or not. It will allow you as the coach to track correct information about players. It will help you to reinforce what you are expecting of them and increase their buy-in.

For example, when your team is on the penalty kill or in a shorthanded situation, the objective may be to keep everyone on the outside of the box. Keeping track of quality information will demonstrate to players how often the other team penetrated. Controlling the focus of your players will help them to execute more effectively and make the tactic more useful against competition.

If you thoroughly explain the outcome desired in a situation, teach the proper execution steps and properly track the progress, then you will challenge everyone to perform at a higher level. Planning for tactics is identifying all the situations that exist in a game. Decide on the outcome you want to achieve as a team, line or group of players and identify the steps needed to make it happen.

## A TACTIC IN USE—PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

In this chapter, I have talked about knowing your desired outcome, planning and measuring. Let's put these to the test and use the practical example of a delayed penalty. For a delayed penalty, there is an outcome. The actual outcome depends on the clarity of your planning. For our example of a delayed penalty, here is the situation:

- The other team causes an infraction.
- The referee raises his arm to indicate a penalty will be called.
- Your bench begins to holler at your goalie to come to the bench.
- As he approaches, an extra player jumps on the ice.
- Now what?

### DESIRED OUTCOME

What is your desired outcome in this situation? Do you want a goal? Do you want a shot on goal? Do you want a face-off in their zone? Do you want to run the clock to waste time? Regardless of the outcome you want, you need to understand the step-by-step process involved to achieve the desired outcome.

## PLANNING

Anyone can have a plan; not everyone can make it work. Understanding your role will make things happen. Coaches need to advise the players on the bench as well as the players on the ice of their roles. Players need to work together and communicate clearly so that execution is precise. They must know where to be if they are on the ice and what options are available to achieve the outcome. Create a back-up plan in case all goes wrong.

Once you have determined a good plan and everyone knows his role, make sure that you try it in a game situation. In theory, most things work. It is when we put them to practical tests that we see their true value. Remember to take statistics on what is happening. You may find that your outcome is nowhere near your expectations.

## MEASURING

In our situation of the delayed penalty, the lowest percentage of achievement is getting a goal. This means that what we want most is to score a goal but that is what is least likely to happen. In increasing order of a percentage of achievement, we have:

- scoring a goal
- a scoring chance
- a shot on goal
- face-off in opponent's zone
- face-off near the infraction

If our desired outcome was to score a goal every time there is a delayed penalty and we know that the percentage of achievement is 1 in 50, then do we have a plan for this? And is this plan or outcome really effective?

What if, on the other hand, our desired outcome was to have a face-off in the opponent's zone for every delayed penalty situation? What would our plan be then? Would we have a higher success rate if the percentage of achievement was 1 in 4? Would our players feel like they had a stronger sense of achievement? Would their confidence grow? Would they feel better? Would they have more fun?

In any situation, you want to optimize the outcome based on what you can control. Although what you are trying to achieve is up to you, consider choosing the desired outcome with the higher percentage of achievement for all situations in a game. How often you achieve this outcome will depend on the tactics you put in place. Know what you want, put a plan together to achieve it, measure for success and make appropriate adjustments to the plan.

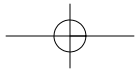
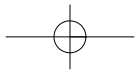
If players cannot perform the basics needed for hockey, then they will have a difficult time understanding a team tactic. Around the age of 10, players become exposed to strategies and systems. Each member of the coaching staff must be clear and concise when explaining purpose, roles and accountability in order for players to understand what it means to perform or not perform the tactics laid out.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following Web sites provide more information on hockey tactics.

- [www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/checking/index.html](http://www.hockeycanada.ca/e/develop/checking/index.html)
- [www.coachesplanner.ca/hockey/](http://www.coachesplanner.ca/hockey/)
- [www.hockey.lifetips.com/tips.asp?Question=hockey](http://www.hockey.lifetips.com/tips.asp?Question=hockey)

“The Hockey Coaches Manual” by Micheal A. Smith is a handy guide for coaches.



## CHAPTER 10

# MENTAL PREPARATION

If you think you are beaten, you are  
If you think you dare not, you don't  
If you like to win, but think you can't  
It's almost a cinch you won't

If you think you'll lose, you are lost  
For out in this world we find  
Success begins with a fellow's will  
It's all in the state of mind

If you think you are outclassed, you are  
You've got to think high to rise You've  
got to be sure of yourself before You  
can ever win a prize

Life's battles don't always go  
To the stronger or faster man  
But sooner or later the man who wins  
Is the man who thinks he can

*Anonymous*

This chapter is about preparing your mind to be ready and in control of any situation during a game.

Mental preparation for a game should start before the puck drops. It means thinking about how you will position yourself, challenge your opponents and maneuver the puck. By the time the game begins, you should already have visualized your performance. Both players and coaches need a personal mental game plan, which means a personal strategy on how they intend to perform during the game.

To be mentally prepared means to prepare ahead of time to be your best. You will increase your self-confidence and stay focused during the game because you will have thought in advance about what you want to do in any situation. This in turn will improve your performance.

As you go up in levels, you will encounter more and more talented athletes. While team skills are equal and player skills are comparable, the difference between success and failure will be found in the mental game.

Reality is a matter of perception. What you perceive to be real is real to you. What you think of long enough will end up being what you experience in your life. Focusing on one thing for a long period of time and believing in it will eventually cause you to live it.

## CONDITIONING YOUR MIND

As an athlete, you prepare your body to be able to deliver an output of some kind. In hockey, it can be a shot on net or quick strides to get free. To reach this point, you must prepare your body through strength and conditioning. Mental preparation is also included. You can also strengthen and condition your mind to achieve quality results. You have to teach your mind to think in a certain way to experience or perform a certain activity effectively.

## WHAT IS MENTAL CONDITIONING?

Mental conditioning involves self-talk, visualization, relaxation and concentration. This means handling distractions and creating internal emotional control.

Talking to yourself can be either uplifting or detrimental. Since your experience in life is determined by what you say to yourself, make sure that you choose your words wisely. Your self-talk will affect your moods, behaviors and, ultimately, your results.

Talking to yourself in an empowering way is the key to your success. Give yourself praise, acceptance and love daily. You will be amazed at how you feel afterwards.

## TRANSITION

Everyone has “lots of stuff” going on in his life. The mentally prepared hockey player is able to put that “stuff” aside and put himself in *game mode*. Each player and coach needs to determine what it means to be in game mode. For some, it might be listening to music. For others, it might

involve a personal ritual. It does not matter what you do as long as it works for you and it puts you in the hockey mindset for that game. Bringing your life problems or issues into the game will cause problems. It will distract you and your teammates and affect your game. Your problems won't be resolved while you are on the ice; they will still be there when the game is over. Push aside those issues for the game and deal with them after the game. You probably won't enjoy yourself if you think about those problems during the game. Isn't the point of playing, coaching or officiating hockey to have fun?

You can put yourself in game mode by:

- Visualizing yourself in the rink
- Thinking about what you will do during the game
- Rehearsing your tactics for various situations
- Focusing on what you want to accomplish in the game

You can start when you are at home getting ready to come to the rink. The warm-up is also an excellent opportunity to put yourself in game mode. It is more than just a preparation for the body—it is a time to prepare your mind.

## HOW DO YOU MENTALLY PREPARE?

Goals are not just about shooting a puck into the net and scoring. Goals assist you in the preparation of an event by planning steps to take. They provide you with a clear picture of what you want to experience and they uncover your purpose in wanting that experience. If you want to be fulfilled in your hockey role, you must prepare.

Preparation is nothing more than applying a simple 3-step process:

Step 1: Know what you want.

Step 2: Understand why you want it.

Step 3: Lay out the actual activities involved in getting it.

First, regardless of your role in hockey, take a minute now and see yourself at a game. You will probably have a goal or an objective that you want to achieve in mind. You will have a purpose for wanting to do it and a few actions in some sort of plan on how you are going to get it. Let's look at a



specific instance: the start of a hockey game. What is your objective for the start of a game? If you are a player, then your goal is to be dressed and focused. If you are a coach, then your goal is to have the team focused on the game strategy and energized. If you are a parent, then your goal is to have your child at the rink on time. If you are an administrator, then your goal is to have officials in place and the ice time set for the game. If you are a fan, then your goal is to watch a game and enjoy yourself. Everyone will have a desired outcome. What will be different for everyone is the reason or the purpose of wanting it.

The second step in preparation is to understand why you want a specific outcome. It is imperative that you understand why you want something. It is what will keep you hungry for that outcome. Using our first example, imagine that you are the player who wants to be dressed and focused. Ask yourself, "Why do I want this?" Your answer will determine if you have the drive to achieve your goal. Let me expand on that. If your reason for wanting to be dressed is because you love the game and you know that you are going to make a difference for your team, then you will feel important and try to make that goal a reality. The same concept applies no matter what role you have. Find out why you want that goal. This is what will drive you. If you can identify all the reasons why you must have that goal, then you will be driven to find ways to make it happen.

Lastly are the actions that you will take to make the want become a reality. This is the easiest part. You know what you want, you know why you want it and now you are going to list all the steps you need to achieve it. This step is most effective if you write down all of the tasks or actions. If we look at our example again, the players know why they want to be dressed and focused for game time. The question now is, "How are you going to do it?" Some of the steps can be: pack your bag at home; eat properly well enough in advance; arrive at the rink on time; ask how long you have to get ready; stretch; get dressed. Now you have a plan that will make you feel prepared. Most importantly, you can identify things before they happen.

This preparation process can be used for any aspect in hockey and by anyone involved in the game. Know what you want. Understand why you want it. Write down the actions that you'll take that will allow you to feel a sense of accomplishment. Wants such as teaching more effectively, playing with

greater impact, watching more intently or planning in more detail will leave you feeling more fulfilled and prepared during a hockey season.

### ASKING POSITIVE QUESTIONS

Asking a question is one way you speak to your mind. No matter what you ask yourself, your brain will always search for an answer. Let's say that you have just completed a task that was done exceptionally well. You even amazed yourself and asked, "How did I do that?" Since your brain needs to provide an answer, it searches through its networks and comes back with "Because you are so smart, you're amazing, you knew it was going to work" and you feel good about yourself. Words such as "smart, amazing, confident, ready" are power words that make you feel good and become self-prophetic. Using power words is positive self-talk.

Now let's say that you have done something that has upset you. What question did you ask yourself then? You might have said, "How could I have done that?" and your brain answers with "Because you're so stupid, you don't what you're doing, you're not good at anything" and now you don't feel so good about yourself. That is negative self-talk and it will not help you to be prepared.

### VISUALIZING

Visualizing an outcome before it happens or seeing yourself perform is another way to create success and set yourself up for victory. All of us have a very powerful imagination that we can unleash to help us achieve our dreams. We have all heard the fantastic stories of people overcoming the odds to achieve great feats. How did they do it? Most of them, if not all, saw themselves winning or achieving in their minds first. That is where it starts.

#### *TRY THIS*

This exercise will show you how you can see what you will achieve before it happens.

1. Stand tall with your arms by your side. Reach down and touch your toes.
2. Stand up again—this time do the same exercise but in your mind only.

3. Stand tall, close your eyes and see yourself touching your toes. With your eyes closed, envision yourself going farther, so far in fact that your head touches your knees. Open your eyes.
4. Physically do the exercise again by reaching down.

Did you go farther this time? Most people can reach 20% farther. Such is the strength of your mind.

Steering the mind to become more flexible, powerful or effective is easy. All you need to do is use your imagination and see yourself achieving what you want. Coaches guide players through a series of exercises to improve this skill.

### GETTING RID OF LIMITING THOUGHTS

Self-talk and self-visualization will direct your mind to think a certain way. Since we learn to like or dislike something through experiencing it, then isn't it possible that what we believe we can and cannot do is influenced by our own limiting thoughts? Because you could not do something yesterday does not mean that you cannot do it tomorrow. However, many of us do exactly that. We try to do something and when it doesn't work, we give up and say, "Oh well, I tried. I can't do it." We create a picture of failure in our mind every time we think about it. Our mind becomes conditioned to the "failure" thoughts instead of the "success" thoughts. Thomas Edison, who invented the light bulb after 10,000 attempts, said that every "unsuccessful" attempt brought him one step closer to getting what he wanted.

Players who plan and practice in their minds and not only with their bodies have a greater chance of achieving their goals. Directing your mind is all about asking yourself quality questions, saying positive words and creating mental pictures that inspire you.

### ACHIEVING A STATE OF CALMNESS

Relaxed feelings will help you to make logical, well-calculated decisions. If you can achieve this state with full energy or power levels, then you would be a top performer at your level. Let me illustrate.

When you want to ride a bicycle, you need to start from a standstill position. You will probably have the bike in first gear until you can pedal at a comfortable pace. If you continue in the gear, then you will find that you will work hard without going anywhere very fast. So you change from the lowest gear to the second gear. What happened? You lowered the amount of effort but you go quicker. You do this one more time because your speed has leveled off although you are putting in a lot of energy. So you move the gear up again. Now you are moving quicker but in a more calm state. The faster you want to go, the higher the gear but the less energy you need to expend. You are in a relaxed state with full power levels.

In hockey, the calmer you are, the better you will think and be able to react to a situation. If you are burning all kinds of energy, you will be tired quickly and not think straight. Coming from a relaxed and calm state helps you to concentrate better on the task at hand.

## CONCENTRATING

Concentration means being able to stay focused for a certain amount of time on a specific task. As a coach, how frustrating is it for you when you are explaining something to the team and there are a few of your players looking in the stands?

### *TRY THIS*

Here is a great exercise for players who want to improve their concentration:

1. Sit down in front of a clock that has a second hand.
2. Stare at the clock for one full rotation of the second hand (60 seconds).
3. Empty your mind of all thoughts as you watch the hand go around.

This exercise will force you to put everything out of your mind for one minute. Although it may feel awkward, uncomfortable or even silly, eventually after 15 or more times, you will start to concentrate on each second as it goes by. This will sharpen your focusing skills and increase your concentration. Do this exercise for 5 minutes every day and you will notice a positive change.

This improved level of concentration will greatly increase your hockey abilities. Here is why:

- One full turn of the clock is sixty seconds.
- Sixty seconds is approximately the length of one shift.

A focused player for an entire shift is difficult to get off his game. Most players lose focus after the first twenty to thirty seconds of a shift. When they lose their concentration, they react without thinking, like a knee jerk reaction. Their mind is clear in the first portion of a shift when their energy level is high. As they get tired, they lose their focus. Teaching them to concentrate helps to lengthen their effectiveness in a shift.

