

A Letter from One Coach to another Coach

Coach Mancini,

With the many coaches that you meet along the way I feel I need to let you know exactly who you are talking to. I am Bryan Lenci with the Jaguar Hockey club in Joliet Illinois. I am currently the head coach of the mite Major team and also assist in with one of our three house teams. You came to our organization before the holidays and ran a stations practice with our mites. I was fortunate enough to be one of the coaches selected to help run a station. What a positive and exciting experience it was for both the skaters and the coaches. The Joliet Jaguar Hockey Director, Mike Breslin has really embraced the stations practice and the principles for the ADM, he has us run group and individual team stations in our practices.

The practice that you ran was well organized and it really gave the kids an opportunity to work on several different skills within one station. Not only did the kids really have fun participating in the stations, they skated hard without even knowing it. It was great! That day there were six coaches on the ice. Three of us currently coach the A2 team, me, Sean Krause, and Rob Steroiti. We have embraced and incorporated stations into all of our A2 practices. So far it has really worked out well teaching the kids skills while they are having fun. We have learned that the key is to be creative and always be positive.

One thing that we have found to be a great asset to have the Junior coaches helping on the ice so the coaches to skater ratio is less than five to one. Not only that, but these stations have really changed the way we plan for practice. Proper planning and choosing the best drills for the skill you want to work on that practice helps us create the station that fits those needs. Flexxcoach is a vital tool that we use in the proper planning for our practices. I took your advice and checked out Flexxcoach amongst others that you recommended on the USA hockey web site. Flexxcoach is a wonderful easy tool to use and really help identify great skill specific drills. I use it for every practice! It's so easy- you go through the drills, choose your favorites, add it to your practice plan, and print. There is a lot of room for variation and most drills are animated to make it sample to follow. It's great to hand out to those first year parents that may not understand the reasoning behind certain drills. We use the plans as a hand out for parents that may ask "Why are we doing these drills?" The drills all have an in depth explanation of what skill is being worked on. This helps the parents understand and also give them a little insight to the "hockey language." Thanks again Coach for steering me in this direction. I still carry your original practice plan that you executed and I use it as a reference. I also took your advice and got creative. One example is that the A2 team coaches created 5 actual bulls' eye targets 2x2 that we tape on the boards and the kids shoot pucks and score points like an archer. The kids absolute love it, and it really has helped them with their shooting skills. Our typical practice begins and ends with a cross ice reverse net 4 on 4 using two different colored balls. One team will try to score with one while at the same time defend from the other color. It's great fun with the kids while they are building skills of skating, passing, stick-handling, and making quick decisions. The kids love it (and so do their coaches)!

As you know Coach, it's the game that brings people together it's the experiences, friendships, life lessons, and everything else that happens around the game that makes our sport so special. I hope that this letter finds you well.

Best to you,

Bryan Lenci

Head Coach A2 Major mite