LEVEL 3 – INTERMEDIATE MANUAL

Handbook 1: Coaching Effectiveness

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Level 3 – Intermediate Manual

Handbook 1
Coaching Effectiveness

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Handbook 1
Coaching Effectiveness

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Chapter 1
Developing A Season Plan

OBJECTIVES

- **Develop a season plan**
- **Identify the steps in season planning**
- **Develop short- and long-range goals**
- **Dividing your season into sections**

The organized coach realizes the importance of planning beyond the daily practice plan. To be effective and to ensure that both short- and long–range goals are accomplished, one must map out an overall season plan with a complete schedule that includes practices, competitions and training for the entire season.

SEASON PLANNING STEPS

1. Identify season goals and objectives

2. Sequence Objectives
*Pre
*Early
*Mid
*Late

3. Identify Practice Objectives

4. Player Outcomes of the Season

Sequence the Season's Objectives

After you have selected the objectives most important to your players, you should divide these objectives into categories that you will attempt to achieve in the pre, early, mid and late season. If pre-season activity is possible, it can save you valuable practice time. Many of the objectives pertaining to knowledge of the rules, strategies of team or individual play and some of those involving conditioning can be all or partially achieved before formal practice begins.

The early season should be devoted to teaching, re-teaching and practicing the season's objectives. The mid-season continues with a heavy focus on teaching, but should also devote a lot of time to executing and refining skills within game-like drills or controlled scrimmages. The late season should focus on the maintenance and refinement of early and mid-season skills, and refining team offensive and defensive play. Figure 1 provides an example of the worksheet that can be used to sequence the season's objectives.

SEASON PLAN WORKSHEET

Goals & Performance Areas	Objectives	Season Division
	(1) _____	PRE EARLY MID LATE
_____	(2) _____	
	(3) _____	
_____	(4) _____	
	(5) _____	
_____	(6) _____	
	(7) _____	
_____	(8) _____	
	(9) _____	
_____	(10) _____	
	(11) _____	
_____	(12) _____	
	(13) _____	
_____	(14) _____	
	(15) _____	
_____	(16) _____	
	(17) _____	
_____	(18) _____	
	(19) _____	
_____	(20) _____	
	(21) _____	
_____	(22) _____	
	(23) _____	
_____	(24) _____	
	(25) _____	
_____	(26) _____	
	(27) _____	
_____	(28) _____	
	(29) _____	
_____	(30) _____	

Figure 1. Example Season Plan Worksheet

Deciding what objectives should be achieved in pre, early, middle and late season is the basis for all subsequent planning

PRE-SEASON

Objectives should be placed in the pre-season when they involve skills, knowledge or attitudes that can be achieved independently, (all or in part) by the player in a safe and efficient manner. This could include learning the basic rules, infractions, penalties, strategies, obtaining appropriate equipment, and developing strength and aerobic fitness.

EARLY SEASON

Objectives should be placed in the early season if they contain abilities that are prerequisite to attaining other identified objectives. For example, players must be able to skate before they can be expected to skate and stickhandle, or skate, stickhandle, and shoot. This attention to the sequence of skills is particularly important for the inexperienced player, who should spend more time on learning skills.

MID- AND LATE SEASON

Generally, you should focus on individual skills in the early season, skill combinations in the mid-season and combinations of both, within systems of play in the latter portion of the season. There are no hard and fast divisions among these three phases of the season (in fact, they should blend or overlap into good transitions). However, you should have them clearly in mind as you view the entire season in terms of what you wish to accomplish and the time in which it must be done.

IDENTIFY PRACTICE OBJECTIVES

As you place objectives into season divisions and adjust the number of weeks assigned to each division, typically you will find that you have chosen to cover more objectives than your available practice time will allow. A good guide in such situations is to **devote sufficient time to the instruction and practice of each objective so that the majority of players are able to make significant improvements.** Reviewing the amount of practice time spent on objectives included in the plan may reveal why many athletes did not substantially improve on some of the skills "taught."

Select, teach and practice objectives that are essential to the game at your level of play

Merely exposing your team to many skills without sufficient time for them to be learned results in frustration for both you and the players. The players must sufficiently master the objectives so that they can be used in a game situation. Rather, **select, teach and practice only the objectives that are essential to the game at your level of play.** You can always add objectives to your plan as it is implemented, but you cannot recover time wasted on objectives that are not achieved.

Generally, the **allotment of time to an objective should be based upon the following instructional needs and should be distributed across several practices. You should allow time:**

1. **to introduce the objective – tell the players what you want them to learn and why it is important.**
2. **for the players to try the skill and for you to assess their levels of performance.**
3. **to teach the key elements of the skill and for the players to practice these elements.**
4. **for skill refinement and automation so that the skill can be used in a game situation.**

PLACE THE OBJECTIVES ON A SEASON CALENDAR

Integrating the results of your planning decisions into a season calendar will give you a master plan of everything you need to effectively manage your coaching activities. The season calendar will convert your plans to practice outlines. It is the guide from which specific practice plans can be developed. Items that should be included on the calendar are listed in Figure 2.

Season calendar entries

1. Registration
2. Team rosters
3. Equipment distribution
4. Game days and times
5. Practice days and times
6. Practice objectives
7. Parent orientation
8. Tournament dates
9. Recognition banquet
10. Special events

Figure 2. Items to include on a season calendar

The most important part of developing a season calendar is the decision you make about what objective to teach and how much practice time you devote to each objective on a practice-by-practice basis. Using your season plan worksheet, select three to six objectives, listed in the early season division, that you wish to work on during your first practice and enter them in the space labeled practice #1 on your season calendar. This process should be repeated for your second, third and subsequent practices through the early, mid and late season divisions. **A season calendar worksheet you can reproduce is included on the last page of this chapter.**

The two most important decisions in planning the season are deciding what objectives to teach and how much time you should spend teaching them.

