

Creating High Performance, High Tempo Practice Plans

Developed By
Mitron Sports Enterprises, Inc.

☛ Hockey is a game defined by:

- Speed
- Thinking
- Reaction
- Execution
- Time
- Space

"As speed increases, players are required to execute at a higher level to gain time and space"

☛ What are High Energy / High Tempo Practice Plans?

- Games are not won on the day of competition
- Winning games is directly related to the hours of strenuous and intensive practice sessions

"The will to win is easy, but the will to prepare to win is much more difficult." (Bob Johnson)

- The most difficult task for a coach is developing practice drills that simulate the situations confronted in games
- Evolving individual & tactical skills combined with group tactical skills must be duplicated at the appropriate energy and tempo of a game
- Drills should contain the exact components of a game:
 - Where on the ice does the situation occur?
 - What do players see in a game?
 - What do players hear in a game?
 - What do players need to do achieve the desired outcome?
- The evolution of the drill needs to keep changing to ultimately duplicate an actual competitive situation
- The tempo & energy of the drill should intensify and the players' execution becomes instinctive.....read & react!

☛ Target Level of Players: Drills must be selected for the appropriate age group and level of play. The time allocated to the skill development, individual tactics, group tactics and team play will vary with following age groups:

- Ages 8 – 11
- Ages 12 – 15
- Ages 16 - 19

☛ Characteristics of a "High Energy – High Tempo Practice

- Practice is perceived as a positive experience – attitude!
- Drills are selected based on age, level of play
- Well designed & prepared. Each drill builds on the previous drill to accomplish an practice plan objective
- The duration of the drill is no longer than 25 – 30 seconds
- Promotes creativity by "adding" a twist (e.g., 2nd effort drill) to the original drill
- Allows players to achieve a conditioning effect
- **Key Practice Plan Concept:** *A well coached team has the advantage of thoughtfully designed practice plans that are implemented with the sole purpose of preparing players to instinctively in games*
 - **Note:** Should not have to end with a "conditioning drill"
 - Tendency to have a "chaotic" feel to the drill
 - **Note:** Do not be alarmed if players "do not get it right away"
 - The execution of basic technical skills at high speeds may also feel uncomfortable to players
 - High levels of concentration are required on the part of players
- **Tips for creating a "High Energy – High Tempo Practice"**
 - Take the time before practice (at least 10 – 15 minutes) to present the practice plan to the players and coaches
 - Introduces the objectives of the practice (e.g. fore-checking)
 - This will minimize long explanations of drill on the ice and allow more practice time
 - Make sure all practice tools (e.g., pylons) are ready to use to eliminate down time spent looking for the equipment
 - Maximum number of drills should be 5-7 with a duration no longer than ten minutes
 - Location of starting positions and pucks be identified on each drill
 - Individual drills should not be done for endurance purposes
 - Limit them to 5-15 second bursts of energy (e.g., over-speed training)
 - Transition to a common meeting point: At the end of any drill, players skate 1 high tempo lap of the ice and then wait at common meeting point to discuss next stage of practice. Note: Good time for players to recover and be attentive
 - During the course of a drill ask for players to skate a high tempo lap forward or backward....then return to the drill
 - End the practice in the locker room rather than a huddle" on the ice. Use the time to practice right until horn sounds! Player will learn to expect the coach to be in the locker room to discuss the outcome of practice.
 - Good time for feedback, praise, and what's ahead for the team!
- Five basic components and progression of a High Energy – High Temp Practice Plan

- o **Warm-up:** Purpose to raise the body temperature and the temperature of the muscles. In addition provide a slight rehearsal of skills and theme of the practice
- o **Team Play:** Utilize high tempo flow drills with emphasis on using all five players (e.g., regrouping, fore – checking)
- o **Group Tactical Skill Building:** High tempo drills to practice tactics involving small groups of players (e.g., passing / receiving, cycling)
- o **Individual Tactical Skills:** On-going formation and perfection of individual skills (e.g., skating, stick-handling, puck control, shooting)
- o **Skating Skills:** Emphasis on edge control, skating quickness, cornering)

Note: Excluding the warm-up component, the flow of practice from team play to individual skills is completely opposite of most youth hockey practices. The format of high tempo practice sessions is based on the quality of ice...better ice conditions to practice team play as compared to the end of practice!

Resources:

1. Mitron Sport Enterprises, Inc. by Ron Dussiaume
2. USA Hockey