

PRACTICE PHILOSOPHY

KEEP THEM MOVING

Whether it is a practice, clinic or camp, ice sessions should be designed to engage every participant consistently. Kids don't attend practice to watch others play. Kids enjoy practices when they have fun and they experience an improvement in their overall skills.

EMPHASIZE THE FUNDAMENTALS

Build a foundation that will never crack by properly teaching the basics. Learning the fundamentals and perfecting the same basics at every level of play is essential to having any chance of success.

If one player does not execute the fundamentals of his position correctly, the most sophisticated drill or play in the world will not work. It is unfair and not fun to focus on running plays that will fail 9 out of 10 times. Practices that focus on Team Play over executing fundamentals are cheating every participant out of the chance to learn the game properly.

INCORPORATE A PROGRESSION OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT FOR EVERY PARTICIPANT

Regardless of a player's skill level, it is your responsibility as a coach to teach every kid on your team. It is no secret that if kids experience improvement in their skills, no matter what their athletic ability may be, they will continue to participate and return to learn more. Teach the skills in the proper order so you can continue to improve and build on each training session.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Following are some general observations of youth sports as stated in the Long-Term Athlete Development Plan.

- Young athletes under-train, over-compete; low training to competition ratios in early years
- Training in early years focuses on outcomes (winning) rather than processes (optimal training)
- Poor training between 6 and 16 years of age cannot be fully corrected (athletes will never reach genetic potential)

It takes thousands of repetitions to master a skill. Stay committed to working on age- and level-specific skills until a reasonable level of mastery is achieved and then move on to more advanced skills. Focus on skill development in a fun, competitive environment.