You will spend less time in planning your season if you use the approach suggested here than if the task is done practice-by-practice throughout the season. The recommended process will also help you verify which skills you believe are most important as you run out of available practice time and are forced to either omit objectives from your plan or find ways to achieve them outside of the normal practice time.

In addition to the good feeling and confidence that comes with completing a season calendar, you will have developed the base necessary to systematically change your plans as unexpected events develop. More importantly, you will know before the mid to late portions of the season whether or not your initial practices allocated too much time to some objectives in the early season which left insufficient time for equally important objectives later on. A completed plan that has been implemented and refined is also an invaluable resource for next year's coaching assignment or for new coaches coming into the program.

SUMMARY

Your role as a coach can be most appropriately filled through the leadership and instruction you provide within the context of practices and games. Clearly, **those coaches who are most effective in facilitating their players' achievement of appropriate skills, knowledge, fitness and attitudes are those who have clear objectives that pertain to these achievements. Organization of the season by selecting and then teaching objectives in an appropriate order, and for an appropriate amount of time, is a major step toward helping players enjoy the benefits of hockey.** This same planning effort is an essential step in reducing some of hockey's unwanted costs.

SEASON PLAN SCHEDULE

Develop a season plan for your team using the following format and based on your season plan priority checklist.

SEASON	WEEK	DAY	ACTIVITY	COMMENTS

MONTH_____

SEASON PLANNING CALENDAR

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY

Chapter 2
A Model for Effective Instruction

OBJECTIVES

- **Develop a model for proper instruction**
- **Understand how to effectively communicate**
- **Understand the different levels of learning**

A MODEL FOR INSTRUCTION

Although there are many ways to instruct young hockey players, **the following approach has proven to be both easy to use and effective in teaching and/or refining skills.**

1. **Get the attention of the players.**
2. **Communicate precisely what needs to be learned.**
3. **Provide for practice and feedback.**
4. **Evaluate results and take appropriate action.**

STEP 1: Establish Attention and Content Credibility

The attention of the players must be directed at the coach before instruction can occur. Be sure to arrange the players so that each one can see your actions and hear your instructions. Choose where you stand in relation to the players so that you specifically avoid competing with other distractions in the background. Often it is good strategy to have the players on one knee as you introduce a skill.

Immediately establish the precedent that when you speak, important information is being communicated. Point out that the team cannot maximize its practice opportunity when several people are talking at the same time.

As you begin your comments, **establish the need for competence of the skill (why this skill is important) by relating it to some phase of successful team and/or individual play.** An excellent way to gain your players' attention and motivate players to want to learn the skill is to mention how a local, regional or national level player or team has mastered the skill and has used it to great advantage. The objective of your comments is to **establish the idea that mastery of this skill is very important to individual and team play and that the key elements of its execution are achievable.**

Establish and maintain the precedent that when you speak, important useful information is being communicated.

The next and perhaps even more important task is to clearly establish in the minds of the players that they need instruction on this skill. This can be accomplished with the following steps:

1. **Briefly describe the new skill and then let them try it several times in a quick paced drill setting.**
2. **Carefully observe their performance and identify their strengths and weaknesses. (Use the key elements of the skill as a basis for your observations).**
3. **Call them back together and report your observations.**

This approach will allow you to point out weaknesses in performance on one or more key elements that were common to many, if not all, of the players. **Using this approach will enhance your credibility and motivate the players to listen to and follow your instruction.** Also, your subsequent teaching can be specifically matched to the needs (weaknesses) you observed. Of course, if in your observation of the players' abilities you determine that they have already achieved the desired skill level, then you should shift your focus to another skill. This could involve moving on to the next phase of your practice plan.

Individuals learn most effectively by focusing their practice attempts on one clearly understood element of skill performance

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When your players are at two or three different levels of ability, you may want to establish two or three instructional groups. This can be accomplished using the following three divisions:

Early learning: (focus on learning the key elements of the skill)

Intermediate Learning: (focus on coordination of all key elements)

Later Learning: (automatic use of the skill in game-like conditions)

STEP 2: Communicate Precisely What Needs to be Learned

When you and your players know their status on a given skill (strengths and weaknesses of their performance), conditions are well established for both teaching and learning. **Because individuals learn most efficiently when they focus on one aspect of a skill at a time, it is important to communicate precisely the one key element of the skill on which you want the individual, pair, group or team to concentrate.** Demonstrate the key element visually (and explain it verbally) so that all players know exactly what they are trying to achieve.

STEP 3: Provide for Practice and Feedback

Organize your practice time and select your drills or practice activity to provide players with:

1. **As many repetitions (trials) as possible within the allotted time for instruction. Minimize standing in lines.**
2. **Specific, immediate and positive feedback on what they did correctly and then on what they can do to improve. Follow this with some encouragement to continue the learning effort.**

Repetitions and feedback are essential to effective coaching. You can expect a direct relationship between the gains in player performance and the degree to which you find ways to maximize these two dimensions of instruction. John Wooden, famed UCLA basketball coach, was found to provide over 2,000 acts of teaching during 30 total hours of practice, of which 75 percent pertained directly to skill instruction. This converts to more than one incidence of feedback for every minute of coaching activity!

