



“MAKING HOCKEY PLAYERS BETTER WITH NO EXTRA COST”

With new skates and sticks, the game of hockey is expensive enough. Why pay more than you have to during the season to become a better player?

The cost to rent an hour of ice is always increasing (also hard to come by), the cost of a gym membership is rather expensive, the cost to purchase a home gym is also expensive and sometimes there is no extra space inside your house, all of this and the price of gas to drive to and from the rink and the gym is rising daily. There is no more money to spare.

Parents ask me often enough how can I help my young athlete become a better player while keeping down the cost? This can be done by using things you probably currently have inside your own home or inside your home rink.

During the course of the winter I calculate a kid carries his/her hockey bag to and from the rink 4 times a week (two practices/two games) over the course of the season at 16 weeks long. 64 total times at the rink. A young player could carry his/her bag into the rink and back out to the car a minimum of 128 times. Most kids are probably going to the rink more than four times a week and the season is usually more than 16 weeks. So a player can become stronger just by carrying their bag. This costs you, as a parent, nothing. This trend is almost out the door because parents either carry the bag or the bag rolls on wheels. Why not help your son/daughter out, help them develop into a stronger athlete and make them carry their own bag?

As long as we are on the topic of the hockey bag, it can be used for another purpose. The hockey bag can also be used as a hurdle and jumped over. If a player can do 5 sets of 30 second lateral hops over their bag each day, they will become a better skater. Once a player masters the double leg lateral hop over their bag, they can try a single leg hop over it. A player can complete this either at home, in the basement or at the rink in the locker room before a practice.

If the entire team joins together and uses their bags, they can do multiple bag jumps. Space as many bags as you can two feet apart in a straight line and jump over one at a time until you make it through the entire line. You can either do forward jumps or lateral jumps, either way will help a young athlete improve their skating ability. This would have to be completed in the locker room either before practice or after practice. Either way it is free of charge and will help the team improve individually and will help build a little teamwork. The entire team can join in and have a little contest to see who can complete the most jumps during the given time. I recommend doing 3 sets of 30 seconds of both forward jumps and lateral jumps over 6-10 bags.

Another piece of training equipment that probably every young player has access to is a set of stairs. These stairs can be used in multiple ways to help develop leg strength. Just by walking up and down the stairs builds leg strength. Take this one step further and run up and down. A little more advanced run up

and down skipping a step, then two, then three etc. For a change of pace, an athlete can hop up and down the steps, hitting every step, and then skipping steps. More advanced try it single leg.

Another leg strength exercise that costs nothing is doing body squats. Have a young athlete stand with their legs shoulder width apart, keeping their feet flat on the floor, squat down until their thighs are parallel to the ground and then stand up. If they could work up to completing 5 sets of 50 squats each day, they will see an improvement in their leg strength within 4-6 weeks.

A young player can complete all of these exercises for the lower body, become a better skater and cost you, as parents, no additional cost.

Along with improving the lower body, there are cheap ways to strengthen a young athlete's upper body as well. Everyone knows of the body weight exercises that all young athletes should perform on a daily basis: push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups etc. These are all great but take it one step further and perform some hockey specific exercises.

Shoulders, core and backs are important to the development of a hockey player. Strengthening shoulders is rather easy. Take two carrying cases of six water bottles, one in each hand, standing upright, keep arms straight and lift your arms straight up in front of you until they are parallel to the ground. Slowly lower arms back to the starting position and repeat. Complete 3 sets of 10 on a daily basis. Holding the same water bottles, keeping your arms straight, lift your arms straight out to your side (forming a cross) until they are parallel to the ground. Complete 3 sets of 10 on a daily basis.

Using water bottles is a great thing for numerous reasons. One every team has a bunch of water bottles. Two, younger athletes can use half filled bottles for less weight while older athletes can fill them completely to the top and then add more bottles if need be. Three, when an athlete is done with the exercises they have water readily available to drink and rehydrate. If an athlete needs more weight than the bottles provide, use puck bags.

An athletes' core needs to be strengthened on a daily basis, for ideas read my article "One Thousand Abs." To add some weight when strengthening a players' core, including their back, hold onto the water bottles again or even the puck bag. Be creative, really anything will work.

These are all ideas to help athletes improve their strength, in a hockey specific manner, so they can develop into the player they aspire to be. All of these ideas cost you, as parents, nothing! There can now be no excuses why a player cannot be doing some sort of training. Hockey is a competitive game. Every advantage one player can get will help them out.

"Help Your Kids, Help Themselves"

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