An interesting statistic to track is the time at which a penalty occurs during a player's shift. You will discover an interesting pattern. Most penalties occur during the end of a player's shift. Fatigue sets in and players become tired, which causes unclear thinking and poor decision-making.

## PLANNING YOUR MENTAL CONDITIONING

Planning encompasses all these exercises into a ritual or series of tasks. This will get the player ready to play. Having a plan for your mental conditioning is as important as having a plan for physical conditioning or developing a skill.

1. Know what you want to achieve.
2. Be clear on why you want this goal.
3. Take the appropriate steps to achieve it.
4. Track your progress.

Players who work with their coaches to prepare their minds as much as they work on their bodies will rise to most challenges easier than those who do not. The best times to implement these steps are during practices where the environment is controlled and there is no added stress of game performance. The practices allow the mental habits to become part of the player.

## DEALING WITH DISTRACTIONS

Distractions cause you to turn away from your original focus of interest. If your attention is drawn away from your game, even for a second, then you become distracted. Distractions can test your focus and ability to continue with your current thought. Unwanted noises or interruptions can make a player fan on his shot or lose sight of the puck. Natural distractions like poor ice quality or ill-fitting equipment can also be distracting.

Distractions are different for players in different age groups. For example:

- 5–8 years old: A small bird flies in the rink and flutters from one rafter to another.
- 9–10 years old: A player with new equipment thinks about how it does not feel right.
- 12–13 years old: A player is told by his grandparent that if he scores or gets a shutout, he will receive a gift or money.
- 14–16 years old: A player has his new girlfriend watching him for the first time.

With time, players learn to block out these distractions and stay focused on their game. As adults, most of us would ignore the distractions mentioned in the examples above but, to a young player, these can affect how he thinks and reacts in a game.

A great way to handle distractions is to deal with them in advance. For example, coaches could play loud music in a practice while drills are going on or they could invite parents and friends in the stands to scream and yell during a practice. After a while, this will eventually aid the players to block out the distractions. Deal with the potential distractions before a game. That way you can focus on what you want in a game and not be distracted by what you don't want.

## CONTROLLING YOUR EMOTIONS

Controlling your emotions is one of the key elements to proper mental preparation and conditioning. Aggravation and frustration can be some of the worst feelings to have. They will prevent any player, coach or official

from seeing clearly and maintaining the focus of a task. One of the best and quickest ways to control emotions is by taking a deep breath. It helps to momentarily calm down the nerves. When you are in a calm state, you can think clearly. When people are tense or angry, they tend to hold their breath, which makes it difficult to think rationally.

Fear is another emotion that can cause distraction. It prevents people from achieving the levels of success they deserve. The degree of fear that a player feels will depend on the situation he faces. Imagine going for the puck in the corner and you are in a foot race with another player. Think of what your initial feeling is based on these instances:

- The opponent is ten inches taller than you.
- The opponent is six inches shorter than you.
- The opponent is a girl.
- The opponent is your best friend.
- The opponent is the other team's best player.

In all of these instances, you may have had different thoughts or feelings when racing for the puck, ranging from confident to passive. Your emotional control is vital to the level of effectiveness you will deliver for that task.

## MENTAL VISUALIZATION EXERCISE

Here is an example of the steps that you can take to make your mental preparation plan effective:

1. Coach: Start with an individual player drill.  
Player: A) Before doing the drill, apply visualization (see yourself succeeding) and self-talk by saying, "I can do this."  
B) During the drill, concentrate on each task.  
C) After the drill, relax and take a couple of deep breaths.
2. Coach: Make the drill more intense by making the drill a multi-player drill.  
Player: Run through the same A, B, C steps as above.

3. Coach: Make the drill game speed or game situation.

Player: Run through the same A, B, C steps as above.

This is basic execution. Once you become adept at mental planning, you can add distractions to the drills or exercises and this will help to improve you as a player or coach.

1. Coach: Start with an individual player drill and ADD loud music or parents screaming.

Player: Run through the same A, B, C steps as above.

2. Coach: Add other players to make it more intense and ADD a distraction (get an assistant coach to yell).

Player: Run through the same A, B, C steps as above.

3. Coach: Make the drill at game speed with all of the distractions.

Player: Run through the same A, B, C steps as above. Planning

your mental game will make you more effective as a player.

Whether it is the clock running down, the fans yelling or the equipment not fitting right, you will think about what needs to be done and not about what is going on around you. You will find that distractions no longer play a role in your game.

## **TRACK YOUR MENTAL CONDITIONING PROGRESS**

Tracking your progress in mental conditioning is very similar to tracking your progress in physical conditioning. By writing down what you think, when you think of it and what your feelings are, you will understand why you did what you did. When you look back, you will be able to see your mistakes and successes.

People are creatures of habit. We do something the same way over and over until someone or something shows us differently. By journaling your activities or emotions, you will be able to teach yourself to break your undesirable habits and create new empowering ones. Here is a list of things you can keep track of after a game to help your progress:



- Emotional control— how you are able to control your feelings in a competitive environment.
- Concentration— how you can focus on the immediate task at hand.
- Handling pressure—how you react when demands are put on you to deliver
- Self-talking— what you say to yourself.
- Visualization— what and how you see something in your mind.
- Distractions— things that happen around you to get you off your game.

Processing all of this information is significant but it does nothing if you do not reflect back on it. Read your journal on a regular basis to see your progress.

Your journaling doesn't have to be fancy or elaborate. You can write in a book, in a binder or even have forms or templates that you fill out for yourself as in the following example.

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>UNSUCCESSFUL INSTANCES</b>	<b>POSITIVE INSTANCES</b>
<i>Emotional control</i>	<i>After being assessed a penalty, I yelled at the referee.</i>	<i>another player, I said nothing and continued to play.</i>
<i>Concentration</i>	<i>At the end of my shift, I was tired and instead of clearing the puck in their zone, I skated with it and then got hit and retaliated.</i>	<i>During a shift, I was able to play my position in our zone, clear the puck and get a shot on net. I blocked out the noise from the yelling crowd.</i>
<i>Handling pressure</i>	<i>At the end of the game, I had 2 guys on me in my corner and just got rid of the puck, which resulted in a shot on our goalie.</i>	<i>In the final few minutes of the game when we were down, I took a few deep breaths and focused on what I can do to help my team.</i>

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>UNSUCCESSFUL INSTANCES</b>	<b>POSITIVE INSTANCES</b>
<i>Self-talk</i>	<i>When I was in the penalty box, I said, "How could I be so stupid?"</i>	<i>In the final few minutes of the game before my last shift, I said "I am focused, I am quick, I pass well."</i>
<i>Visualization</i>	<i>I was upset with myself and kept thinking of what I had done, instead of what I needed to do for the next shift.</i>	<i>I sat on the bench before my last shift and could see myself making the pass to my line mate for the tying goal.</i>
<i>Distractions</i>	<i>While I was in the penalty box, I kept looking at the fans and thinking, "I wish they would be quiet."</i>	<i>While I was on the bench, I was able to block out all noises and focus on what I needed to do on the ice.</i>

## PRE-GAME PREPARATION

Pre-game preparation should include reading the power words you wrote for yourself. Saying them over and over will do wonders for your confidence while increasing your concentration and honing your focus. Relaxation should be another element in your preparation. One way to relax is to socialize before a game in the front lobby of a rink and talk with family and friends. You can also take deep breaths in the room while you dress.

Your mental condition is based on how you plan to work your mind. Mental weights include good images, power words and exercising focus through concentration. You do what you need to do to become the best you can. You cannot control your outside surroundings but you can control how you handle them.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about mental preparation at the following Web sites.

- [www.mentalgame.com](http://www.mentalgame.com)
- [www.betterhockey.com/level.itml/icOid/358](http://www.betterhockey.com/level.itml/icOid/358)

- [www.powerplayhockeystl.com/message4.htm](http://www.powerplayhockeystl.com/message4.htm)
- <http://mypages.allcanadiansport.ca/redwings/22335.asp>

Here are two good references to add to your library:

- “The Complete Player” by Dr. Saul L. Miller
- “Sports Psyching” by Dr. Thomas Tutko

## CHAPTER 11

# PHYSICAL CONDITIONING

“The higher your energy level, the more efficient your body. The more efficient your body, the better you feel and the more you will use your talent to produce outstanding results.”

*Anthony Robbins*

Physical fitness is the capacity of a person to perform physical activities (such as hockey) without feeling drained or fatigued. Physical conditioning is the enhancement of physical fitness and capabilities by exercising properly and regularly. This chapter discusses how physical conditioning can affect players and officials during a game.

## BODY COMPOSITION

The body is composed of billions of cells. These cells are surrounded by liquid. This liquid makes up eighty percent of our body. This means that we are more a liquid than a solid in terms of substance. If you look at physical conditioning as a process, then it would be a means of making the liquid in our body move faster and become stronger.

In hockey, actions or body movements require a certain level of physical conditioning. Whether you are skating on the ice or doing push-ups off the ice, you are conditioning or working your physical form. You are asking your body to take a certain shape or deliver a certain kind of output.

## ACTIVE VERSUS INACTIVE MUSCLES

Your muscles have memory. They need to be shown what to do in order to keep or achieve a level of strength, speed and power. If you only work out once per week, then your body will take the shape of someone who works out once a week. It also means that for the majority of that week, you are not being flexible, strong or powerful, which would be best described as INACTIVE. If on the other hand you work out more than three times a week, then you will increase your strength, speed and power. Your form

will be at a higher conditioned level. As a player or official in hockey, it is vital to keep your body in this type of shape so that your chances of injuries are reduced and your physical outputs are improved.

## BALANCING YOUR CONDITIONING

### PLAYERS

Training your body to achieve certain levels of movement varies from player to player and from official to official. Pushing your body to become faster, stronger and more flexible depends on what you do in a typical week of hockey. If you are a player who does not get a lot of ice time in a game, then you want to work out a little more to make up for the lost conditioning on the ice. If you do get a lot of ice time, then you will want an off-ice program or routine of exercises to complement your conditioning on the ice. You will not be able to support your team if you burn yourself out by doing too much.

### OFFICIALS

Officials, on the other hand, do not have the problem of limited ice time. They are on the ice, barring injuries, for the entire game. How many games they participate in will determine their type of workout.

Non-stop play makes for a long night for officials. Unlike a player, a referee or linesman does not get a break to rejuvenate himself other than in between periods. Extensive skating up and down the ice by means of stops and starts causes exhaustion in the leg muscles. If fights or scuffles occur between players, then trying to break them up will result in excessive energy to be exerted on the officials' upper body. Officials must consider taking measures to be fit. As players get older, the games get quicker and the scuffles between players become more intense. This means that more physical force is needed to break up scuffles or keep players apart.

Professional leagues around the world have policies that state that their officials must go through a conditioning assessment at the start and middle of the season. As a safety measure, all minor hockey officials should consider using the same training philosophy as players and include an off-ice routine to condition the body for effective output.

## TYPES OF EXERCISE

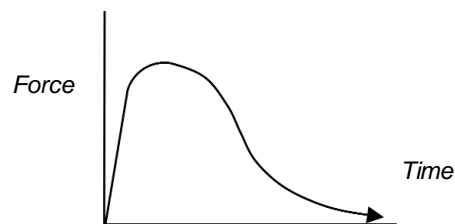
### ANAEROBIC

Anaerobic is a training system that the body uses most during a hockey game. Anaerobic literally means “without oxygen” as opposed to aerobic which means “with oxygen.” Anaerobic exercise involves short bursts of exertion followed by periods of rest. This results in the body building stronger muscles and getting more powerful. Push-ups, stomach crunches and weight lifting are examples of anaerobic exercise. In hockey, examples are sprints, slapshots and saves.

Because of its high intensity, hockey demands a lot of work from the body’s anaerobic system. Let’s take skating as an example.

It is all about power. One second, players are skating at top speed forcing the legs to push with all their might. In the next second, they are stopping and going in another direction. This goes on for the length of time that they are on the ice. Shooting a puck also requires the body to exert force. Other examples include hitting or body checking with on-again, off-again force. All of these basic movements require a large amount of output from the body but are not consistent over a long period. As a result, most conditioning for hockey players and officials should be based on power, which is the ability to move quickly in a short amount of time.

Diagram 11–1 shows the effects of anaerobic measures on the body:



**Diagram 11–1** A maximum force is exerted. A player is able to hold that maximum for a short while. The longer the force is exerted, the less strength is left in the force. Eventually there will be no force at all resulting in muscle failure.

## **AEROBIC**

Aerobic, which means air, is the system in the body that works while exerting forces or moving in a consistent manner over a long period. Moving around for more than two minutes is considered consistent. Endurance is the ability to last longer during a rhythmic motion. Bike riding, running and swimming are excellent examples of exercises that will increase endurance.

So why is it so important to be aerobic? With all the force you exert in a game, you would run out of energy and would probably not finish a game if you did not have aerobic power. It is important to condition your body to increase its ability to regain full strength. Adding aerobics to your workout helps you to achieve this.

Aerobic training is not something that you do a few times and then leave it. You must continue to train or you will lose your power. Unlike anaerobic exercise where you train and eventually give your body a longer rest period and still see progress, aerobic training requires continuation for longer periods. You must build in an increase of capacities to become more aerobic.

## **STRENGTH AND POWER**

Strength in the body is crucial to movement. A young player of six or seven may not be able to hold his stick as compared to an eleven or twelve-year-old player. Time will help them to improve. Strength comes after power because you do not have to be super strong to be a powerful player. Skating, shooting and passing require technique and timing. As a player, you may be small yet still be faster than someone who is taller and stronger. That is why I stress power training. The game of hockey is so fast that you must move with it. You build your strength once you have developed the power.

Is there an age when you should work on power and strength? Definitely! Right now! If you are in the age group of six to seventeen, then you are in the growth mode. Your body is getting stronger and you need to guide the muscle growth to shape your body the way you want. Remember when I said that your muscles have memory? That is why you need to teach them

to be a certain way right now. It will not just happen. The earlier you teach your muscles, the more they will “remember.”

## **FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility in the body will improve your results on and off the ice. At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that we are mostly made up of liquid. That liquid makes up most of a muscle. Muscles expand and contract, meaning that they get bigger and smaller with motion. Muscles are elastic. You must condition the body to become more elastic and have greater range of motion, which means more flexibility. The older we get, the more we need to work on flexibility to keep it. This is a simple law. **USE IT OR LOSE IT!**

Stretching has other benefits besides increased flexibility. By taking the time to stretch, you warm up the temperature in your body, which increases your range of motion. This also becomes a great time to focus and control your thoughts as you prepare to compete.