Repeated trials and specific feedback on what was right, followed by what can be improved, with an encouraging "try again," produces results

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Feedback can be dramatically increased by using volunteers and/or players as instructional aids. Where instruction is focused on one key element of performance and the important aspects of performing the skill have been effectively communicated to the players, they are often as good (and sometimes better) at seeing discrepancies in a partner's performance as some adults. Working in pairs or small groups can thus be very effective in increasing both the number of trials and the amount of feedback that individuals get within a given amount of practice time. Also, by providing feedback, players are improving their mental understanding of how the skill should be performed.

STEP 4: Evaluate Results and Take Appropriate Action

Evaluation of player performance must occur on a continuing basis during practices and in the games. This is the only valid means to answer the question, "Are the players achieving the skills?" If they are, you have two appropriate actions to take

1. **First, enjoy it. You are making an important contribution to your players.**
2. **Second, consider how you can be even more efficient. Are there ways that you can get the same results in less time? Can even higher gains in skill be achieved within the same time allotment?**

If the players are not achieving the instructional objectives, it is important to ask, "why?" **Although it is possible that you have a cluster of players who are slower learners, this is seldom the case.** First, assume that you are using inappropriate instructional techniques or that you simply did not provide enough instructional time. A good approach to answering the "why" question is to go back through the instructional factors related to effective planning, teaching, communicating, discipline and/or conditioning and determine which of the guidelines or steps was missed and/or inappropriately implemented. Then alter your subsequent practices accordingly. Continuous trial, error and revisions will usually result in improved coaching effectiveness, which then translates into increased achievement by the players. **In instances where you cannot determine what to alter, seek help from a fellow coach whose team is consistently strong in the skill(s) that are causing you difficulty.** This is an excellent way to obtain some good ideas for alterations in your approach.

SUMMARY

Effective instruction is the foundation of successful coaching. It requires practices which include a clear communication of what is to be learned, a continuous evaluation of player performance on the objectives included in the practices, a systematic method of instruction, and the use of guidelines for instruction which have been associated with player achievement.

Systematic instruction includes: 1) establishing attention and content credibility; 2) precise communication of what needs to be learned; 3) providing many practice trials and plenty of feedback; 4) evaluation of player achievement. **Use of the guidelines for effective instruction (realistic expectations, structured instruction, order, grouping, maximizing time, success, monitoring and providing a sense of control) will maximize the results of instruction.** Systematic instruction based upon these guidelines of effective instruction, incorporated into effective practice plans, will result in player achievement of the essentials of the game.

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Chapter 3
Motivating Your Players

OBJECTIVES

- **Understanding motivational techniques**
- **Understanding the meaning of success**
- **Learning how to deal with stress**

HOW TO HELP MOTIVATE YOUR PLAYERS

Athletes are most highly motivated when they obtain what they seek from their participation in sport. Therefore, **motivational techniques should be selected that are based upon the reasons athletes have for joining the team** (provided that their motives are healthy for the individual and the team). The following strategies may help you improve your players' motivation.

Know your Athletes
Why are they participating?

Young athletes differ in their personalities, needs, and objectives for playing hockey. You must, therefore, **get to know your athletes as individuals in order to determine why they participate.** One way to accomplish this is through a team meeting at the start of the season. Ask your players why they are participating and what their personal objectives are for the season. Continue this dialogue before, during and after practices, special events or whenever you have a chance to talk one-on-one with your players.

Help Athletes Improve Their Skills and Learn New Skills

Skill improvement is one reason for joining a hockey team. Therefore, practice sessions should focus on skill development, with regular opportunities for players to measure their progress. In addition, you can help athletes set performance goals that are appropriate for them. For example, when young players are first learning to pass, tell them that if they can pass the puck so that a teammate can receive it without moving his/her stick, they have been successful. More advanced players should be encouraged to pass without altering their speed or direction so that their teammate can receive the puck and continue a developing play without hesitations. As players improve, they can increase the number of times they pass successfully. In this way, your players can measure their improvement in performance more objectively than by considering only the game outcome.

Practices and Games Should be Enjoyable

As indicated by various studies, **young athletes want to have fun. This means they want to play, not sit on the bench or stand in long lines waiting for their turn at a drill.** One of the best ways to ensure that practices are enjoyable is to use short, snappy drills that involve a large number of players. You can also keep your players' interest by incorporating new drills. Your players may even be able to invent useful drills of their own.

Having a chance to display their skills during a contest is an excellent motivator

In games, too, all players can be involved, even if they're sitting on the bench. Team members can be watching the individuals who are playing similar positions in order to learn from their good techniques or their mistakes. They can also watch for strategies used by the other team. Most importantly, however, they should all have a chance to play in every game. Knowing they will have a chance to display their skills during the course of the contest is a primary source of motivation prior to and after the experience. Players who sit on the bench, unable to test their skills in a game, are not having fun.

Allow Players to be with their Friends and Make New Friends

Many athletes view their hockey participation as a chance to be with their friends while doing something they enjoy. Allowing them to have fun with their friends does not mean your practices have to be disrupted. You can encourage opportunities for them to develop their friendships by initiating social activities such as a mid-season pizza party which would take place outside of practice. This will require more time on your part, but you will also get to know your players better and may find these activities very rewarding.

Help Players Understand the Meaning of Success

Children learn at an early age to equate winning with success and losing with failure. If athletes win a game, they feel good or worthy. If they lose, they feel incompetent or unworthy. This attitude toward winning can be very discouraging to players, unless they are always winning (an impossibility for at least 50% of the participants). **One of your most important roles, therefore, is to help your players keep winning in perspective.** One way to accomplish this is to help your players understand that winning a game is not always under their control. For example, after losing a game, you may tell your team, "We ran the offense well today, but their goalie played very well, so we didn't get as many goals as we expected."

