



## THE TEN TECHNICAL COMMANDMENTS

### I HEADS UP

Players must learn to play heads-up hockey for both safety and proper form. Constantly remind your players, during both practices and games, to keep their heads up while skating, passing (giving and receiving), stick handling and shooting. In addition, teach your players the proper technique to hit the boards and take a check – as well as the proper way to deliver each.

### II ONE HAND ON THE STICK TO GAIN SPEED

In a nutshell if you are not threatened or threatening another player, *with the puck*, you use one hand on the stick. This is probably, I am estimating, 80% of the time you are on the ice. One hand on the stick allows freedom of movement and speed.

Players must be taught to move their hands like a train (front to back) and skate with one hand on the stick in order to gain speed. Side to side swinging of the hands, with or without two hands on the stick, will not allow the player to get to the puck first. Use one hand on the stick to gain speed even in close quarters. Take one or two strides with one hand and then switch to two hands when you get close to the puck. It takes practice, but if used you will beat all the opponents to the puck.

One hand on the stick, to gain speed stick handling, is an essential technique for the player. When is one hand used verses two hands stick handling? In most situations when the player is not threatened by an opposing player. Watch a professional hockey game and see how the players switch from one hand to two hands and back to one hand while rushing down the ice. You can also use one hand on the stick when stick handling around the opponents. Robby Glantz teaches this technique in his power skating classes. It is critical for the fast player.

### III TWO HANDS ON THE STICK

Fundamentally, players should be taught to keep two hands on their sticks in many hockey situations – except to gain speed (see below). During your next game or practice session, count the number of

passes, shots and battles that are lost because the player didn't have both hands on his/her stick.

#### **IV KNEES BENT**

Virtually all skating maneuvers require the players' knees to be bent approximately two inches past their toes. Most young players have a tendency to straighten their legs during skating drills; especially during stopping and cross-unders. Constant reinforcement and correction during all drills is crucial in instilling the importance of keeping the knees bent.

#### **V STICK LENGTH**

Proper stick length for ANY player is slightly below or just touching the chin, with skates on. Anything longer will make it difficult for the player to properly handle their stick and make it difficult for them to become "magicians" on the ice.

#### **VI KEEP THE SKATES SHARP**

The players will not improve their game, or gain confidence with a dull pair of skates. Constantly remind your players' parents to sharpen their skates.

#### **VII TEACH THE PROPER TECHNIQUE**

Many coaches play/played hockey. However, many coaches were taught incorrectly. As coaches, we owe it to our players to research proper technique and form before a skill is introduced. This includes reading, viewing videos or soliciting help from others more knowledgeable in certain areas. It is much easier teaching a skill correctly the first time than it is to correct it later.

#### **VIII CONDUCT SKATING DRILLS WITH THE PUCK**

The old rule when coaching hockey read: "the player does not get the puck until he/she could skate well." Again, that is the old rule. Players signed up to play hockey, not to take skating lessons. Skating with the puck early takes their minds off of the skill they are attempting to learn, thus allowing them to learn the skill automatically. In addition, skating with the puck will increase their confidence, starts the stick handling process early and most of all, it makes the drills more fun. Optimum practices are well balanced - both with and without the puck.

#### **IX EXPANDED REACH**

Players must learn to expand their "reach zone" required to give and receive a pass, shoot the puck and stick check. How many times, as coaches, do we see players just miss the pass because they didn't reach out far enough. Expanding a player's zone should start at the beginning of the season in conjunction with the most basic drills. It takes a lot of practice and reinforcement for players to expand their zone – so start early!

## **X SKATES AS AN EXTENSION OF THEIR STICK**

The use of skates as a tool is essential to playing the game of hockey well. For example: bad passes can be directed to the stick with both the inside and outside blades of the skate; stick handling “magic” is improved by incorporating the skates; winning the puck along the boards cannot be accomplished without the use of the skates; and defensemen can stop a dek with their skates. The list goes on; so practice the use of skates early in the season and don’t stop.

## **XI KEEP THE FEET MOVING**

Momentum wins everything – from airplane dogfights to ice hockey! Why is an NHL shift only 45/60 seconds when athletes at that level are in peak physical condition? Because the players are always moving. Players should always be on the move. Whether they are receiving a pass, playing defense or prowling the net - keep them moving when they are on the ice. This is an extremely difficult concept to teach young players; but one that will pay huge dividends in the long run. It takes constant repetition.

## **XII UNCONTROLLED DRILLS & EXCESSIVE SUICIDE DRILLS**

For this topic, allow me to break the drills into two distinct categories: (a.) fundamentals and (b.) speed.

(a) Fundamental drills should be performed in a sized area that is just stretching the players comfort zone. If you are over-stretching their zone, they will most likely perform the drill sloppy and finish with bad form. These drills should be controllable by both the coach and the player. Remember that bad form is just as easy to learn as good form. Example: performing crossunders around one or two circles before using all of the circles on the ice.

(b) Over speed training is required to achieve speed and stamina. Of course, fundamentals are required for all drills. Performing an over speed drill that promotes bad form can be detrimental to a player’s skill development. Example: The well-known and much used suicide stopping drills. By the end of this particular drill, most players are performing uncontrolled tight turns instead of coming to controlled stops because they are too tired. Try reducing the number of stops, or changing the drill so that the players can perform their stops correctly while gaining strength and speed.

## **XIII FACE THE PUCK**

Always face the puck. If you don't know where the puck is how do you know where the play will develop too, pass is coming from, ect. ect? It is such an easy comment but watch many youth hockey games and you will see many backs to the puck. It takes constant practice and the mastering of many of the skating skills. But once it is achieved by

your players they will be much better read and react players.

#### **XIV HANDS CLOSE TOGETHER WHEN STICK HANDLING & PASSING**

When passing and stick handling place your hands approximately six inches apart and no further. Why? With your hands 6" apart you can maneuver your stick and perform many magical moves when stick handling. Placing your hands farther apart adds to the stick fulcrum and reduces its blade sweeping arc and also brings your arms closer to your body. Now if you pass with your hands the same distance apart as stick handling several important things are accomplished. You do not telegraph your pass by moving your hand down, you can pass right from a stick handling position, when you release the puck off the stick it has better spin, you have more expanded reach to get a bad pass and you can quickly roll the wrist to get a back hand pass while still facing the puck.