## **WARM-UPS**

It is important to warm up the body to allow for better movement and greater range of motion. This helps to maximize outputs. The body increases temperature because of the increased movement of the liquid in the body. Rubbing your hands together causes friction. This friction means that the molecules in your body are moving quicker. The quicker they move, the more the temperature grows. The more the temperature grows, the easier the flow of liquid. This flow of liquid makes your muscles move easily and allows you to push to a maximum. Can you move your fingers when they are cold?

## **AGILITY AND BALANCE**

In hockey, to be a good skater you need to have agility and balance. When a player is skating at a good speed and is about to be checked by another player, he needs the ability to move and get out of the way. It may require a sharp turn of the feet, a twisting of the hips or even jumping. Any way he moves or gets out of the way is going to require some agility and balance.



Imagine having to balance on a steel rudder that is 1/8" thick. Now imagine that you want to turn your body around to face the opposite direction. That is the nature of skating and the reason that coordination, agility and balance are so important.

Years ago, the hall of fame goalie Jacques Plante was nicknamed "The Snake" because he was so agile. He could move his feet, kick his legs and swing his arms while he played. Whether he was standing up or lying on his back, he could swing his limbs. Agility and balance are crucial for goalies and for players who need avoid checks, pivot front and back and shoot the puck while in stride.

## P.O.W.E.R. TECHNOLOGY

P.O.W.E.R. technology is a system I created to help maximize energy output. **P.O.W.E.R.** stands for:

**P** lanning  
**O** rganizing  
**W** eights  
**E** xplode  
**R** est

P.O.W.E.R. Technology is a 5-step process designed for players and coaches to help get the most out of the body when preparing to play the game. Let's explore each element, starting with Planning.

**P** lanning  
**O**  
**W**  
**E**  
**R**

### PLANNING

Planning means scheduling what you want to achieve by a certain date and having a written step-by-step plan of how it is going to happen.

Remember that you are conditioning your body. What you condition it for is up to you. Some players may set goals to be the fastest skater or score the most points. As long as you know what you want, you can prepare your body to help you get it.

There are three elements to remember in planning:

1. Taking inventory
2. Setting goals
3. Developing a strategy

### *1—INVENTORY*

Inventory means listing your current assets—no, not the bicycle, computer or furniture you own! Your assets are those skills that you possess or have developed. What are you good at? This will be your starting point. Let's take sprinting as an example. This is a power exercise because we exert a maximum output by moving our legs quickly over a certain distance in a certain amount of time. A specific exercise or test would be to run as fast as you can across a 40-yard distance. This will give you an understanding of where you are now and allow you to take inventory on your sprint time.

### *2—SETTING A GOAL*

Setting a goal means having a dream with a date attached to it. In our example of sprinting, let's say that you ran the 40-yard distance in 6 seconds. Your goal might be to run the same distance in 4 seconds by the end of 2 months. Remember to make your goals specific, measurable and time related.

### *3—DEVELOPING A STRATEGY*

Laying out the steps or developing your strategy is the last piece to planning. In order to achieve the goal of sprinting in 4 seconds, you will need to increase the amount of speed you currently have. This will happen when you increase the strength in your legs. Here is one way that you can increase the strength in your legs: add resistance (weights) to your exercises. This will work the quadriceps (upper thigh muscles) by forcing them to exert more power, since there is added weight. The results are rewarding

because, as you add weight, your muscles will work harder and become stronger. As you become stronger, you are able to exert more force. As you exert more force, you will run faster. This is your strategy to achieve your goal. Effective planning is imperative in making sure that you reach your maximum power.

You now have a great plan! So what? Set yourself up to achieve.

**P**

**O** rganizing

**W**

**E**

**R**

## **ORGANIZING**

This is:

- WHAT you will do
- WHEN you will do it
- WHERE you will do it

In the example of sprinting, you will need leg power.

### *WHAT TO DO*

The exercises you want to use should revolve around the same type of leg motion as sprinting. For example, take the thigh muscle from extension to contraction quickly. Leg presses, squats and lifts are excellent ways to strengthen the leg muscle group, since power is defined as a maximum amount of force exerted over a short amount of time. The longer you exert that force, the more tired you will get to the point that you will have no strength to lift that weight. The result is muscle failure.

### *WHEN TO DO IT*

Know when it is a good time for you to do these exercises to attain your set goals. A rule of thumb is a 48-hour rest period. This may grow as the force you exert grows. Listen to your body.

*WHERE TO DO IT*

You will need to determine the location or type of environment that you need. It is always best to be where someone can be of assistance in case of injury. That could be in a gym, training facility or fitness center. That may include your home or a friend's home as long as there is someone to assist you when needed and provide encouragement.

**P**

**O**

**W** eights

**E**

**R**

**WEIGHTS**

Increasing your power requires more than planning and organization. It requires the proper amount of weights and frequencies. The greater the force is against you, the greater the amount of force you need to exert. When starting out, find your maximum. If you are under the age of 15, the weight can be your own body weight or the weight of a teammate or partner for resistance. If you are 15 and older, then you can add weight machines and free weights. Up to the age of 15, the body is still growing and maturing. By adding excessive weights, it can damage or hinder growth. Another reason for not using weights for youngsters under 15 is proper technique. Most young players are just learning the proper form and do not yet have complete knowledge and understanding of weight training. Adding weight to an improper form can be damaging.

Remember that power is the maximum amount of force exerted over a short period. To determine your maximum, apply a weight or resistance to an exercise and see if you can hold it for 5 to 10 seconds. If you can hold it longer, then it is not your maximum. Do it again with a stronger force or more weight. Once you know your maximum, make a note of it by writing it down and then work with 80% of that amount in your chosen exercise. After a few workouts, your maximum will increase. This is how you grow. Always work towards progress. Progress means increasing the weight, not lowering the weight. In this example, remember that we are working power,

not endurance. After you have found your maximum weight, you will be ready to do your exercises.

**P**

**O**

**W**

**E** xplode

**R**

### **EXPLODE**

At each exercise, you only work that muscle once with the maximum weight you determined. Push yourself to go from rest to the maximum extension in the shortest amount of time. Explode! For example, if you were to do a leg press, you would have your legs at a 90° angle and you would explode them out to full extension without locking your knees. You would exhale as you apply the force. Holding your breath can result in problems. Once you exert the force and extend your legs, you have exhausted that muscle group. If you were to try it again, you would not be able to do it. In order to be able to redo it and be at the level of strength you started with, you would need to rest. This is key to power training.

**P**

**O**

**W**

**E**

**R** est

### **REST**

This is the last element in the P.O.W.E.R. technology. It is usually the one that can cause poor results or no improvement in athletes if it is not done. You must allow your body to recover. Use the 48-hour rule as a guideline. Once you have exerted a muscle group, let it rest before you do it again. The next time you do this exercise, increase the weight by a small percentage. To prepare an effective plan, you must make sure to split muscle groups into alternating days or workout sessions.

Now you are P.O.W.E.R. training.

## MONITOR YOUR PROGRESS

Progress can only happen if you know your starting point. Your starting point is the amount of force you can exert. If you want results, then you need to monitor what you do. In order to track your results, you can write it down or videotape yourself. How will you know if you are stronger or faster if your only frame of reference is your thoughts or memory? Your mind is a powerful tool. It can make anything seem more or less than it is. By writing down what you do, you can see your results and measure your progress. Progress only happens if there is improvement. Improvement occurs when you rest long enough to be rejuvenated. When you are rejuvenated, you will have maximum energy, which will allow you to exert more power, hence progress.

The following chart highlights the elements that you can use to track progress during your power training. Over time, your goal should be to see an increase in weight.

<b>MUSCLE GROUP YOU WANT TO WORK</b>	<b>EXERCISES YOU WILL DO</b>	<b>WEIGHT USED/ TIME THE FORCE IS EXERTED/ FREQUENCY</b>	<b>REST TIME IN BETWEEN FREQUENCY</b>	<b>DATE ACCOMPLISHED</b>
Thigh	Leg Press	400 lbs / 9sec / 2 times	5 min	Jul 23
Thigh	Leg Press	450 lbs / 8 sec / 2 times	5 min	Jul 25
Upper Back	Lat Pulls	100 lbs / 10 sec / 2 times	6 min	Jul 24
Upper Back	Lat Pulls	110 lbs / 10 sec / 2 times	6 min	Jul 26

## INJURIES AND RECOVERY

Rebounding from an injury will depend on the severity of that injury. Most players want to return to play quickly, so a prompt recovery is necessary. Three key factors that limit recovery are:

- severity of the injury
- lack of knowledge of the injury
- insufficient rest

Outside the severity of the injury, the main reason that players recover slowly is that they do not know about the nature of the injury. In many instances, a player knows that there is pain but has a hard time describing it or does not want to say anything in case it is more severe than he thinks. He knows that he will have to take a break from the game if that is the case.

I cannot stress enough the importance of getting the painful part checked and/or x-rayed as quickly as possible after the incident. Some injuries could turn out to be life threatening or cause long-term suffering. Why take a chance? Get off the ego trip! There is no shame in reporting your injuries and there can be a lot of pain in trying to play with a wounded body part.

Recovery from an injury or pain can be a long healing process. Breaks or fractures are always a two to three month recovery period depending on the severity. Treat your body with respect and care and, in turn, it will perform for you.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following Web sites provide useful information on physical conditioning.

- [www.sportbodybasics.ca/hockey/hockey\\_activities.html#OfficeWarmup](http://www.sportbodybasics.ca/hockey/hockey_activities.html#OfficeWarmup)
- [www.sportconditioning.ca/web/index.htm](http://www.sportconditioning.ca/web/index.htm)
- [www.lifetimehockey.com/Conditioning.htm](http://www.lifetimehockey.com/Conditioning.htm)
- [www.sportandspine.mb.ca/stretch/str\\_1.shtml](http://www.sportandspine.mb.ca/stretch/str_1.shtml)

## CHAPTER 12

# NUTRITION

“To ensure good health: eat lightly, breathe deeply,  
live moderately, cultivate cheerfulness and maintain  
an interest in life.”

*William Londen*

A great amount of energy is needed by the body to exert a force such as shooting the puck or making a save. Proper nourishment is the only way to achieve this energy. This mass of muscle, bones and skin called your body can only move consistently well if it has the right food inside it. This chapter is about understanding the importance of good nutrition and its impact on the body during hockey games and practices.

## FOOD CONSUMPTION

“If you put water in the gas pipe of your car, you’re only going to get it wet.” This adage implies, of course, that you are putting the wrong substance in your car. The car will not take you anywhere with water as fuel. Putting food in your body is the same thing. If you fill it up with junk food, then you will not get very far. In order to get the maximum output from your body, you must give it proper fuel. Whether you play, officiate or coach hockey, it is vital that you know what should be consumed, when it should be consumed and the effects of this consumption. Healthy consumption can energize you for a game and, more importantly, enrich your life.

Food consumption or nourishment means that you are fueling the body or replenishing it. You are taking the calories from the food you eat and storing them for future energy output. When you exercise or move, you will have the energy to make sure that you can do what you want. Your body burns calories when you perform any activity. If you overeat, this process does not stop. You just overfill your body and it cannot burn off the calories as fast as you are eating them, thus causing you to put on weight.



According to some nutritionists, in order to lose weight you need to eat more often. This means that you must eat smaller amounts of food but eat more often.

If you are always on the go, then paying attention to proper nutrition is crucial. It is easy to get into the bad habit of eating processed or fast food, which are low in nutritional value. Make sure that you have the right amount of liquids and food in you so that you can deliver a great output.

## METABOLISM

Your metabolism, which is the rate at which your body performs basic digestion or food processing, depends on what you eat and do. If you want to lose weight, then you must increase your metabolism.

It simply comes down to this: the more you do, the more you can do. If you want something done, to whom should you give it? A busy person! Why? People who are busy seem to have a knack for getting things done, whereas people who are not so busy will tend to put things off. It is all about momentum.

## CALORIES

Calories are needed to feed the body in order to restore lost energy. Too many calories will cause weight gain. Empty calories will do nothing for your body except put on unwanted weight or cause excessive work internally. Empty calories are typically found in junk food. These foods have many calories with very little (if any) enzyme-producing vitamin and mineral content (found in vegetables, fruits, grains and legumes). The body needs to produce its own enzymes (found in the lining of the intestinal tract) to change these empty calories into usable energy.

## WEIGHT GAIN

There is good weight gain and bad weight gain. It is important to note that for hockey players and officials, eating when you are hungry is not the only time to eat. Calories need to be consumed at key times. Should you drink a gallon of juice in five minutes before a game so that you hydrate yourself

fully? Consider that your stomach is the size of your fist. A gallon of liquid would be too much for your stomach. Your body can only digest 1 cup of liquid (preferably water) every 15 minutes.

## DEHYDRATION

What is dehydration? It is bad. It means that your body needs more liquid. To use a car analogy, your vehicle would be dehydrated if it were missing a quart of oil. You can still function but at a lower level of effectiveness. Symptoms are dry mouth, feeling light-headed and even nausea. A good way to tell is by the color of your urine. If it is a dark yellow, then it is a sign that you probably do not have enough water in you. You need liquids. You are made up of 80% water, so guess what you should be drinking? Water! The key is to make sure that you do not go too long without liquids or you will become dehydrated.

In 2000, The Position of Dietitians of Canada, the American Dietetic Association and the American College of Sport Medicine published a document called *“Nutrition and Athletic Performance.”* It summarized their recommendations as follows:

*“The amount of fluid you need depends on a number of factors—the weather conditions (temperature and humidity), the activity (type and duration) and your body (age, size, gender and sweat rate). A person needs fluid before, during and after exercise. Consuming 150 to 350 ml (approximately one cup) every 15 to 20 minutes during physical activity is recommended. In general, individuals should strive to keep their body weight loss during physical activity in the heat to less than 2% of total body mass—i.e., for a 70 kg person this is less than 1.4 kg body weight loss (or 1.4 L water) due to sweating. In some situations, carbohydrate added to the fluid will benefit performance.”*

Liquids need to get inside you. Since you know that you are made up of 80% water, you must make high amounts of water part of your intake. Why? If you do not, then you will become dehydrated.

Drink water. Stay away from the sugared juices, soft drinks and pops. These are mostly filled with sugars, which take away from the ease of

digesting the water they have. Sport drinks also have sugar, dyes and minerals in them. Your body needs to move the water quickly from your stomach to your muscles and organs when it is thirsty. Having any additives slows down this process.