Your players also need to know that, although striving to win is an important objective in hockey, **being successful in hockey also means making personal improvement and striving to do one's best.** This attitude can be developed by:

- **Encouraging maximum effort during practices and games.**
- **Rewarding that effort.**
- **Helping your players set important but realistic goals that they can attain and thus be successful.**

In helping your players understand the meaning of success, it is important not to punish them when they fail, particularly if they gave a maximum effort.

Your coaching approach is the most important factor that influences player motivation

Use the Positive Approach to Coaching

Probably **the most important factor that influences your players' motivation is the approach you take in coaching.** There are many different styles or approaches used by coaches, but most fall into two categories: the

negative approach and the positive approach. The negative approach is the most visible model of coaching because it is prominent (like bad news in the newspaper) through the media, in professional, college and even high school sports. This approach is one where the coach focuses on performance errors and uses fear, intimidation, and/or anger to motivate players. **The negative approach doesn't work very well with young athletes.** Constant criticism, sarcasm, and yelling often frustrates young athletes, deteriorates their self-confidence, and decreases their motivation because they are just developing their skills and have fragile self-concepts.

The positive approach, in contrast, is one where the coach focuses on the correct aspects of performance and uses plenty of encouragement and praise for the tasks that players perform correctly. When skill errors occur, a coach who uses the positive approach corrects mistakes with constructive criticism. **A positive, supportive approach is essential when coaching young athletes if high levels of motivation are to be maintained.**

Key principles for implementing a positive approach to coaching are listed and explained in the following paragraphs.

- **Be liberal with rewards and encouragement**

The most effective way to influence positive behavior and increase motivation is through the frequent use of encouraging statements and rewards. **The single most important difference between coaches whom young athletes respect most and those they respect least is the frequency with which coaches reward them for desirable behaviors.** The most important rewards you can give are free. They include a pat on the back, a smile, clapping, verbal praise or a friendly nod. The more a coach uses encouraging statements and rewards, the more motivated the players will be.

- **Give rewards and encouragement sincerely**

For rewards to be beneficial, they must be given sincerely. This does not mean that you shouldn't give them positive feedback about their performance when they made mistakes. You can point out their errors and at the same time praise them for the plays they performed well. It is important to be positive, but also realistic.

- **Reward effort and correct technique, not just results**

It's easy to praise a player who just scored a goal, but it's less natural to praise a player who tried hard but missed the shot. Sometimes, too, we forget to reward correct technique when it does not result in positive outcomes. It is important, however, to reward players' efforts and the use of correct technique if you want this behavior to continue.

- **Have realistic expectations**

Base your rewards and encouragement on realistic expectations. Encouraging your Pee Wees, Squirts, or Mites to strive to elite-level standards will probably make them feel as though they have failed when they can't reach the goals they think you've set for them. It is much easier for you to give honest rewards when you have realistic expectations about your players' abilities.

Help Players Set Goals

Young athletes learn from parents and coaches that success is equated with winning and failure is equated with losing. Adopting this view of success and failure confuses the players. Let's take, for example, the cases of Charlie and Paul, members of the winning and losing teams, respectively. Charlie played three minutes in the final period, spending two of those minutes in the penalty box. Because he was a member of the winning team, however, his performance is perceived as a part of the success. On the other hand, although Paul masterfully used the skill he had been practicing and scored his first goal of the season, he is forced to conclude that he is a failure because he was on the losing team. As adults, we recognize the inaccuracy of these

perceptions, but our actions at the end of a contest may tell our players that a winning score is what really matters.

Equating success or failure with winning or losing results in mixed messages to the athlete

Athletes need a way to compare current and past performances to determine whether they are successful. This can be accomplished through goal setting. By using an individualized goal-setting strategy, each athlete can regain control over his/her own success or failure. In addition to removing the mixed messages, remind the players that there are some factors which can determine the outcome of a game that are out of a player's control. For example, the person your athlete is defending may be playing the best game of his/her career. Although your athlete is playing very well, there is just no stopping the opposing player. Or, injury or illness of one player may force another player to play an unfamiliar position. Or, the ice may be much faster or slower than your players are used to playing on and all their passes are slightly off the mark. These examples highlight the need to establish personal improvement goals consistent with the objective of winning, but not entirely dependent on its achievement, to maintain player motivation. **Several guidelines for goal setting that can markedly help performance are listed and explained in the following paragraphs.**

- **Success should be possible for everyone on the team**

When implementing a goal-setting program, each athlete must experience some success; in other words, each player should perform at a level that demands a **best effort** for the existing conditions. Help each athlete realize that effort equals success by focusing rewards on such efforts.

- **Practice goals should be more challenging and goals during competition more realistic**

When you set up drills to work on passing or shooting, help your players set goals for practice that will challenge them to exceed a previous effort. For example, when practicing slap shots, you may ask your best shooter to make seven out of 10 shots in practice, while another player may be challenged with four out of 10. You cannot expect the same level of performance in a game because neither you nor the player control all the factors. Therefore, you may set two or three out of 10 shots in a game as a realistic goal for your best and one out of 10 shots for your other players. With this approach, motivation at practice is increased and players have a realistic chance of experiencing self-worth in a game.

- **Goals should be flexible**

If goal-setting is to be effective, goals must be evaluated frequently and adjusted depending on the athlete's success ratio. If an athlete is achieving the set goal, increase the goal to provide for greater challenge and motivation. If the goal is too difficult and the athlete is feeling frustration or failure, the goal should be lowered rather than having the athlete continue to experience failure.

