THE IMPORTANCE OF SKATING TECHNIQUE

- **The speed in today's hockey is mind-boggling. Every year we see players who are bigger, stronger, and faster. The players who dominate the sport are usually those who are the fastest and the most skilled.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF SKATING TECHNIQUE TRAINING

- **In recent years, they are predominantly Europeans. Why?**
- **Because European players learn to skate before they are allowed to use the puck; they work on skill development before they play games.**
- ***Skill development is the most important aspect of their early training.***

- “The two most fundamental hockey skills are skating and stick-handling. However, it’s pretty difficult to be a great puck handler if you can’t maneuver the puck while skating ***fast!”***

Another hockey myth:

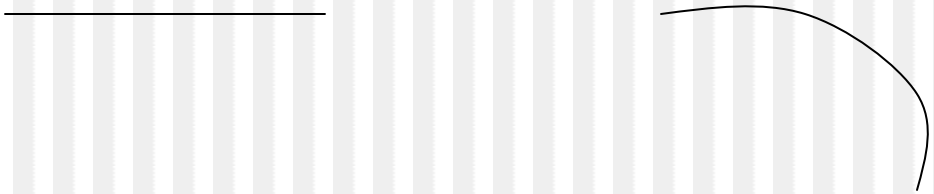
- **If players skate more they'll get faster/become better skaters**
- **"More" does not equal "better".**
- **Quality ice time & Quality instruction is much more valuable than quantity ice time.**

The Science of skating

- **Why does the blade slide on the ice?**
  - Water has the uncommon property of expanding when it freezes.
  - If you apply pressure to ice, it melts. So, when the blade presses against the ice, it creates a thin film of water which acts as lubricant, and allows you to slide.
  - When you are skating, you actually are sliding on a thin film of liquid water.

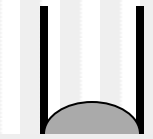
The Science of skating

- **Why does the blade turn when I lean?**
  - **Next time you skate, glide straight ahead on a flat.**
  - **Using your ankle and nothing else, tilt the skate to the right or left, and feel how it turns you in that direction. Look at the shape of the blade. (ankle strength).**
  - **As the blade moves along the ice, it will follow this curve.**



The Science of skating

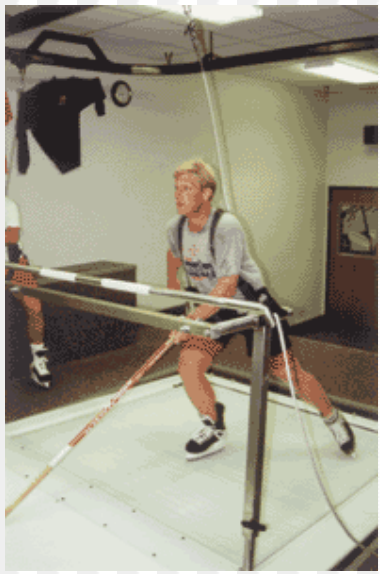
- **Hollow ground**
  - **You probably know that your blade has two edges, inside and outside, and that there is a "hollow" between the edges.**
  - **Average hockey skate/ sharpening is 1/2”-5/8” radius**
  - **Small children (with little body weight) require sharper blades and a relatively deep hollow to enable the edges to dig into the ice more easily. Conversely, heavier people can skate with less sharp blades and a shallower hollow.**
  - **Mike Madono- 1.2” radius**



Contouring versus Rockering

THE STRIDE

- Which is more important Strength or Technique?



THE STRIDE

Moving the feet fast with improper and incomplete leg drive may look fast, but in studying the distances traveled per stride it becomes obvious that these players often end up "going nowhere fast".

Fast efficiency is the goal.

THE STRIDE

- **Strength vs. Technique**
  - How much of skating is strength and how much of it is mechanics or technique?
    It's difficult to draw the line, both are important, but it is thought that mechanics is the more important of the two.

Strength vs. Technique

- The importance of skating practice to hockey players - who should practice skating technique and why?

- Today's hockey is all about speed. Players fly down the ice at speeds not conceived of in years past.
  Competitive players who aspire to play hockey at a high level must master **balance, agility, and maneuverability (BAM).** Recreational players inevitably find the game of hockey more fun as their skating improves.

Strength vs. Technique

- **The importance of "skating position" to balance, power and speed?**

- **Skating is an extremely precise and intricate activity. Position is critical; any loss of it will inevitably have a negative result.**

Strength vs. Technique

- **"Skating position"** is actually a combination of many components; these include knee bend,
- edges,
- leg drive and leg recovery
- weight shift
- upper body positioning and control
- usage of the arms
- **The combined correct usage of these components is critical to balance, power, and speed.**

Strength vs. Technique

- **Marion Gabrik (Acceleration tread mill)**
  - **17 mph/ 30 strides/ 30 seconds**
- **5 weeks**
  - **19 mph/ 20 stride/ 30 seconds**
- **Effective stride technique + improved power**

Strength vs. Technique

- **Is there a right way and a wrong way to teach hockey skating?**
- I believe that the right way of teaching is to break down each maneuver into its many motions or parts.
- Players should learn each part separately and perform drills to perfect each part. The parts must then be put together so that the "whole" maneuver is performed correctly.
  In order to teach it correctly, skating stride must be understood correctly.

Strength vs. Technique

- **Teaching sequence:**
  - **focus on performing the maneuver correctly**
  - **then powerfully**
  - **then quickly**
  - **finally, all three (correctly, powerfully, quickly),**
  - **with the puck and then in games and under lots of pressure.**

- Telling players to "do this" or "do that" or "follow me" doesn't work.
  They don't know what "this" means. They must experience each part of the technique.

How to teach the stride

- Teach by appealing to the intellectual abilities of the students, then by incorporating all the senses - students need to see (visualize), feel, hear, and think. I call it the **FAST method - F**EEL, **A**CT, **S**EE, **T**HINK.
- Therefore we must have many different ways of explaining things and use many different drills to teach the same thing. I always try to keep this in mind.

Strength vs. Technique

- How much skating should be done in hockey practices? When should the puck be incorporated?
- Skating should be included in every hockey practice; not just skating for endurance but skating for technique.
- It is very important that Mite coaches teach skating technique throughout the season

Strength vs. Technique

- A great way of practicing skating technique in a fun manner is to have scrimmages that include "skating rules" - i.e, how many times players have to crossover (or turn, or pivot, or stride, or skate backward) before shooting or passing, etc.

Forward Skating-“1/3” Rule

- 1st Third of Stride on the front 1/3 of blade (toe)
- Middle third of stride is on the middle third of the blade
- Last third of stride is on the back third of blade (heel)

Teaching Crossovers(unders)

- 1st- teach step over (outside over inside)
  - Balance, position
  - Walking position first
- 2nd- teach push-unders
  - Knee bend,
- Emphasis is on the push under

Coaching Mites (Philosophy)

- Try not to over coach

Backward Skating

- 1st Teach balance
  - Ready position- push gently
- Focus on leg drive not butt wiggle
- One Leg at a time
- Then teach rhythm

Things to consider?

- Kids are experiential- they learn fastest by 1st hand experience

What does it mean to play a game?

- What does it mean to practice?
  - Write it down.

“Kids love playing games” -

- What does it mean to a mite when you say we are going to play a game

Which is more fun a game where there is 2 players or a game where there is 10 players?

- Which one will engage the player more?

Which one will develop skills better?

Teaching Skills while Coaching for fun

- Be Creative
  - Be consistent in language and points of emphasis
  - But change up how you teach
    - Example: Riding the stick
    - Example: Airplane glide