Here is the Hockey-ology plan for battling dehydration:

Before exercise—drink water

During exercise—drink water

After exercise—drink water

The amount of liquid the body gets rid of is so high that you can become easily dehydrated. In fact, once you feel thirsty, you are already at the dehydration stage. Water is the one element that can reduce the side effects of overworked muscles.

So when do you drink?

I recommend drinking about 1 liter (32 oz) of water approximately an hour before you commence the activity. This will give your body a surplus and help to keep you hydrated longer. When you drink it, make sure that you drink 250 ml (one cup) at a time.

Drink a cup of water every fifteen minutes while playing or exercising. Remember that the body can only use 250 ml (1 cup) every 15 minutes. After a game, make sure that you drink another half a liter (16 oz) or so [only 250 ml (1 cup) every 15 minutes].

## EFFECTS OF FOOD ON THE BODY

You might have heard doctors, nutritionists or personal trainers say that it is important to eat several hours before you exercise. Why is that? Once there is food in your stomach, blood rushes to the lining of your stomach to help the digestive fluids break down the food. This makes you tired since the body is hard at work digesting the food. That is why you may feel sleepy after eating a meal. Your body is working so vigorously at digesting that the other parts need to rest. By the way, WHAT you eat will also affect how much energy you will be able to exert.

## WHAT TO CONSUME

How much energy would you like to have? Here is one simple thing you can do that will help you to perform better on the ice. Eat high water content foods. That's it. Eat more foods that are composed of water. Foods such as vegetables, fruits and legumes are all-natural and in their raw state are made up of mostly water. So if you are made up of 80% water, then doesn't it make sense to eat 80% of water content food? These foods assist in maintaining high levels of energy and when combined properly, ensure that you are running well for a long time. The remaining 20% of your food consumption should include grains, proteins, breads and some quality fats.

## HOW TO CONSUME

Slow down when you eat in order to make your food consumption an effective source of energy. This allows your saliva to get around the food and properly begin the digestion in the mouth. Chew well before you swallow.

## WHEN TO CONSUME

When it comes to proper nutrition, timing is everything. WHEN you eat is as important as what you eat. Writing a Food Consumption Plan can help you to become nutritionally fit. A plan can be as simple as writing, "I will eat two vegetables and one salad at each meal and drink eight times eight ounces of water a day" or it can be as complicated as the chart below.

## PLANNING YOUR MEALS

Eating has two purposes: storing energy for the future and replenishing what was used. These are defined as pre-game and post-game meals. For most youngsters in minor hockey, the question of what to eat before and after a game can drive them crazy. Their mouth and friends say one thing, but their parents and food groups say another. In fact, the same goes for parents because they are usually the ones responsible for grocery shopping and cooking. Meals need to be planned.

## FOOD CONSUMPTION PLAN

	<b>ON-ICE DAY GAMES / PRACTICES / TOURNAMENTS</b>	<b>OFF-ICE TRAINING DAY</b>	<b>REST DAY</b>
<b>Morning</b>	<i>This is a day for eating well enough before or quickly enough after.</i>  Toast, 8 to 10 oz water, orange juice, fresh fruit cup, scrambled eggs	<i>This is a day for rejuvenating.</i>  8 to 12 oz water, pancakes, French toast	<i>This is a day for maintaining, carb-loading or cleansing.</i>  <b>High “carb” day—</b> Pancakes, French toast or waffles, orange juice
<b>Snack</b>	12 to 16 oz water, apple, banana	Muffin or banana	Apple, orange or banana
<b>Lunch</b>	Salad, steamed vegetables, chicken/turkey wrap sandwich, 8 to 10 oz water	Salad, soup, roll, pasta (depends on time of game)	Steamed and raw veggies, salad, pasta
<b>Snack</b>	Power bar (protein)	Almonds, cucumber	Whole wheat bagel toasted
<b>Dinner</b>	Depending on time of practice, eat 3 hours before (pasta, steamed veggies) or within 30 minutes after eating whole wheat bagel, a banana, apple, a muffin	Garden salad with grilled chicken	Vegetables, salad, fish—salmon, sole, etc.
<b>Snack</b>	Make sure that you stop eating about 2 hours before sleeping; water or orange juice, muffin	Water, bagel, or muffin; make sure you stop eating about 2 hours before sleeping	Oatmeal or bran muffins
<b>During activity</b>	Drink 24-32 oz 45 min prior; in 15 min intervals drink 8 oz of water	Drink 32 oz 45 min prior; in 15 min intervals drink 8 oz of water	

This chart is simply an example. It is not necessarily a recommended food plan for you to follow. Make your own plan to support your schedule and preferences.

There is a timing difference between pre-game and post-game meals. Eating 20 minutes before you play is not a pre-game meal. You are setting yourself up to be sick or play poorly. The optimal time to eat before games, practices or even workouts is three to four hours prior to that activity. This allows your body to digest and for the food to be in your intestines and not in your stomach. Remember that blood goes to the stomach when you eat and away from your muscles where you need it most when exercising.

The timing of post-game, post-practice or post-workout meals is also significant. Within 30 minutes of exertion, it is necessary to drink and eat to help replenish nutrients that the body used.

## KEEP TRACK OF WHAT YOU EAT

You are not going to be able to make changes to what you eat unless you know what it is you are eating. Writing down on a daily basis all of the food you consume and the fluids you drink will give you the ability in the future to see what you can remove or increase in your daily regimen. Your progress in hockey will be affected by your caloric intake on a daily basis. During a month, if you ate fatty foods for twenty-eight days and for the other two days you ate vegetables and fruit, your body would probably be on the fat or unhealthy side. The two days of good food might even cause discomfort.

If on the other hand you ate fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins and legumes for twenty-eight of the thirty days in a month, then you would feel energetic, strong and clean inside. The two fatty days would not make you unhealthy, although they might make you feel uncomfortable and yearning for the good stuff. Drinking water and eating vegetables, fruits, grains, appropriate portions of meat and limited amounts of starches also helps to keep hunger to a minimum.

You will only be able to make correlations of what you eat to your level of performance by writing down what you ate on what day.

## OFF-SEASON MAINTENANCE

During the off-season or transition phase, players and officials should focus on maintenance. Keep the same weight, watch what you consume on a daily basis and stay fit. This will make for a very easy transition into the pre-season and preparatory phase of the following season.

During the summer, physical activity is encouraged to keep the blood flowing and muscles loose. Being active can mean jogging a few times a week, riding a bike or even taking a brisk walk. As long as the activity lasts for a minimum of twenty minutes, the heart rate will increase and you will work up a sweat.

## SPECIAL EVENTS

Multiple events or many games in a row as in a tournament require a well-planned meal plan. Eating three to four hours before a game may not always be an option, especially if you have a tight schedule. Your number one priority is to make sure that liquids are being consistently consumed. Eating is best after a game rather than before. The amounts consumed at those times should be smaller than normal.

In order to be ready for a tournament, prepare and follow a proper food plan. Two to three days prior, start loading up on carbohydrates. Eat more vegetables at each meal and choose breads, potatoes and pasta rather than meats or dairy. This will allow your muscles to have the energy they need to exert force in the games.

## INJURIES AND RECOVERY

Recovery from a major injury (lasting more than 2 to 3 weeks) can be stressful for a player or official in many ways. Despite feeling pain in a body part, there is a desire or yearning to get back on the ice. Furthermore, most injured players or officials keep the same food habits as they had when they were active. A major injury causes a sudden stop in body activity. Eating the same foods with no activity can have negative side effects. Players who have injuries like broken bones, muscle tears or sprains will find the healing process quite long. The natural tendency is to keep busy since that is what they did before.

Reducing the amount of food helps to maintain body weight and energy levels and could speed up recovery. Because hockey is played mostly at the anaerobic levels, muscle building during recovery will not drop off too much. In fact, you may be getting the rest you need.

## OFFICIALS

Officials are in a similar situation as players. They need to have energy stored for exercise and muscle exertion. Selecting what to eat can affect a referee or linesman as much as a player. The only difference is that the official does not have to perform for the same kind of results. They want to keep up with the play and enforce the rules of the game.

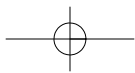
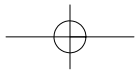
An overweight official will most likely receive very little respect from the players and the fans. The quality of officiating suffers due to lack of speed or agility. It is important to get into a play to make the right call. This is a fast game. As an official on the ice, you need to be in good shape for your own health as well as to establish a level of respect from players and fans.

If you want your body to perform at its best, then you need to keep it well nourished. Create a plan around your on-ice and off-ice schedules. Select foods that will enhance and support your body's muscle exertion. Drink water and stay hydrated. Seek professional guidance to gain or lose weight that is ideal for your size and age. A combination of water, healthy food and proper consumption will be the right fuel for your body.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [www.coach.ca/e/nutrition/resources.htm](http://www.coach.ca/e/nutrition/resources.htm)
- [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)
- [www.betterhockey.com/level.itml/icOid/632](http://www.betterhockey.com/level.itml/icOid/632)
- [www.mckinley.uiuc.edu/Handouts/sportsnutrquicktips.html](http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu/Handouts/sportsnutrquicktips.html)





## CHAPTER 13

# MEDICAL TREATMENT

“To keep the body in good health is a duty. . .  
otherwise we shall not be able to keep our mind  
strong and clear.”

*Buddha*

Injuries require immediate attention. The severity of an injury can grow if it is not looked after within an appropriate amount of time. This may seem like common sense, so why is there a need to write about it? When a team is in the hunt for a championship, injuries can be overlooked or misdiagnosed during the heat of battle. This chapter is about stressing the importance of taking good care of your precious body.

## PREVENTION IS THE BEST MEDICINE

It is required by some regions in minor hockey to have a certified trainer on the bench. In other areas, the requirement is to have at least one person on the bench with first aid training. As a parent, your job is to assure that your child's health is not at risk before, during or after an injury. Too many times, the short-term loss becomes the higher priority instead of the individual's long-term health. This is why every team should have a certified trainer and not just a first aid certified person called a trainer no matter what level of hockey it is.

## ROLE OF A TRAINER

Taking a lead role in attending to injuries immediately in accordance with training and proper injury management principles, and then ensuring referral to appropriate medical professionals, is the primary responsibility of a trainer. Trainers are also instrumental in the development and implementation of a risk management plan and program that emphasizes the prevention of injuries and accidents before they occur. A trainer can be a great resource to teach, promote and supervise the proper conditioning, stretching and warm-up techniques prior to all on-ice and off-ice physical activities.

A trainer is the decision maker on whether a player who is injured in a game or practice is able to return to the play. It should not be up to the coach or player. He will develop and maintain accurate medical history files on each and all players and should use a system that ensures the availability of profiles at all games, practices and off-ice training events. Conducting or supervising (depending on age level) regular checks and reviews of player equipment to ensure maximum safety and comfort is also an important trainer task.

Having a First Aid certification is good but it is not enough to handle a real medical emergency. Unfortunately, not all regions offer certified trainers programs. As a coach, if you want to have a qualified person on the bench, then consider getting a doctor, nurse or paramedic who could handle emergencies. If you are interested in being a trainer, then look into emergency medical training offered in your local colleges or universities.

As a coach, if you have no certified person on your staff, then make sure that a player who was injured brings a doctor's note to prove that he has clearance to play before returning to the ice.

## ASSESSING INJURIES

A team's trainer usually assesses an injury that occurs on the ice. Whether it is a player, official or coach, time is of the essence. When someone is injured, no matter how severe the injury, it is critical to get to him as quickly as possible.

My CPR training taught me that, in traumatic situations, always make sure that the injured person is taken care of on the spot or protected from surrounding environment dangers. As a precaution, wear protective gear (such as surgical gloves) in case there is blood from the injured party. As you get close to the injury, make room for yourself to work and if possible, ask someone to find outside help or a telephone. Take care of yourself so that you can take care of the injured party. As you arrive to help, make a mental note of the time the incident happen, how the injury took place and the person's reaction. It will help the doctor to better understand the injury and it will eliminate the guesswork. By looking at a time log, the physician or emergency paramedic can understand the length of time since that person sustained the injury.

As you approach the injured person, talk to him. This will get him used to your voice if he is conscious. If he is not conscious, then use the ABC Rule:

- Airway—check to see if the air passage is blocked
- Breathing—check for respiration
- Circulation—check for a pulse

If all of these are fine, then see if the injured person can move under his own power. If the injury requires greater attention, then it is best to remove the person from the cold ice surface.

The trainer's role is to help get the injured person to the bench or the dressing room where it is warmer for immediate assessment. In the event that the injury is severe and movement could be detrimental to the injured person, then the trainer should signal the on-duty person to call for an ambulance. Every team needs an emergency plan in place with a contact person. It costs nothing and serves as preventive medicine.

## OFF-ICE INJURIES

Off-ice injuries require the same immediate attention. Although injuries may differ from those that occur on-ice, treatment is dealt with in the same way. First, protect yourself and then check for consciousness, breathing and circulation. Locate the exact source of injury and pay attention to time as well as how the injury happened.

Determining who can administer first aid in an off-ice environment usually depends on the coach or trainer. Once the assessment is done and the player can leave on his own, then the player should go to the hospital or the family doctor.

## DOCUMENTATION

Documenting key aspects of the environment helps in the post-assessment. For example, make note of:

- What took place—step-by-step details that led up to the injury.
- What time it happened—it is important for the doctor to know how much time has passed since the injury.

- The location—note where the injury took place (i.e., on the ice, while working out in the gym).
- Steps taken—what exactly was done to help the injured party.

All of this information will help a doctor to better assess the injured person.

## RECOVERY

When an injury occurs to a player or an official, there are four key elements needed to return to the ice and make the recovery easier and quicker. They are:

1. Rest
2. Use of equipment
3. Body massage
4. Exercise

### REST

Resting means to take it easy and do nothing that would require the use of the injured area. In extreme cases, it means lying down. Resting will help the recovery process. Some players and officials are so anxious to get back on the ice that they actually do not rest properly. Have you ever seen players with leg injuries hobble or limp around arenas so that they can be around the team instead of resting at home? This is not team spirit. This is behaving in a foolish and irresponsible manner. Take the time to rest properly and you will return to the game more quickly.

### EQUIPMENT

Equipment in the recovery process involves an electronic or physical working of the muscle, joint or ligament. Machines stimulate the muscles by sending electric pulses to the damaged tissue. Trainers or physical therapists use manual manipulation to maneuver the limbs to certain movements. Either equipment will help the injured person increase the use of his muscles, joints and ligaments. The next step is to introduce resistance, movement and stretching to gradually allow the injured person to regain the full motion and strength.