- **Set individual goals rather than team goals**

In general, team goals should not be made. This is because team goals are not under anyone's control and they are often unrealistic. It is too difficult to assess accurately how a team will progress through a season. Will your team improve faster than other teams, at the same pace or be a late-comer? If you set as a goal winning a certain number of games (i.e., 15 out of 20 games), and the team loses their first six games, you cannot achieve the goal even by winning the remaining 14 games. This will only cause greater discouragement among team members. Work on individual improvement through goal-setting and let the team's improvement reflect the individual's improvement.

Goal-setting can be very effective in improving a player's performance, confidence and self-worth. To be effective, however, you must know your players well enough to know when they are setting goals that are challenging, controllable and realistic. In

addition, goals must be adjusted to ensure feelings of self-worth. Team goals should generally be avoided.

Dealing with Competitive Stress

Some coaches believe the best way to motivate a team for competition is to get them "psyched-up" before the game. **With young athletes, however, getting "psyched-up" is not usually the problem; rather, the problem for them is getting "psyched-out."**

Competitive stress in young players can originate from many sources - the player, teammates, the coach, and/or the parents. When hockey players are asked what might cause them to worry, the five most frequent answers given were: improving their performance, participating in championship games, falling for a "sucker move," performing up to their level of ability and what their coach would think or say. Thus, young hockey players are most likely to be worried about performance failure. This worry about failure may increase players' anxieties, which, in turn, may cause poor performance and eventually decrease motivation.

A good way to help your players avoid the effects of competitive stress is to reduce their fear of failure. This can be achieved by encouraging them to enjoy the game and do their best. When your players lose or make a mistake, don't express displeasure; rather correct their mistakes in a positive way by using the following steps.

1. **Start with a compliment. Find some aspect of the performance that was correct.**
2. **Then tell the player what was wrong and how to correct it.**
3. **End with another positive statement such as, "Keep working at it. You'll get it."**

This approach allows players to keep practicing their skills without the fear of making a mistake. **The following guidelines may be helpful in preventing competitive stress.**

1. **Don't set unrealistic goals.**
2. **Use the positive approach when correcting mistakes.**
3. **Eliminate the type of "pep talks" that communicate overemphasis on the game and the outcome.**

SUMMARY

Children play hockey because they want to improve their skills, have fun, be with friends and be successful. Children who drop out of hockey typically do so because one or more of their goals was not met. You can maximize your players' desire to participate and help prevent them from dropping out by getting to know them as individuals. Learn why they are participating; focus on skill development in practice sessions and make sure the practices are enjoyable. Allow time for friendships to develop by creating a cordial environment both on and off the ice. Help players understand the meaning of success and have them set realistic goals.

Using a positive approach to coaching is the most effective way to improve players' performance. Positive coaching will also make playing and coaching more enjoyable. Be sure to reward effort and correct techniques, in addition to the results that meet your expectations.

Having realistic expectations of players' performance will provide more opportunities to give rewards. However, where players make mistakes, use the positive approach to correcting errors. **The positive approach involves using a compliment, correcting the error and then finishing with another positive statement.** Using a positive approach and helping players reach their goals are effective ways to motivate your players toward maximum performance.

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Chapter 4
Care and Rehabilitation of Common Hockey Injuries

OBJECTIVES

- **Understanding what are common hockey injuries**
- **Identifying common treatment of common injuries**
- **Outlining rehabilitation tips**

COMMON INJURIES

The following section lists **fourteen injuries that may occur in ice hockey**. The information about each injury provides (1) definition, (2) common symptoms, (3) immediate on-ice treatment and (4) guidelines for returning to action.

1. **back or neck injury**
2. **blisters**
3. **bruise**
4. **dental injury**
5. **dislocation**
6. **fracture**
7. **head injury - conscious**
8. **head injury - unconscious**
9. **lacerations**
10. **loss of wind**
11. **nose bleed**
12. **skate bite**
13. **sprain**
14. **strain**

1. BACK OR NECK INJURY

Definition

- any injury to the back or neck area which causes the player to become immobile or unconscious

Symptoms

- pain and tenderness over the spine
- numbness
- weakness or heaviness in limbs
- tingling feeling in extremities

Care

- make sure player is breathing
- call for medical assistance

Return to Action

- dependent upon severity of the injury, a bruise may mean no practice for 2-3 days; a fracture may mean the player could never play again
- permission of a physician

2. BLISTERS

Definition
- localized collection of fluid in the outer portion of the skin

Symptoms
- redness
- inflammation
- oozing of fluid
- discomfort

Care
- clean the site with disinfectant
- use a sterile needle and puncture the blister at the edge; force the fluid out
- put disinfectant on the area
- cover the area with a band-aid
- alter the cause of the problem when possible (i.e., proper size and/or shape of the skates)

Return to Action
- immediately, unless pain is severe

3. BRUISE

Definition
- a bruising of the skin caused by a direct blow

Symptoms
- tenderness around the injury
- swelling
- localized pain

Care
- Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation (R.I.C.E.) for first 3 days
- contrast treatments for days 4-8
- restricted activity, protective padding

Return to Action
- when there is complete absence of pain and full range of motion

4. DENTAL INJURY

Definition
- any injury to mouth or teeth

Symptoms
- pain
- bleeding
- loss of tooth (partial or total)

Care
- clear the airway where necessary
- stop the bleeding with direct pressure, (make sure excess blood does not clog airway)
- save any teeth that were knocked free; store them in moist, sterile cloth. They may be reinserted in some cases.
- transport to hospital

Return to Action
- when pain is gone - usually within 2-3 days
- permission of a dentist

5. DISLOCATION

Definition
- loss of normal anatomical alignment

Symptoms
- complaints of joint slipping in and out (subluxation)
- joint out of line
- pain at the joint

Care
- mild
  - treat as a sprain (R.I.C.E.)
  - obtain medical care
- severe
  - immobilize before moving
  - needs to be treated by a physician
  - obtain medical care (do not attempt to put joint back into place)
  - R.I.C.E.

