



ADM Best Practices – Teaching Skills

Passing AND Receiving

Passing and receiving are two of hockey's most basic skills. The two should almost be considered one skill as they go hand-in-hand. For your team to be considered a good passing team your players must be equally adept at both passing and collecting the puck.

Most players with very basic skills can push the puck in the general direction of their teammate. It is the ability to collect the puck that really separates players. In most youth practices, when a player makes a poor pass to a teammate, what does the coach do? Typically they get on the passer and tell him or her to “put it on the tape”, or “make a good pass.” And while we do want the passer to concentrate, every pass made in a hockey game is not perfectly placed. Even at the NHL level, a large number of passes are not on the mark. Hockey is a fast-paced game, and players with the puck are rarely unhurried by the opponent. Players must become adept at receiving the puck from all directions and placements.

As coaches, our teams usually become good at what we stress and most coaches seem to place the emphasis on the passer and not on the receiver. In football, receivers are taught that if they can get a hand on the ball, they are expected to catch it...no excuses. The coach doesn't turn to the quarterback who just got hammered and say, “make a better pass.”

From an early age players should be expected to collect the puck. To stress this point, have your players extend their stick in one hand and draw a circle around them. Next, with their free hand, have them reach down to their skates on one side and then bring the arm all the way up over their head and down to their skates on the other side. Let them know that if the puck comes to them in this bubble -- their sphere of influence -- they are expected to collect it.

This mindset will help develop the more difficult half of the passing and receiving skill. Remember, your players will typically become good at what you as a coach stress.