## MASSAGE

At first, I thought massages were something that happened only in those not-to-mention parlors. I quickly learned that there is an entire study of various massages. There are two key types of massages used in sports: Swedish massage and Therapeutic massage. The Swedish massage is done to the full body, usually to relax muscles. The Therapeutic massage is used to relieve muscle clotting and stiffness and it allows for movement shortly after it is done. Therapeutic massages are most beneficial for specific areas rather than all over the body.

## EXERCISE

The last element in the recovery process is to transition from a medical-type environment to a gym environment. Once an injured player or official is rested, shows resistance strength and has a good range of motion, he can start resistance training. For example, he can do exercises that require resistance, using rubber bands, boxing gloves and weights.

For players under the age of 14, it is highly recommended to avoid weights. The muscles, bones and ligaments are still in the growing stage and overexerting them could result in damage over the long term. Instead, young players should use body weight along with resistance bands when doing force-loading exercises. Over the age of 15, weights are fine as long as the weightlifting exercise is done under supervision and accompanied by a plan. Working out without a plan is a waste of time. You will have no consistency or means to measure progress.

## RECOVERY PHASES

There are two phases involved in recovering from an injury:

- Phase I—from the table to the gym
- Phase II—from walking to running

These should be used as a guideline for most injuries.

The “table” referred to in Phase I is a physiotherapist’s table. Once a player or official can complete exercises with a full range of motion and maximum strength, he can then move to a gym floor. Here, he can start working out

with exercises that call for cardio training, some resistance training and then weights. Depending on the type of injury, the player then progresses to walking, jogging and finally running. This is Phase II, where the athlete undergoes ups and downs in his progress. Following this recovery cycle will allow players and officials to return to the ice as good as new.

Remember that the length of time required in this entire recovery process can vary for each athlete. It depends on the severity of the injury, the age and the pain tolerance of the athlete. There is no quick fix to getting back to the game. It requires time and patience. The athlete's age does not matter. A person of any age can recover from an injury; however, a younger player is more likely to recover quicker.

## TABLE OF TERMINOLOGY

The following list of terms of injuries and other medical terms are associated with hockey. This is not an extensive list. It shows a majority of the terms that you will encounter during your involvement with minor hockey. Hopefully, you will not have to refer to this list too often.

<i><b>TERM</b></i>	<i><b>DEFINITION</b></i>
<i>Concussion</i>	<i>This occurs when there is a jarring injury to the brain resulting in dysfunction (loss of consciousness, amnesia and loss of equilibrium). It can be graded as a 1, 2 or 3, where 1 is mild, 2 is moderate and 3 is severe.</i>
<i>Dislocation</i>	<i>This involves a complete displacement of the joint. It is quite common to occur to hockey players' shoulders.</i>
<i>Flexibility</i>	<i>This is the muscle's ability to relax and allow a force to stretch it. It can be measured in a series of tests.</i>
<i>Fracture</i>	<i>The bone has a crack. Common fractures include simple, compound, incomplete, impacted, longitudinal, oblique or stress.</i>
<i>Hematoma</i>	<i>This happens in a soft tissue area. It is an accumulation of coagulated blood that turns into a lump or mass.</i>
<i>Hyperextension</i>	<i>A limb is forced in the opposite direction of its normal motion, usually in the wrist, elbow or knee.</i>

<i><b>TERM</b></i>	<i><b>DEFINITION</b></i>
<i>Inflammation</i>	<i>This is the body's reaction to an injury. You would probably see swelling or redness. You would feel certain degrees of pain, heat and/or loss of movement.</i>
<i>MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging)</i>	<i>A radio frequency pulse is directed towards the injured area, causing a reaction to the tissue. Through this process, a computer can establish a visual image.</i>
<i>Reconstruction</i>	<i>The surgeon rebuilds a joint by using natural or artificial materials and transplants it into the damaged area.</i>
<i>Shin Splint</i>	<i>This describes the pain in the shin that is not caused by a fracture or a tumor.</i>
<i>Sprain</i>	<i>This is a stretch or tear injury in a ligament or soft part of the tissue at the joint. It is caused from a stretching or twisting movement.</i>
<i>Strain</i>	<i>This is a stretch or tear in the muscle or tendon. It is caused from a pull or torsion of the muscle or tendon.</i>
<i>Tendonitis</i>	<i>This is common in the elbow and is the result of excessive overuse or sudden injury. It is an inflammation of the tendon, tendon sheath or both.</i>
<i>"Wind knocked out of you"</i>	<i>This describes a contraction of the abdominal nerve trunk, the solar plexus, as a result of a blow from a blunt object or stick to the abdomen.</i>

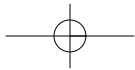
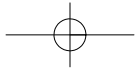
I would like to emphasize that this table is only a guide. Use it as a basis to understand what is involved in minor hockey. Playing the game is fun. It takes special equipment and the right mind set to make it safe as well. Awareness is just another means to make hockey safe and fun.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

You can find more information on injury and recovery at the following Web sites.

- [www.sportbodybasics.ca/hockey/hockey\\_commoninjuries.html](http://www.sportbodybasics.ca/hockey/hockey_commoninjuries.html)
- [www.trainerschoice.on.ca](http://www.trainerschoice.on.ca)
- [www.e-firstaidsupplies.com/first-aid-kits.html](http://www.e-firstaidsupplies.com/first-aid-kits.html)





## CHAPTER 14

# STATISTICS

“There are no facts, only interpretations.”

*Friedrich Nietzsche*

Statistics provide the facts for a hockey game. Accumulated over a period, these collected numbers provide valuable feedback that becomes a resource for progression tracking. Statistics reflect what happened during a certain situation, such as in a game. When tabulated, they can help to identify the strengths and weaknesses of players, groups of players or the entire team. Statistics are also a great tool to measure progress during practices or off-ice workouts. Over time, this compilation of figures can provide a clear picture of what has been happening with an individual or team. Measuring results and monitoring skill development should be the primary use for statistics. This chapter discusses statistics as a tool for improvement.

## WHO LOOKS AT STATISTICS?

People in different positions at all levels have different requirements for statistics. Statistics at the professional, college and junior levels of hockey are used to keep record holder achievements. Data such as number of goals in a game, number of points in a season and penalties are just a few of the many that are tracked. The higher the caliber of hockey, the greater the need is for statistics. In minor hockey, using statistics allows a team to compare how they did to how they wanted to do.

From a coach's perspective, statistics are useful for providing information related to a team's development. From a player's perspective, they reveal the effectiveness of his play as it relates to himself, his teammates and other league players. From a league's viewpoint, they tell the story of a game.

## THE NEGATIVE SIDE

Statistics used incorrectly can have a negative effect on players, teams, parents and fans. For example, as a coach, if you place importance on your team's win-loss ratio, you may cause undue pressure on some

players to play to win and not play to improve or have fun. The players might focus on scoring instead of taking time to execute strategy and tactics. If a player focuses on how many goals he scores, he may refuse to pass the puck to a teammate and try to score a goal to increase his points.

When I coached 14- to 17-year-olds, I was careful of the measurements I used because I did not want the players to focus on their own points or statistics. I needed them to think about how they could improve as players and be more helpful to their teammates.

During my time with junior teams where players were 17 to 20 years old, I was able to use statistics to show players why they might not have been getting as much ice time as they thought they should. It also helped to identify what needed to be worked on for each player.

## SOURCE OF STATISTICS

Although games are the primary source of statistics, practices and conditioning sessions are also good situations to collect data.

### GAMES

Players' goals, assists and penalties can be captured from the game sheet. For development purposes of minor hockey players, whether the player is 6 or 16 years old, there are statistics that can help them to enjoy the game and show that they are making progress. Here are a few examples of statistics that can be tracked and controlled to help players stay focused on improvement without becoming selfish:

- Player attendance—Track the time that he arrives at games and practices.
- Ready on time— Track the amount of times that a player is ready on time and not scrambling at the last minute for equipment or disturbing his teammates.
- Passing efficiency—Track the number of passes that he completes against how many he attempts.
- Hitting the net with a shot—Track the percentage of his shots that hit the net.
- Save percentage— Track the percentage of times that the goalie stops the puck.

With these types of statistics, players will learn to be the best that they can be. During your next season, make a point of capturing these statistics. It will help your players focus on what they can control. They will quickly adopt a helpful attitude towards teammates, experience fun and develop confidence. As for the team, the results will be greater effectiveness in the execution of tasks.

## PRACTICES

Practices are an excellent source of statistics; however, too often, they are a wasted opportunity of measuring progress. John Wooden, former coach of the UCLA Bruins Men's Basketball team, kept player statistics for all practices. He believed that this gave his players something to focus on, it measured their levels of improvement and it instilled good habits for game situations. Consider a practice as an opportune time for players and coaches to challenge themselves and raise the bar without any pressure. One practice a week for 1.5 hours is enough time for coaches and players to track activities for progress. Keeping statistics such as passing, hitting the net and being ready on time are all part of creating a positive outlook for a player. It creates a mindset based on "what I can control" rather than "we need to win this game." Being successful in hockey is about developing and putting into practice what you've learned while having fun. Winning and losing are by-products of how you play the game.

## OFF-ICE CONDITIONING

Working out in a gym involves performing exercises or a group of exercises over a period. This is quite similar to a practice but without the equipment. Never go to a gym to work out without a written plan. How will you know if you are progressing and becoming stronger? It is important to track what you can lift or how far you can run and then compare that to previous attempts. If you do not track your results, then you will not know how you are doing. You cannot manage what you cannot measure. Development depends on the facts. Track these facts effectively.

## TABLE OF STATISTICS

So what statistics are most important for minor hockey? Below is a table outlining a list of data that can be tracked as well as possible uses for that data. The relevance of these statistics will depend on the audience, your position and the purposes needed.

## GAME STATISTICS

<b>STATISTIC</b>	<b>DEFINED AS . . .</b>
<i>1st pass out of zone for a D</i>	<i>The effectiveness of a Defenseman (D) to get the puck to a line mate outside his own zone.</i>
<i>Assists</i>	<i>The amount of times a player passes the puck to the person who scores.</i>
<i>Face-offs</i>	<i>The amount of times a player wins or loses a draw.</i>
<i>Game-tying goals</i>	<i>Goals that are scored that result in a team tying the game.</i>
<i>Game-winning goals</i>	<i>Goals that are scored that result in a team winning.</i>
<i>Games played</i>	<i>Number of games a player, goalie or team participates in. At the time the game commences, who is on the game sheet.</i>
<i>Goals against average—Goalies</i>	<i>The number of goals against per game per goalie.</i>
<i>Goals against average—Team</i>	<i>The number of goals against per game by team.</i>
<i>Goals for—Team</i>	<i>The number of goals for per game by the team.</i>
<i>Icings</i>	<i>The amount of times the puck is shot down the ice.</i>

<i><b>TO BE USED BY . . .</b></i>	<i><b>FOR THE PURPOSE OF. . . .</b></i>
Coaches Players	Identifying the habit for a D to pass the puck out of his zone instead of clearing it or skating with it.
Leagues Team Coaches Players Goalies	Tracking points by a player or goalie. Identifying a playmaker or passer.
Coaches Players Teams Recruiters	Getting a percentage of win-loss ratio.
Coaches Players	Identifying players that score to even up the game.
Coaches Players	Identifying players that score to give their team the advantage that eventually leads to a win.
Leagues Coaches Players Goalies Recruiters	Calculating statistics that compare themselves over a number of games played by a team or player.
Coaches Goalies Recruiters Leagues	Measuring goals against by goalie in Home, Away and Total games.
Coaches Goalies Teams Leagues	Measuring goals against by team in Home, Away and Total games.
Coaches Players Teams Leagues	Measuring goals for by the team in Home, Away and Total games.
Coaches	Identifying patterns in a game—where the puck is iced, situations when it is iced, time during the game, who is icing the puck. Measuring a team's puck possession.

Continues

<b>STATISTIC</b>	<b>DEFINED AS . . .</b>
<i>Length of shift</i>	<i>The average amount of time the player is on the ice during a shift.</i>
<i>Location of shots</i>	<i>The place on the ice where the shot on net is taken in a game—for and against a team.</i>
<i>Number of ice shifts</i>	<i>Amount of times a player goes on the ice in a period or game.</i>
<i>Off-sides</i>	<i>Number and type of off-side passes or positioning.</i>
<i>Overtime losses</i>	<i>The amount of times a team loses a game in overtime.</i>
<i>Overtime ties</i>	<i>The amount of times the game finishes in a tie in overtime.</i>
<i>Overtime wins</i>	<i>The amount of times a team wins a game in overtime.</i>
<i>Penalties</i>	<i>The amount and type of infractions taken by a player or coach in a game.</i>
<i>Plus—Minus</i>	<i>The amount of times a player is on the ice when a goal is scored for or against his team.</i>
<i>Power play goals</i>	<i>Amount of goals scored by a player or a team when there is a man advantage situation.</i>
<i>Power play opportunities (man advantage)</i>	<i>Amount of times that your team has a man advantage.</i>
<i>Puck possession—amount of time or frequency</i>	<i>Amount of time that a player, line or team has control of the puck vs. the total amount of time.</i>

<i><b>TO BE USED BY . . .</b></i>	<i><b>FOR THE PURPOSE OF. . . .</b></i>
Coaches Players	Calculating ice time in a game. Calculating effectiveness while on the ice.
Coaches Goalies Players	Identifying shot patterns by individuals. Showing a goalie the kind of attack a team is doing. Identifying effective scoring spots on the ice vs. a team or a goalie.
Coaches Players	Calculating average ice time shift.
Coaches	Identifying the offenders and how they go off-side. Identifying timing and "read and react".
Leagues Coaches Goalies	Calculating points for standings. Calculating goalie save percentage and goals against average.
Leagues Coaches Goalies	Calculating points for standings. Calculating goalie save percentage and goals against average.
Leagues Coaches Goalies	Calculating points for standings. Calculating goalie save percentage and goals against average.
Coaches Players Goalies Other teams Leagues	Seeing who breaks the rules and how. Calculating specialty teams (PP and PK).
Coaches Players Recruiters	Measuring the even strength play for players by game.
Coaches Leagues Players	Measuring the effectiveness of scoring with a man advantage. Qualifying the type of goal scored by a player—compared with even strength goals.
Coaches Players Teams	Calculating the efficiency of scoring while on a power play.
Coaches	Measuring offensive control versus defensive control. Identifying lack of puck confidence. Matching lines between teams.