Return to Action

- subluxation: go by pain level, range of motion and strength; if no pain, has full range of motion and strength returned to 95% of same joint on opposite side of body, player may return to action
- severe: surgery may be necessary, six weeks is usually the minimum recovery time; full range of motion must be present, full strength must be present; doctor's permission is required to resume practice

6. FRACTURE

Definition

- a crack or complete break in a bone. A simple fracture is a broken bone, but with unbroken skin. A compound fracture is a broken bone and broken skin.

Symptoms

- pain at fracture site
- tenderness, swelling
- deformity or unnatural position
- loss of function in injured area
- open wound, bleeding (compound)
- a simple fracture may not be evident immediately. If localized pain persists, obtain medical assistance

Return to Action

- full range of motion is present
- strength must be returned to pre-injury levels throughout the entire range of motion of adjoining joints
- permission of a physician

7. HEAD INJURY - CONSCIOUS

Definition

- any injury which causes the player to be unable to respond in a coherent fashion to known facts (names, date, etc.)

Symptoms

- dizziness
- pupils unequal in size and/or non-responsive to light and dark
- disoriented
- unsure of name, date, or activity
- unsteady movement of eyeballs when trying to follow a finger moving in front of eyes
- same symptoms as noted for back or neck injury may be present

Care

- if above symptoms are present, player may be moved carefully when dizziness disappears. Players with head injuries should be removed from further practice or competition that day and should be carefully observed.
- obtain medical assistance

Return to Action

- permission of a physician

8. HEAD INJURY – UNCONSCIOUS

Definition

- any injury in which the player is unable to respond to external stimuli by verbal or visual means

Symptoms

- player is unconscious
- cuts or bruises to head area

Care

- **any time a player is unconscious, assume an injury to the spinal cord or brain**
- remove the mouthpiece and clear the airway if necessary
- do not move the player
- call for medical assistance
- do not remove the helmet

Return to Action

- permission of a physician

9. LACERATIONS

Definition
- a tearing or cutting of the skin

Symptoms
- bleeding
- swelling

Care
- direct pressure to the wound for four to five minutes will usually stop bleeding
- clean the wound with disinfectant
- R.I.C.E.
- if stitches are required, send to a doctor within twenty-four hours.

Return to Action
- as soon as pain is gone, if the wound can be protected from further injury

10. LOSS OF WIND

Definition
- a forceful blow to mid-abdomen area which causes inability to breathe

Symptoms
- rapid, shallow breathing
- gasping for breath

Care
- make sure no other injuries exist
- place player on back
- get player to relax and breathe slowly

Return to Action
- after five minutes of rest to regain composure and breathing has returned to normal rate

11. NOSE BLEED

Definition
- bleeding from the nose

Symptoms
- bleeding
- swelling
- pain
- deformity of nose

Care
- calm the athlete down
- get athlete into a sitting position
- pinch the nostrils together with fingers while the victim breathes through the mouth
- if bleeding cannot be controlled, call for medical assistance

Return to Action
- minor nosebleed - when bleeding has stopped for several minutes
- serious nosebleed - no more competition that day; doctor's permission if a fracture has occurred.

12. SKATE BITE

Definition
- pain where the skate laces are tied

Symptoms
- localized pain
- small, swollen area

Care
- lace skates down one eyelet
- put foam rubber under tongue where laces are tied
- rest if pain continues

Return to Action
- immediately

13. SPRAIN

Definition
- a stretching or a partial or complete tear of the ligaments surrounding a joint

Symptoms
- pain at the joint
- pain aggravated by motion at the joint
- tenderness and swelling
- looseness at the joint

Care

- immobilize at time of injury if pain is severe; use hockey stick as a splint
- R.I.C.E.
- see physician
- extended rest
- surgery

Return to Action

- pain and swelling are gone
- full range of motion reestablished
- strength and stability within 95% of the non-injured limb throughout range of motion
- light formal activity with no favoring of the injury
- moderate to full intensity formal activity with no favoring of the injury
- return to formal practice and competition

14. STRAIN

Definition

- stretching or tearing of the muscle or tendons which attach the muscle to the bone. Commonly referred to as a "muscle pull"

Symptoms

- localized pain brought on by stretching or contracting the muscle in question
- unequal strength between limbs

Care

- R.I.C.E. for the first 3 days
- stretching to point of discomfort; no pain; start as soon as player is able
- contrast treatment for days 4-8

Return to Action

- check flexibility - can players stretch as far as they could pre-injury?
- check strength between limbs; do both sides of the body appear equally strong?
- can athlete perform basic hockey tasks (i.e., skating, passing, shooting) without favoring the injury?
- mild strain - 1 to 2 days
- moderate - 4 to 6 days
- severe - 1 to 2 weeks or more

Maintaining Appropriate Records

The immediate care you provide to an injured player is important to limit the extent of the injury and set the stage for appropriate rehabilitation and thus a quick recovery. It is not sufficient, however, to terminate your care with these two areas. Two additional brief but valuable tasks should be completed. The first of these is to **complete a personal injury report form and** the second is to **log the injury on your summary of season injuries**.

