

In My Recent Travels...

In my recent travels I've had the opportunity to observe numerous practices and off-ice training sessions. I applaud anyone that takes the time to train and develop our youth in hockey. As a former Hockey Director and coach, I can relate to many of the challenges we face daily in our training sessions. There are a few key points I feel can be improved that may help you with your ice sessions. In today's fast-paced world we tend to forget certain aspects that assist in player development, and here are a few things that will help bring us back to the basics.

It is important that you come to practice with a well-thought-out plan that utilizes the ice, promotes skill development and is age appropriate. Taking the time to prepare will certainly make a positive change to the flow and content of your practice. Nothing looks worse than coaches huddled up at center ice trying to decide what to do next while the players are wandering aimlessly around the ice. Another key point would be to keep socializing to a minimum, as well as time spent explaining drills. Ice time is expensive and the less time you spend talking, the more time you have to use the ice. I have also found that in order to keep players focused coaches need to bring enthusiasm and energy to training sessions! Encourage kids to give 100% and remember that they respond well to positive feedback and comments. A few days ago I had the pleasure to see an excellent skill session that included 42 squirts, 9 coaches with 6 stations. It was one of the best skill sessions I've seen in a long time. The content of the session was simple but effective. After all, hockey is a progression of skills and not rocket science, right? Every one of the 9 coaches were fully engaged and focused at their stations, which I found very impressive. The coaches were encouraging the players with positive feedback and as a unit, created a great learning environment for the players. The players competed and skated with a purpose! I was in the lobby after practice looking around at sweaty rosy-faced kids with smiles on their faces! How about that! Wow! The kids had fun, worked their tails off, coaches did a great job and nobody was complaining about how many games they're not playing! How refreshing!

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