Continues



**STATISTIC****DEFINED AS . . .**

<i>Scoring chances</i>	<i>Amount of times players are in a position on the ice to score a goal (i.e., situations like 2 on 1, break away, shot from the point).</i>
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<i>Shorthanded goals</i>	<i>Amount of goals scored by a player and a team when there is a shorthanded situation.</i>
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<i>Shorthanded situations (penalty killing)</i>	<i>Amount of times that your opponent has a man advantage.</i>
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<i>Shots per game</i>	<i>The amount of shots taken in a game.</i>
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<i>Shots per goal</i>	<i>The amount of shots taken to get a goal.</i>
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<i>Shutouts</i>	<i>A game when no goals are scored against.</i>
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<i>Skating surface covered in a shift, period and game</i>	<i>A map of the area covered by a player during their ice time.</i>
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<i>Suspensions</i>	<i>Measurement of how many times a player is not allowed to dress for a game.</i>
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<i>Turnovers</i>	<i>The amount of times a player or group of players lose possession of the puck to the other team.</i>
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**GAMES, PRACTICE AND OFF-ICE CONDITIONING****STATISTIC****DEFINED AS . . .**

<i>Player attendance</i>	<i>Record of attendance and tardiness.</i>
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<b><i>TO BE USED BY . . .</i></b>	<b><i>FOR THE PURPOSE OF. . . .</i></b>
Coaches Players Teams	Measuring how often players are getting chances to score on the opponent's goalie. Calculating how many chances turn into goals. Identifying players that can make offensive situations happen.
Coaches Leagues Players	Measuring the effectiveness of scoring in a shorthanded situation. Qualifying the type of goal scored by a player—compared with even strength goals.
Coaches Players Teams	Calculating the efficiency of stopping the opponent while they are on a power play.
Coaches Players Goalies	Getting an average by measuring how many shots taken by player, by a team and by an opponent in a game.
Coaches Players Goalies	Getting an average of how many shots to get a goal by player, by a team and by an opponent.
Goalies Coaches	Tracking an entire game with no goals scored against or for.
Coaches Players Goalies	Seeing a pattern of positional play by players as it relates to game situations (goals against or for).
Coaches Players Leagues	Measuring how many games a player is not allowed to be on the game sheet.
Coaches	Measuring the frequency of giving the puck to the other team by poor choices. Identifying areas on the ice that it happens—neutral, opponents and own zone. Comparing to amount of scoring chances.
<b><i>TO BE USED BY . . .</i></b>	<b><i>FOR THE PURPOSE OF. . . .</i></b>
Coaches Recruiters	Measuring how many times a player shows up at practices and games. Checking players' arrival times. Seeing levels of commitment.

Continues

## GAMES AND PRACTICES

<b>STATISTIC</b>	<b>DEFINED AS . . .</b>
<i>1 on 1 battles</i>	<i>How often a player wins a battle against an opponent for the puck.</i>
<i>Where are goalies scored on</i>	<i>Location of the puck when it enters the net.</i>
<i>Goals</i>	<i>The amount of times a player puts the puck in the net.</i>
<i>Passes</i>	<i>Amount of times passes are completed vs. how many attempts.</i>
<i>Rebounds</i>	<i>Amount of times the puck hits the goalie and then comes free for a second chance to be shot.</i>
<i>Save percentage</i>	<i>A calculation of how many saves per total amount of shots.</i>

## OFF-ICE CONDITIONING

<b>STATISTIC</b>	<b>DEFINED AS . . .</b>
<i>NHL sit-ups</i>	<i>The amount of sit-ups a player can do while his knees are bent and his feet stay flat on the ground—and do not lift during the exercise.</i>
<i>Power jumps</i>	<i>The distance between the reach from a standing upright position and a two foot jump reach.</i>
<i>Push-ups in 60 seconds</i>	<i>The amount of push-ups a player can do in 60 seconds.</i>

<i><b>TO BE USED BY . . .</b></i>	<i><b>FOR THE PURPOSE OF. . . .</b></i>
Coaches Players	Measuring player effectiveness against opponents—offensively and defensively.
Coaches Goalies	Tracking goals and identifying a goalie's weaknesses.
Leagues Team Coaches Players Goalies	Tracking points by a player or goalie. Identifying a scorer.
Coaches Players Goalies	Measuring the effectiveness of a player's passing skill.
Coaches Goalies Players	Measuring how often a goalie gives up a rebound. Helping to improve "read and react" skills.
Coaches Goalies Players Leagues Recruiters	Identifying goalie effectiveness.

<i><b>TO BE USED BY . . .</b></i>	<i><b>FOR THE PURPOSE OF. . . .</b></i>
Coaches Goalies Players Trainers	Measuring strength of mid-section.
Coaches Players Goalies Trainers	Measuring the power in a player's legs.
Coaches Players Trainers	Measuring the strength in the upper back, shoulders, arms and chest.

Continues

*Touch toes**The distance between the reach to and over the toes while sitting with legs flat on the ground stretched out.*

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## PRACTICE

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**STATISTIC****DEFINED AS . . .***Speed of shot**The velocity at which the puck hits the net after being shot by a player.**Accuracy**The amount of times the puck hits a specific target.*

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## WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

Now you know which statistics to track. Fabulous! But what do these numbers mean? Statistics don't mean anything until you relate them to your objectives or use them in strategy building.

Let's take the following example. A team is halfway through a season of 40 games. They have played 20 games and have a record of 15 wins and 5 losses. The goals against are 80 and the goals for are 100, which gives an average of 4 goals against and 5 goals for, per game. At first glance, it may appear to be a successful team. Most people would judge these statistics and say that this team is having a good season. However, looking at the team from the inside out, we see that they are not pleased by the results. Why would that be? We then discover that their objective at the beginning of the season was to have 3 goals against and 6 goals for on average per game. In this example, the statistic of wins and losses had no importance to this team.

Have you ever heard of a team having a poor winning season but the players had fun, learned and considered their season a success? I have. I coached one. The team set objectives at the beginning of the season and worked to achieve them throughout the season. They did not focus on the wins and losses statistics but rather on other statistics. Although it may have been discouraging to almost be in last place, statistics showed that all of their objectives had been met and they achieved what they first set out to do.

*Players*  
*Coaches*  
*Trainers*

*Measuring a player's flexibility.*

<b><i>TO BE USED BY . . .</i></b>	<b><i>FOR THE PURPOSE OF. . . .</i></b>
<i>Coaches</i> <i>Players</i>	<i>Measuring the velocity of players' shots that will show strength and timing improvements.</i>
<i>Coaches</i> <i>Players</i>	<i>Creating a habit of hitting certain areas around the net.</i>

## TRACKING STATISTICS

Other than the game sheet, there are many ways to get statistics (as listed in the table previously). Some of these are as simple as taking a piece of paper and marking the number of occurrences for various measures. Others require a diagram of a specific layout of an ice surface and the distance covered or area traveled. Whatever method you choose, be as clear as possible on why you want those statistics.

Here are five steps to effectively gather statistics:

1. Use a clean sheet per game, practice or workout.
2. Consolidate the statistics in one central source by grouping them for each player or for the team (use a word processor or spreadsheet software).
3. Regularly verify for progression against player or team objectives.
4. Communicate the progress to the players or team.
5. Make appropriate plans to help achieve the goals or re-evaluate the objectives.

Statistics reflect how the players played the game. They do not show if the individual player had fun or learned anything while he played. The meaning and importance given to a statistic is up to you. As the coach, make sure that you know what you are measuring and that you monitor for success. Use statistics as a guide to check for progress and encourage develop-

ment. As the player, concern yourself with statistics that you can control. You cannot control the score of the game. You can only handle how you deliver with your own skills and emotions. Remember, this is about developing and having fun. Use statistics as a tool for improvement.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Here are some Web sites that will give you more information on statistics and how to use them.

- [www.hockeysfuture.com/ScoutingTips/scoutstips4.html](http://www.hockeysfuture.com/ScoutingTips/scoutstips4.html)
- [www.allprosoftware.com/ho](http://www.allprosoftware.com/ho)
- [www.tqsports.com/hockey/hockey.htm](http://www.tqsports.com/hockey/hockey.htm)
- [www.drilldraw.com](http://www.drilldraw.com)

## CHAPTER 15

# SCOUTS

“I don’t have a lot of respect for talent. Talent is genetic.  
It’s what you do with it that counts.”

*Martin Ritt*

Uncovering the hidden talented hockey player is the main role of any scout. In hockey, teams and leagues have scouts so that their key leaders (i.e., general managers, head scouts and coaches) can get a better understanding of what is going on with player skill level on other teams. Scouts represent the eyes and ears for their team. In this chapter, the focus will be on scouts who are involved with players at the minor hockey level.

## TYPES OF SCOUTS

There are two types of scouts: team scouts and league scouts. Most teams and leagues have an average of six scouts each, with one Head Scout and the other scouts reporting to him. Both team scouts and league scouts complete player evaluations and use them to highlight players’ abilities. A league scout is mainly interested in identifying and rating eligible players for the draft; the team scout is interested in identifying eligible and available players. The draft, which always occurs at the end of the playoffs before the summer break, is the process whereby teams select players.

There are two forms of scouting: talent scouting and team scouting. Team scouting, also known as pre-game scouting, means that a person (usually the coach, general manager or scout) goes to watch another team play before his team plays them. This person will observe how the other team plays in certain situations and make notes. This information can assist his team and staff in preparing an effective game strategy.

Talent scouting involves uncovering and evaluating the talent of players for the upcoming seasons. As a coach and former scout, I would go to games to evaluate the talent pool of players, make notes and report to my team’s general manager. The information would be consolidated with other scouts’ reports and used for the draft.



## ELIGIBLE OR AVAILABLE?

In hockey jargon, there is a difference between eligibility and availability of players. *Eligible* means that a player has met the league's age requirements—different leagues will have different age criteria. It also means that a player has not yet been drafted by any team or been put on a team's protected players list. *Available* means that a player does not belong to any team and is not on the Draft List. A Draft List is a list of players' names that a league puts together for teams to choose from at the draft. The league scouting staff is responsible for compiling the names that go on the Draft List.

## ROLE OF A SCOUT

The most important skill of a scout is his ability to see the player's potential. Evaluating players goes beyond observing what they are doing today. It involves watching them over time and seeing growth or improvement. It also involves getting to know them outside the on-ice environment and noticing their attitudes, relationships and behavior. Scouts need to be like "fortune-tellers." They try to predict if a player can perform a year down the road at the required level. Will they continue to grow or have they already peaked?

Scouts must be able to explain or describe the player's ability or style. For example, I used to compare the observed player's style to that of a specific NHL player. During discussions with colleagues, this would help them to visualize the particular player's style of play.

Assessing talent can be quite involved. The scout is required to view the players with objective eyes. It is important for a scout to look at a player on several occasions. By watching players in multiple games, it allows the scout to observe consistency as well as signs of improvement.

A scout is required to:

- Complete player profiles.
- Indicate the number of times a player has been viewed.
- Indicate the types of games watched (season, playoffs, tournaments).
- Write an assessment on skills.

- Obtain feedback from coaches or interview parents.
- Acquire players' individual statistics.

A strong team of scouts works together. Each scout is usually given a territory and throughout a season, scouts cross over into each other's territory so that more than one pair of eyes can evaluate the same talent. This increases the probability of making non-biased assessments.

League scouts watch all players and rank them from excellent to weak. In North America, there are three different major junior leagues and they each differ in how they rate players. For example, in the Ontario Hockey League, league scouts work a certain region and are expected to see all draft-eligible players. They rate the players and upload those ratings to the league's Web site for the teams to view.

Scouts are always on the lookout for those players who can perform when the pressure is on. Players will usually show their true character in the heat of the moment when a situation requires the player's emotions to remain under control. If a player panics, it is an indication that he may not be able to handle pressure effectively and execute the task at hand. Many players can perform in outstanding ways during a practice but falter during the pressures of a game. Scouts will usually notice players who can make quality decisions in key moments.

Scouts are impressed when a player has the patience to wait the extra second and make a good play instead of having a knee jerk reaction to a situation and losing an opportunity. This is often seen, for example, when players bang away at a loose puck in front of the net rather than pulling it back and lifting it over the goalie.

Being alone in the stands can make you feel isolated if you are the type of person who is used to a team environment. It can be quite rewarding if you are prepared to perform the mundane repetitive tasks of note taking and you do not mind doing your homework by talking to others. Your job is to watch players with an undisturbed focus, speak to key people around the players you are watching and write specific evaluations. Sitting alone allows you to focus without anyone else's opinion or comments distracting you. You can concentrate on the game without being disturbed by spectators.

Do not fall into the trap of player evaluation by poll. I have seen scouts from different teams sit together like a wolf pack. They watch the players and discuss their abilities like a committee. Be a scout and make your own observations. Your team is depending on you to bring back the facts, not someone else's opinion. The reward of knowing that you helped to build a team can be quite satisfying.

## SKILLS REQUIRED

Listening is one of the most important skills a scout can have outside of observation. Being resourceful in uncovering talent means meeting some of the key people in a player's life. Players' coaches and parents are the primary resources in obtaining information. Successful scouts know that the more they learn about a player's surroundings and lifestyle, the more complete the picture becomes. This is why taking the time to meet with players' parents will give you more information beyond seeing if the player can skate, pass or shoot. By talking to parents and other key people in a player's life, you will find out how he acts and what inspires him outside of hockey. The role of a scout is "to recognize what could be."

Be sincere when dealing with players directly. When you give your opinion to a player, make sure that you are candid and upfront. If they have built up the courage to ask you a question, then be honest in your response. I am amazed at how many scouts would rather not talk to players. Often, they believe that by giving their opinion, the player will take it to heart and believe it to be factual when it is only one person's opinion. As a scout, players have asked me numerous times what it would take to play for my team. My answer was always based on what our team was looking for at the time (for example, speed, strength or a particular position). I would then ask the player what he thought his strengths were or how he could contribute to our team. Based on his answer, I could see if there was a gap or a potential match. If there was a gap, I would encourage the player to work on that part of his game and assure him that we would keep an eye on his progress. If there was a potential match, I would make a note of it and bring it to the attention of our general manager. It is important to be congruent with your message because teenagers will be able to see through you. Be honest.

## RATING METHODS AND TOOLS

Rating methods are a matter of preference for scouts, teams and leagues. Some like a numbering system while others prefer letters. As long as the rating system is defined, it will be clear for everyone. When it comes to actually logging or reporting on the player's ability, it is important to express yourself clearly. Write down in words what you see. Be specific and descriptive. Avoid general terms such as "skates well," "good shot," or "good hands." Instead write, "... has quick acceleration from stationary position" or "... has hard shot from the blue line." Strong communication skills are an important asset to a scout.