Personal Injury Report Form

It is important for you to **maintain a record of the injuries that occur to your players**. This information may be helpful to guide delayed care or medical treatment and may be very important if any legal problems develop in connection with the injury.

Summary of Season Injuries

A Summary of Season Injuries, lists each type of injury, with a space for you to record when that type of injury occurred. At the end of the season you should **total the incidences of each injury to see if there is a trend to the kind of injuries your team has suffered**. If a trend exists, evaluate your training methods in all areas of practices and games. Try to alter drills or circumstances that may be causing injuries. Perhaps your practice routine ignores or overemphasizes some area of stretching or conditioning. Decide on a course of action that may be implemented for next season and note the appropriate changes you wish to make on your season or practice plans.

REHABILITATION

Decisions about the rehabilitation of injuries and re-entry into competition must be

made according to a flexible set of guidelines; not hard and fast rules. Every individual on your team and each injury is unique. Therefore, rehabilitation techniques and re-entry criteria will differ for each injured player.

General Procedures

Most minor injuries suffered by your players will not be treated by a physician. Therefore, you, the player, and the player's parents will determine when the player returns to action. Players, coaches and parents realize that missing practices will reduce the player's ability to help the team and that the loss of practice time will reduce the opportunity to perfect the skills of the game. **Pressure is often exerted on the coach to play injured players before they are fully recovered. However, chances of an injury recurring are greatly increased if a player returns too soon. The following five criteria should be met, in order, before allowing an injured player back into full competition. They are:**

1. **absence of pain.**
2. **full range of motion at the injured area.**
3. **normal size and power (strength throughout the range of motion) at the injured area.**
4. **normal speed and agility.**
5. **normal level of fitness.**

If a physician is not overseeing an injured player's rehabilitation, the task of rehabilitation will probably fall upon the coach. **Stretching activities, calisthenics and weight training exercises form the basis of a rehabilitation program.** Start with simple stretches. Presence of pain during movement is the key to determining if the activity is too stressful. The onset of pain means too much is being attempted too soon. When players can handle the stretching, then calisthenics and weight training can be added to the program.

Absence of Pain

Most injuries are accompanied by pain, although the pain is not always evident immediately when the injury occurs. Usually, the pain disappears quickly if the injury is a bruise, a strain or a minor sprain. For more serious injuries such as dislocations, tears, or fractures, the pain may remain for days or weeks. When the pain is gone, the player can start the stretching portion of a rehabilitation program. **The main goal of a rehabilitation program is to re-establish range of motion, strength, power and muscular endurance at the point of injury.** As long as players remain free of pain, they should proceed with their program. If pain reoccurs they should eliminate pain-producing movements until they are pain-free again.

The chance of an injury recurring is greatly increased if a player returns to action too soon

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Full Range of Motion

Injuries generally reduce the range of motion around a joint. The more severe the injury, the greater the reduction in range of motion, particularly when the injured area has been immobilized. **As soon as they are able, injured players should start moving the injured area in a progressively normal way.** For example, if the player has strained a groin muscle, a fairly common injury early in the season, he/she should stretch the muscle as much as possible without causing pain. Initially, the movement may be slight if the injury was severe, but with stretching, the full range of motion will eventually return. **When the player can move the injured joint through its normal range, strengthening exercises should begin.**

Strength and Size

After a body part has been immobilized (cast, splint wrap or disuse), muscles become smaller and weaker than they were prior to the injury. Just because a cast is removed and the injuries have "healed" does not mean that players are ready to practice or play at full speed. Loss of muscle mass means a loss of strength. Letting the player resume a normal practice schedule before strength has returned to pre-injury levels could lead to re-injury.

Strengthening the injured area should be done very conservatively. If weights are used, start with light weights and perform the exercise through the entire range of motion. If the exercise causes pain, then lighter weights should be used. Your goal is to **have the players regain full strength through the entire range of motion before allowing them to return to competition.** To determine when full strength and size has been regained, compare the injured area to the non-injured area on the opposite side of the body. When both areas are of equal size and strength then the players may progress to the next phase of recovery.

Normal Speed and Agility

If the lower parts of the body were injured, skating drills which incorporate progressively more intense changes of speed, and/or direction, stopping and accelerating will provide a good indication of the player's recovery. If the upper part of the body was injured, passing and shooting drills should be attempted also. In your observation of injured players, **try to detect any favoring of the injury or inability to smoothly perform a skill at increasing intensities. When players can move at pre-injury speed and agility, they are almost ready to play.**

The main goal of a rehabilitation program is to re-establish range of motion, strength, power and muscular endurance to the injured area

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Level of Fitness

Every extended layoff reduces the level of muscular fitness. While recovering, the player may be able to exercise other body parts without affecting the injured area. Someone with a sprained ankle may not be able to skate, but may be able to swim. Someone with a broken wrist may be able to jog or ride a bike. Encourage this type of activity, because it helps to maintain portions of their pre-injury levels of fitness. Players who have missed long periods of time due to an injury, should practice for several days after meeting the previous criteria, before being allowed to play in a game. Their cardiovascular system and the endurance of the injured musculature need time to adjust to the demands of the game. **The longer the layoff, the more conditioning work they will need.**

SUMMARY

This chapter was an attempt to acquaint you with various injuries associated with hockey and how you should be prepared to deal with these injuries. If you have prepared your first aid kit, brought along the medical records and familiarized yourself with the different types of injuries, you should be able to handle whatever situation arises. Follow the steps that are outlined for you and remember – **you are not a doctor**. If you are in doubt about how to proceed, use the coins in your first aid kit and call for professional help. Do not make decisions about treatments if you are not qualified to make them.