Utilizing a form can make it easier for note taking when you are watching a game because descriptive terms and situations are pre-printed. This allows the scout to use the form as a checklist and quickly make clear notes, which will make it easier to remember the details long after the game is finished. Forms or some structured way of taking notes will help to keep you focused on different aspects of the game.

## WHERE TO DISCOVER TALENT

Games are the primary source of seeing skill level at its best. However, there are other means of uncovering potential talent. Hockey schools, high school hockey teams and private skating sessions can be areas of opportunity for scouts. In my case, I have found at least one player every season that was in this type of environment.

A good scout will do his duty by going to games, making his report and giving his opinion to the general manager or head scout. A great scout will do all of that AND go the extra mile by looking for potential players in uncommon places.

## BECOMING A SCOUT

Retired people seem to be the best positioned for a scout's job since the commitment can be quite time-consuming. Watching games can take four to five hours a night for six to seven days a week. This can be difficult for a person who holds a full-time job over a hockey season. Incredibly, more

than half of the scouts in hockey live this lifestyle. Those who love the game make it work for themselves and their family.

If you love the game and want to get into scouting, start networking. Make contact with general managers, coaches and head scouts of teams in the junior and university levels. You can do this through phone calls with team GMs, by meeting them in arenas or by writing to them expressing your interest. They will know who would be looking for help. I have received letters from high profile NHL general managers who have told me that being in the right place at the right time and who I know will help me to secure certain jobs in hockey. So get out there and get to know hockey people.

## PLAYER CHARACTERISTICS

As a player, if you are out to impress a scout, you are playing for the wrong reasons. It is imperative that you play the game for fun and enjoyment. This will shine through loud and clear when a scout watches you in action. Your performance will determine if they are interested in you. Here are three key factors that scouts observe:

1. Attitude
2. Demonstration of skills
3. Effectiveness in situations (includes skills and decision-making)

Most parents will comment at this point. "There must be some other reason. How did this player I know make it on a team?" to which I reply, "It has to do with one or all of the reasons I just mentioned."

Regardless of the player's age, scouts always assess certain basic characteristics. A player will receive more scrutiny from scouts as he moves up in caliber.

Most teams welcome a "how-do-I-get-looked-at" inquiry and will send a scout to watch a game. Promoting yourself will initially get doors opened and show a team that there is interest. At the age of 18, many players are thinking about opportunities in the NHL or university. Teams at this level are no different from those in Major Junior, Junior A or minor hockey. They are looking to put a quality program on the ice with the best skill available.

## RATING PLAYERS

Game situations will affect how scouts rate players. For example, in a situation where a player is in open ice stickhandling the puck, he should not lose the puck. However, if he is in traffic with two or three opponents on him, then there is more probability of him losing the puck. The scout will most likely be more lenient in his rating of the second situation than the first. Scouts primarily look at a player's individual skills and decision-making skills. For instance, in evaluating the skill of skating, a scout watches for the type of stride, the speed and the player's body positioning. While evaluating a particular skill, scouts will usually ask:

- Can this area be corrected or not?
- Is skating affected with or without the puck?
- Does the player get the job done in spite of how he skates?

This was the thinking process I applied for each skill including passing, shooting, stickhandling and body contact. Having a structured evaluation process ensures that the scout makes a fair and sound judgment when assessing a player.

When evaluating the player's decision-making abilities, a scout will also identify positioning. Some players seem to be most comfortable in a certain area of the ice (for example, the defensive zone, neutral zone or offensive zone). They will do things in their preferred area that they may not do in other areas. These decision-making skills are evaluated when players are with and without the puck.

Scouts also watch a player's interaction with teammates, coaches and officials during the game. While a scout sits in the stands watching and evaluating a player's skills, he also looks at how a player comes off the ice to his team's bench. He makes notes on how he reacts to a call by an official and how he communicates to a line mate. Actions like throwing a stick or a piece of equipment show a player's frustration. Yelling at an official over a call or pushing away from a teammate can demonstrate a poor level of respect. I have seen players break sticks, slam doors and even throw water bottles as they come off the ice at their bench.

For players who are at the age of wanting to be noticed by a scout or recruiter, make sure that you have the mindset of always being at your best. You never know who is watching and when. You will not get a second chance to make a first impression.

In minor hockey, the ultimate goal is skill development, not winning a championship. It is how a player uses his skill that will catch the eye of a scout. Be creative and remember to have fun while you play. Your enthusiasm and joy for the game will be expressed in your play. As an experienced scout once counseled me, "Players don't come ready made!" Mistakes will happen. Scouts want to see what you do when you have made a mistake.

## COMPENSATION

Salaries for team scouts are mostly a break-even deal. Outside of being paid for expenses such as gas or for special assignments, there is no compensation. There are some people who will receive more compensation than others will for their duties but, in general, there is no money to be made. Most teams pay their scouts monthly. The biggest perk for most of the guys I know was the ability to say that they were with a particular team and that they had a team jacket or some paraphernalia to show for it. League scouts are compensated in a similar fashion; they can proudly proclaim that they represent the league and all of its team members. The greatest benefit is that scouts get to watch hockey—a sport they love.

A scout's job is to seek out the talent and bring back his findings. As a member of a team, his role is important for the growth and development of the future seasons of his team. This is why scouts assess the current skill level of a player to foresee what kind of potential the player can have in years to come.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about scouting on the following Web sites.

- <http://hockeysfuture.com/ScoutingTips/scoutstips3.html>
- [www.internationalscouting.com/framework/skills%20assessment.htm](http://www.internationalscouting.com/framework/skills%20assessment.htm)

## CHAPTER 16

# AGENTS

“To keep a lamp burning we have to  
keep putting oil in it.”

*Mother Teresa*

Agents, also known as player representatives and family advisors, are intermediaries between teams and players. An agent acts as a buffer between the player, who is the agent's client and a team. Their primary focus is to represent an individual, present their offering to a team and negotiate on their behalf for a fee. Agents take the emotions out of negotiating for their clients. This chapter is about understanding the role of an agent in the lives of young minor hockey players.

## WHY IS AN AGENT NEEDED?

By the time a player is a young teenager, he becomes recognizable as a rising potential talent. This recognition is followed by calls from team managers, coaches and friends seeking him out to play for a specific team. I have seen many families get confused, misguided and frustrated with the pressures put upon them. Parents want what is best for their child and try to make the best decisions based on the information offered. In the fast pace of hockey and quick turnaround opportunities, having quality information makes for a better experience and a more successful journey in hockey.

Agents can handle coaches or players but not at the same time, as it would cause a conflict of interest. When the agent positions his client to a team or a team's manager, he is in sales mode because he is promoting his player's service. When an agent interacts with his client, the goal is to satisfy two main objectives. First, he needs to understand the player's position and direction. Second, he has to motivate, guide and nurture his “product” for the marketplace.

In minor hockey, an agent is required to liaise with the player and his family. The agent will offer viable options, network with teams for a quality match and position the player in a positive environment to maximize the experience and pleasure of playing the game. Hopefully, your agent will



have your best interests at heart. For the agents, it is usually a numbers game; only one out of a large number of players they work with will become a professional.

Guidance is the main reason to consider an agent for the parent of a player involved in elite minor hockey. It can be overwhelming to be asked by numerous teams to play for them. It can be intimidating to be asked to play at levels you have only dreamed of in the past. Filtering the opportunities is what an agent does best.

Imagine that you are given \$15,000. You can do anything you want for that \$15,000. What do you do? What do you buy? For whom do you buy? What is going to be the best use of your money? Questions will race through your mind. You might want to look first and buy later. You might want to check out what is available. You might think of others you know and think about what they would like. You would not likely do anything that could harm anyone or go against someone. In the end, you would do what is best for you.

That is the agent's role. He looks into what you want. He understands what you need and who you want to become. He recommends the best avenues to follow and offers guidance. Negotiating a contract or advising a client is only the beginning of an agent's role. Remember, at the end of the day, it comes down to what is best for you and your family.

## RECRUITING

Players are being prospected at a younger age than ever before. I have read articles where, in certain parts of Canada and the U.S., players are being recruited when they become a Pee Wee player (by the age of twelve).

If you are a parent, then you and your children could be introduced to a new environment of the game. Through the teenage years, a player representative could interview your budding young star. This person's role is to identify potential players with talent so that they can make the money through player marketing. This process enables agents, sometimes known as advisors, to understand your family situation and provide a possible route for your child's career in hockey. If they become successful hockey players in the NHL, then the agent makes a percentage of the contract value.

Agents are in business to provide you with direction to enhance the chances for your child to play with higher-level teams. Their objective is to

have your child develop from minor hockey to become a future commodity for the NHL or a professional hockey team.

An agent will look at each player's talent and character. If they like what they see and hear, then they will approach the player or parent and ask if the child has a representative. If they are not currently represented, then they will offer their services to aid in the growth of their potential.

Be aware that the majority of quality NHL recognized agents refrain from acquiring players until they are approximately fourteen years old. They establish a relationship with the young players by having an associate or distant partner groom the players from minor hockey to junior hockey.

Agents have been around for years. Their intention is to help your child to deal with the business side of hockey. You can think of them as a buffer. For example, they will listen to the feedback from a team manager or coach and filter the information before presenting it to you. Their objective is to help your children get to where they want to go by marketing and promoting their skill sets and attributes to teams.

It has been said that agents have evolved the business part of hockey because of high contract dealings with teams and corporations. These accusers see only the multi-million dollar deals with teams and the publicity contracts with corporations. What they do not see is the years of relationship building, grooming and guidance prior to signing these contracts. Since the late 1970s, salaries have increased tremendously. This is due partially to what owners of teams are willing to pay and what agents have been able to negotiate for their clients. Agents are supposed to act in the player's best interests; it is their job to make sure that the player's involvement in the game is fairly compensated.

## POSITIVE INFLUENCE

In minor hockey, agents have played a positive role doing more good than harm over the past 20 years. Their goal is to help the player become a future commodity for professional hockey. They focus on educating the player and the player's family about what is best for them. A good agent will provide options that will develop the player for the long term rather than the short term. They align themselves with general managers and leagues. This helps them to become aware of what teams are looking for and what

could be a fit for their clients. Although it may seem like they are only needed once a player turns professional, agents can help to adequately prepare minor hockey players and their families. They understand the importance of working with players at the younger levels.

Through networking phone calls, meetings and watching teams, agents have been able to assist in the creation of quality teams. They watch available players and through networking, identify opportunities with teams. Their job is to find synergies and match the right player to the right team. An agent is a networking individual who understands needs and positions the solution to make players and teams happy.

## WHO NEEDS AN AGENT?

Hiring an agent can be a long process but it can be very rewarding, both financially and morally. It can also be very painful, primarily for the young player. Parents often take the advice of the first agent who comes along and find themselves frustrated with the results. Hiring an agent is like acquiring the services of a lawyer or an accountant. You probably want to get references, an understanding of their expertise and a full comprehension of the fees that go along with the relationship. Remember that an agent is in business—they want to make money. They are not volunteers.

This does not mean that they do not care about their client. It does mean that they will do their best to make you happy while working to make a living. In the NHL, there are a limited number of recognized and certified agents. This means that they are the only ones who can deal with teams. Many of these agents have associates who can work with and groom the young upcoming star.

A discussion with an agent should be considered under the following conditions:

1. The player is 15 years old or older.
2. Two or more teams at the Major Junior level are interested in the player.
3. The player is unsure of how to proceed (for example, playing Major Junior or getting an NCAA scholarship).

Minor hockey is meant to be fun and enjoyable. That last thing any teenager needs is pressure to deliver on his skills from outside sources. He is under enough pressure from himself and his teammates. Having an agent can ease the pressure and allow the skill level to come out.

## WHAT DOES AN AGENT DO?

Here are some tasks that show what an agent does for his client:

- Negotiations
- Relationship management
- Education

The agent is usually involved in two types of contracts: between the player and the agent and between the player and the team. An agent must be an expert at relationships. He needs to understand people, communicate effectively and identify his level of involvement in a situation. He must also be an educator. There is so much information that it can be overwhelming for players, especially young ones and the family.

Contracts drawn up between a player and a team usually have nothing to do with the agent. The player has an agreement with the agent to represent him in all dealings with teams and corporations. This includes a fee for service or a commission for the agent based on what is paid to the player. Regardless of your skill level, the agent will take his percentage off your total earnings negotiated. The percentage paid to an agent is usually between 3% and 7%. In some cases, an incentive bonus based on level of achievements is also included.

Dealing with an agent is no easy task, as any general manager will surely agree. The agent walks a fine line as he protects the player but assures quality to the team. He makes sure that the player's family is highly regarded and respected, as these are the people who have helped the player reach the elite levels of hockey. In addition to helping the player, an agent will also help the player's family by providing information and guidance. This will happen more for the player who is between 15 and 19 years old.

Agents also prepare players to be on top of their game at all times. They help you to acquire the tools to become stronger, faster and smarter. They surround you with the right people to improve yourself. You are an important

piece to their success and integrity as a business. Therefore, they will help you. It is up to you to help yourself and make the partnership a joint success.

Below is a list of questions that will help parents to assess the effectiveness of any agent for their child. Together, parents and players can make an informed decision when choosing to work with an agent. Use this questionnaire when contacting hockey agents for possible representation. Use a separate sheet for each agent that you contact.

## PLAYER AGENT QUESTIONNAIRE

### EXPERIENCE

- 1 What is your educational background?
- 2 What business experience do you have besides representing professional athletes?
- 3 How long have you been representing players?
- 4 Are you certified by the NHL Players Association?
- 5 How many minor league clients do you have?
- 6 Will you provide me with a list of all of the hockey players you represent along with their home telephone numbers so that I can call them?
- 7 How many players have fired you in the last five years?  
What are their names?

### FEES

- 8 When do you start charging fees?
- 9 How much do you charge for negotiations?
- 10 How much do you charge for Financial Management?
- 11 If you charge a percentage fee, \_\_\_\_\_ signing bonus  
what is it a percentage of? \_\_\_\_\_ games played bonuses  
\_\_\_\_\_ performance bonuses  
\_\_\_\_\_ salary  
\_\_\_\_\_ play-off monies
- 12 Are your fees to be paid upfront or as earned?

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- 13 Who do you refer your clients to for:
  - a) Financial management?  
What experience do they have?  
Can you send me information about them?

- b) Life insurance and estate planning?  
What experience do they have?  
Can you send me information about them?*
- 
- c) Preparation of wills and trusts?  
What experience do they have?  
Can you send me information about them?*
- 
- d) Tax compliance in Canada and the U.S.?  
What experience do they have?  
Can you send me information about them?*
- 
- e) Marketing and licensing?  
What experience do they have?  
Can you send me information about them?*
- 
- f) Disability insurance planning?  
What experience do they have?  
Can you send me information about them?*
- 
- g) On-ice career planning and development?  
What experience do they have?  
Can you send me information about them?*
- 
- h) Physical training and development?  
What experience do they have?  
Can you send me information about them?*
- 
- 14** *Have you ever used a Power of Attorney with any of your clients?  
If so, why?*
- 

### **CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS**

---

- 15** *Have you ever negotiated deferred money in a contract?  
If so, why?*
- 
- 16** *Can you explain to me the three most creative clauses that you have  
negotiated into contract for National Hockey League players and explain  
why you did what you did?*
- a)*  
*b)*  
*c)*
- 

### **AGENT PHILOSOPHY**

---

- 17** *What is the main reason you decided to represent players?*
- 
- 18** *Why would I be better off having you represent me as compared to  
other agents?*
- 
- 19** *What is your company's overall  
philosophy relating to the  
representation of professional athletes?*
- 

*Continues*

- 20** *Some agents offer players money or other gifts to encourage players to sign with them. Do you?  
If so, why?  
And if yes, how do you get your money back?*
- 

## BECOMING AN AGENT

It is not so easy to become a quality agent. Passing a test from the NHLPA is the highest credentials available for an agent in hockey. Lawyers make up the majority of these agents because contracts are intricate and in some cases very complex. Understanding legal ramifications, terminology and negotiations makes it an ideal job for a lawyer to fill.

Although most of their work at the professional level involves contractual readings, analysis and negotiations, they must also be people-oriented individuals. Managing the relationship between a player and a team requires patience, compassion and understanding. Negotiation and writing a contract is not enough. Decisions are based on emotional needs and desires. It is imperative in the agent-player relationship that the agent knows how a player is feeling about any given situation.

If you want to become an agent, consider taking sports management courses in college or university. This will give you a baseline understanding of the business side of sports and hockey. You might also consider helping out with the management and administration of a hockey team to gain practical experience about dealing with people, players and media as well as experience with various types of negotiations.

Most minor hockey players will not need to deal with agents, especially at the younger age. However, if a player does require or want the services of an agent, the most important point to remember is to shop around as you would for any other type of service. It is crucial to have a trusting working relationship.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [www.nhlpa.com/Content/ABOUT\\_THE\\_NHLPA/Labour\\_And\\_Licensing.asp](http://www.nhlpa.com/Content/ABOUT_THE_NHLPA/Labour_And_Licensing.asp)
- [www.aktssports.com/resource/resource.html](http://www.aktssports.com/resource/resource.html)

## CHAPTER 17

# LAST BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

“Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm.”

*Ralph Waldo Emerson*

This chapter covers topics that have not been covered in specific chapters of this book but still need to be addressed. Although I did not write a chapter about each of these items, there are some excellent sources of information readily available on the Internet and in books. The topics addressed here are tournaments, girls' hockey and hockey schools.

## TOURNAMENTS

A tournament is a competition other than normally scheduled league or exhibition games where three or more legally registered teams compete within a specified time frame for the purpose of declaring a champion.<sup>3</sup>

Whether you coach, officiate, play, scout, manage or volunteer, one of the most enjoyable environments in hockey is the tournament. Although it is only a series of games played against other teams in a short time span, a tournament lends itself to a friendlier environment than a regular season game. Most of the time, they are designed as an invitational gathering of teams from other cities and sometimes other countries. Regardless of the games' outcome, the team experiences a trip together and forms a bond. Local communities get involved and cultural views are exchanged.

I recall two great tournament experiences in my life—one as a player and one as a coach. In my early teens, my team was invited to play in a tournament in Boston, MA. This was an annual event set up between our Montreal organization and the organization in the U.S. A couple of teams from different calibers were sent down on a 6-hour bus ride. The buses were filled with young excited hockey players and some parents accompanying them as chaperones. We arrived in Boston where over a weekend

<sup>3</sup>SOURCE: [www.canadianhockeyparents.com/tournaments.htm](http://www.canadianhockeyparents.com/tournaments.htm)



we played three games, toured the city and shared the lifestyle of a local family. The arenas were filled with fun, light-heartedness and happiness. Playing hockey was a bonus. We played hard and yet it felt as if we were hardly playing. Time passed so quickly that the weekend seemed like hours.

Each player was billeted (provided with lodging) with another family from one of the opposing teams. The adopted family offered a place to stay, meals and transportation to and from the arena. A few weeks later, we in turn received our billeted friends.

I found that it was extremely enjoyable and it created a lifelong memory. I played in front of an unknown crowd in an unfamiliar setting that tested my abilities to focus and play at the top of my game. It was very satisfying to be on my own as a young teenager and experience life in someone else's home. Questions are constantly being asked about what is going on in the area, what are other teams like and where is a good place to take a bunch of hungry boys. I cannot emphasize enough how great it was to participate in an exchange trip.

During my days as a coach, I had the good fortune to attend an international invitational tournament in Calgary, Alberta. Twenty-five teams were invited from around the world—Switzerland, Germany, the United States and Canada—to play a series of four games over an eight-day period. This was no easy task to organize and it required many people to make it work. I remember the amount of work I personally had to do to organize the trip for our team. From the very start, planning was detailed so that no steps were overlooked. My staff and I would be in constant communication with tournament committee members as well as with our own team's players, parents and administration. Taking 30 people on a plane, spending a week in a hotel and making sure that everyone eats, sleeps and arrives at scheduled events is no easy task.

The tournament conveners and organizers made sure that we were greeted at the airport. They controlled our transportation to and from the arena for games. We received assistance in getting registered and having equipment repaired at the arena. After our games we were invited to participate in the weeklong festivities of dinners, parties and special events.

Mingling with others from foreign countries allowed me to see that, despite our differences, they had to do the same type of coordination and they had the same fears and worries that we did. They prepared the same way and they were all treated with the same welcome. It was reassuring that no matter who was participating, we would be treated with dignity, respect and a warm welcome.

Tournament organizers want to make sure that your stay is enjoyable and fun. If you go to participate, then look at it as an opportunity to learn and share about the game and others. What a better way to play, watch and participate in hockey than by enjoying it.

If you are a player, tournaments are a great opportunity to compete with other players from outside your league. If you are a coach, it is an experience to see talent and tactics from other teams and an opportunity to have your team do some bonding. If you are a parent, then this could be that getaway or rest period you were looking for. No matter what your role is, take this opportunity to see the wonders of another city and listen to someone from afar talk about their life in hockey.

Organizing a tournament is tedious work, involves constant changes and can be frustrating for those involved. The reward for organizers is in knowing that they brought all these people together and helped the young players have a great experience playing the game of hockey.

Tournament listings can be found on the Hockey Canada and USA Hockey Web sites. There are also periodic listings of tournaments in *The Hockey News* magazine.

Whether you play, watch or set up tournaments, being active in this environment really gives you a sense of coming together with people and having fun with the game.

## **GIRLS' HOCKEY**

Up to this point, I have talked primarily about minor hockey as it relates to age groups, not sexes. In North America, girl's hockey is growing and becoming its own branch within the minor hockey system.

Girls' hockey is essentially the same as minor hockey with two key differences. There is no contact and boys are not allowed to play on girls' hockey teams. However, girls are allowed to play on minor hockey teams. This is a growing concern for some people and a challenge for others.

I believe that girls and boys should be allowed to play together in minor hockey. In my opinion, once the players become teenagers around the age of thirteen, they should play hockey by gender (girls with girls and boys with boys). Before you get too flustered by this comment, let me explain my reasoning.

The main problem is logistics. Let's examine the demands on arenas of having mixed genders. Each game played would need to have four dressing rooms available, one for each gender on two teams. If there was a tournament, then you could imagine the chaos involved in having multiple changing rooms. In addition, there would be significant financial implications in building more change rooms for each arena.

The next issue is puberty. As girls and boys become teenagers, they become young women and men with changing bodies. The biological change is twofold. One change is physical and the other is chemical. Through the eyes of young boys and girls, the opposite sex is someone to kiss and be affectionate with, not someone to bang around on an ice rink.

As a society, we have evolved to respect each other as men and women. Most boys and men were raised to "never hit a girl." In minor hockey, contact is allowed. Having a girl play at this age with boys can affect how the game is played. In girls' hockey, body contact and checking are not allowed.

What about a team's coaching staff? By having two genders, the coaching staff would need to have both males and females to be able to assist both boys and girls. As the father of a teenage girl, I would have concerns about male coaches going into the dressing room to help my daughter dress.

One suggestion would be to allow girls to play on a team as a goalie. This is common today and has been done on many occasions. Before you put your daughter on a minor hockey team, consider the caliber and age of the team as well as your daughter's best interests. She may not be comfortable playing on a mixed team when she reaches a certain age.

I admire anyone who wants to compete at the highest levels of hockey regardless of their background or gender. I have difficulty understanding why we think that boys and girls can perform the same way. In the Olympics for example, the focus is put on making the playing field the same. I don't recall seeing mixed track and field or mixed team events. This is probably because it is about fair competition. I believe that the same goes for hockey. Let them play together while they are at a young age and once the children reach the age of 13, then the boys and girls separate.

## HOCKEY SCHOOLS

Learning in a fun environment makes for better retention. Most hockey schools provide a stress-free atmosphere and individual care focus. They are not about winning and losing but about making each player and goalie the best that they can be.

With the incremental costs of ice time, coaches have taken individual skills development out of their programs and are promoting specialized instruction from a hockey school for their players.

In Canada, hockey schools are more than just a summer vacation. They offer training classes year round for players. This is a great opportunity for young ones to enroll in a hockey development program during Spring Break instead of hanging around a mall.

There are three types of hockey schools:

- Day Camp: where you attend the school for a 5-7 day period and are on the ice, in most cases, twice a day.
- Overnight Camp: where you attend for a week or two and go on the ice, do off-ice activities, eat and sleep in dorms.
- Specialty Training: where you can attend anywhere from one to many sessions of on-ice teaching. They can be specific to a skill or by position. They can last 30 minutes to an hour at a time.

Whether you participate in a hockey school where you bunk with another player for a week or in activities just for the day, the teacher-to-player ratio is greater than most teams provide. Participating in a hockey school is a great way to learn and improve without the stress of a team environment.

When you are trying to decide on a hockey school, consider price, location, instructors and the school's philosophy. I recommend a summer hockey school environment for players from the ages of 8 to 11. It is a great opportunity for them to expand their social skills and experience hockey in a non-competitive environment. When players are 12, they begin to know what they want and specialty training can be part of appropriate programs to explore.

If a player cannot get a lot of ice time per week with his team, then he can consider specialty training as an additional practice for skill development. This will give him ice time and one-on-one instruction attention. This is about having fun. When going to hockey schools is no longer fun for a player, then it is time to take a break.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

**Hockey-ology** is a guide to success and fun for minor hockey. I hope that I have been able to heighten your awareness of the game and deepen your level of knowledge. I thank you for reading this book.

Hockey is a team sport and working together, we can make it more fun! If you learned one thing from this book, then I have accomplished what I set out to do—to better the game by bettering the people. Have fun!

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The following list of resources provides excellent references to expand your overall knowledge of the game of hockey.

### WEB SITES:

- [www.hockeycanada.com](http://www.hockeycanada.com)
- [www.usahockey.com](http://www.usahockey.com)
- [www.chl.ca](http://www.chl.ca)

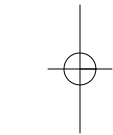
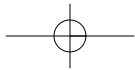
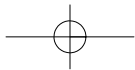
- [www.ncaaclearinghouse.net](http://www.ncaaclearinghouse.net)
- [www.usajuniorhockey.com](http://www.usajuniorhockey.com)

*BOOKS:*

- Hockey Handbook, Lloyd Percival, Wayne Majors
- Coaching, Dave Chambers
- Hockey Goaltending for Young Players, Francois Allaire
- Sports Psyching, Dr. Thomas Tutko
- The Complete Player, Dr. Saul Miller
- Hockey for Dummies, John Davidson, John Steinbreder

*TRAINING, COURSES & SEMINARS:*

- Hockey Canada Coaching Certification: Coach, Intermediate, Advanced I & II
- USA Hockey Coaching Certification
- Canada's National Coaching Certification Program: Level 1 to 5
- HDCO Trainer's certification HTCP Level I, II, III
- Toastmasters International Certificate
- USA Hockey Referee's Certification: Level 1 to 4
- Hockey Canada Referee's Certification: Level 1 to 6
- Agent certification from the NHLPA



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## About The Author

KEVIN V. HUHN is an Advanced I certified hockey coach with Hockey Canada and has a Level III certification from the Coaching Association of Canada. His extensive experience comes from over 30 years of combined playing, coaching, scouting, managing, advising and instructing in minor hockey. Kevin has coached most hockey calibers from Novice to Junior A, in Montreal, London and Toronto over twenty seasons. He scouted for three seasons in the Ontario Hockey League (OHL) and was an instructor in hockey schools through ten summers.

Through his professional business positions, he gained fifteen years experience as a business consultant and relationship manager. He achieved the title of "Employee of the Year" with his strategic planning and persistent follow through. Kevin was able to translate these skills to hockey during his roles as manager and family advisor.

## About The Book

"Kevin captures the essence of hockey, in his light-hearted style, ... provides motivation, advice and guidelines for those of all ages. I recommend Hockey-ology... it offers a helpful and insightful overview ..."  
**Yvonne Sciavilla, Hockey Mom**

"Kevin has thoroughly touched on every aspect of the game. Hockey-ology educates the parent the coach, the player and even the fan on all aspects of minor hockey"  
**Jack Capuano Jr., Senior Vice President, Florence Pride, ECNL**

"This is a great book! The intricacies of minor hockey are finally explained in laymen terms so you know what to expect. Anybody can understand, whether you are a novice or an expert."  
**Mike Treacy, Hockey Coach and Dad**

"It is a must read for any one who has a passion for hockey. It is an invaluable source of information for parents on all topics in minor hockey."  
**Doug MacDonald, Director of Hockey Operations, Centennial Regional High School**

"Kevin knows his stuff...clearly organized thought patterns reflected in the writing. A must read for anyone who has a passion for hockey. Let this book be your guide!"  
**Anna Esposito - Lupo, Hockey Mom**

"...the book reads well and easily...down-to-earth... a good manual and guide for players and parents ... will teach you to think for yourself..."  
**Jack Ray, Team Manager and Trainer**

"...a 'must read' book for all ...involved in the minor hockey system. It is well researched and offers useful information."  
**Jamie McDonald, Scout, New York Rangers, NHL**



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