Remember, react quickly and with confidence. Most injuries will be minor and the injured players will need only a little reassurance before they can be moved to the bench area. Injuries will always occur in ice hockey. Therefore, you must prepare yourself to deal with whatever happens in a calm, responsible manner.

When the pain is gone, and the range of motion, strength, agility and conditioning are back to normal, your player is ready to resume play. The entire process may take two days for a bruise to 12 weeks or more for a fracture. In either case, if you have followed the general guidelines of this chapter, you know you have acted in the best long-term interest of the player. Participation is important, but only if the participation is achieved with a healthy body. Resist the pressure and the temptation to rush players into a game before they are ready. Your patience will be rewarded in terms of the long term health and performance of your players.

MEDICAL HISTORY FORM

Name:_____ Date:_____

Address:_____ Birthdate:_____

_____

Phone(s): Day:_____ Evening:_____

WHO TO CONTACT IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY?

Name:_____ Phone(s):_____

Relationship:_____ _____

Physician's Name:_____ Phone(s):_____

Hospital of Choice:_____ _____

(If the answer to any of the following questions is or was yes, please describe the problem and its implications for proper first aid treatment on the back). Have you had (or do you presently have) any of the following?

	Circle One	
Head injury (concussion, skull fracture)	Yes	No
Fainting spells	Yes	No
Convulsions/epilepsy	Yes	No
Neck or back injury	Yes	No
Asthma	Yes	No
High blood pressure	Yes	No
Kidney problems	Yes	No
Hernia	Yes	No
Diabetes	Yes	No
Heart murmur	Yes	No
Allergies	Yes	No
Specify:_____		
_____		
Injuries to:		
Shoulder	Yes	No
Knee	Yes	No
Ankle	Yes	No
Fingers	Yes	No
Arm	Yes	No
Other:_____		
_____		
Poor vision	Yes	No
Poor hearing	Yes	No

Other:_____

Have you had a recent tetanus booster? If so, when?_____

Are you currently taking any medication? What? Why?_____

_____

Has the doctor placed any restrictions on your activity? Explain._____

_____

Signed: _____ _____

(athlete) (parent)

SAMPLE 3 X 5 CARD

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Player's Name _____

Address _____

_____

Parent's Name _____

Telephone: _____ _____ _____
Home Work Alternate

In an emergency, if parents cannot be contacted, notify:

Name _____

Phone(s): _____ _____
Work Home

Doctor's Name _____

Telephone(s): _____ _____
Day Evening

Past Injuries _____

Restrictions/Allergies _____

Hospital Preference _____

_____

SUMMARY OF SEASON INJURIES

INJURY TYPE	FIRST 4 WEEKS	MIDDLE WEEKS	LAST 4 WEEKS	TOTAL
1. Back or Neck Injury				
2. Blisters				
3. Bruise				
4. Dental Injury				
5. Dislocation				
6. Fracture				
7. Head Injury – Conscious				
8. Head Injury – Unconscious				
9. Lacerations				
10. Loss of Wind				
11. Nose Bleed				
12. Skate Bite				
13. Sprain				
14. Strain				
15.				
16.				
17.				

Do you see a trend? YES NO

Steps to take to reduce injuries next season:

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(4) _____

(continued on reverse side)

SUMMARY OF SEASON INJURIES (cont.)

(5) _____

(6) _____

(7) _____

(8) _____

(9) _____

(10) _____

(11) _____

(12) _____

(13) _____

(14) _____

(15) _____

(16) _____

(17) _____

(18) _____

(19) _____

(20) _____

ATTENDANCE / INJURY REPORT

COACH_____ **Month**_____ **Year**_____

Report Dates	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	Comments
P=Practice G=Game																										
Roster																										
1																										
2																										
3																										
4																										
5																										
6																										
7																										
8																										
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19																										
20																										

Note: If a player is at a practice or game and has no sickness or injury, leave box blank

KEY

I = Injured – did not practice/play at all
E = Excused – sick or ill
U = Unexcused – did not practice/play, discipline or skipped
L = Limited practice/play because of previous injury (no contact)
N = New injury happened during practice/game
R = Re-injury to same body part
G = Gone from team – quit or removed from team
X = Missed practice/game from a non-hockey injury
T = Tardy to practice/game
__ = Other _____

USA HOCKEY INJURY SURVEY

One form must be completed for each "*injury*." The definition of an "*injury*" is: Any ailment that causes a player to seek medical attention OR forces the player to miss a game or practice.

Name _____ Team/Association _____

Age ____ Gender ____ Date of Birth _____ (mm/dd/yy) Height _____ (ft. in.) Weight _____ (lbs.) Home # ( ) _____

Age Classification: ❑ 8 and under ❑ 10 and under ❑ 12 and under ❑ 14 and under ❑ 18 and under ❑ Junior

Level of Play: ❑ Elite-Travel-Top Team ❑ Competitive ❑ Recreational – House

Date of Injury_____ ❑ Game **OR** ❑ Practice

Time of Injury (Warm-ups, Per. 1,2,3,OT) _____

Ice Conditions (New, Old, Outdoor)_____

Game Frequency (1st of day, 2nd, 3rd) _____

TYPE OF INJURY

- ❑ Bruise (Black & Blue)
- ❑ Laceration (Cut)
- ❑ Muscle Pull/Strain
- ❑ Sprained Joint
- ❑ Broken/Fractured Bone
- ❑ Dislocation/Separation
- ❑ Concussion/Blow to Head
- ❑ Other _____

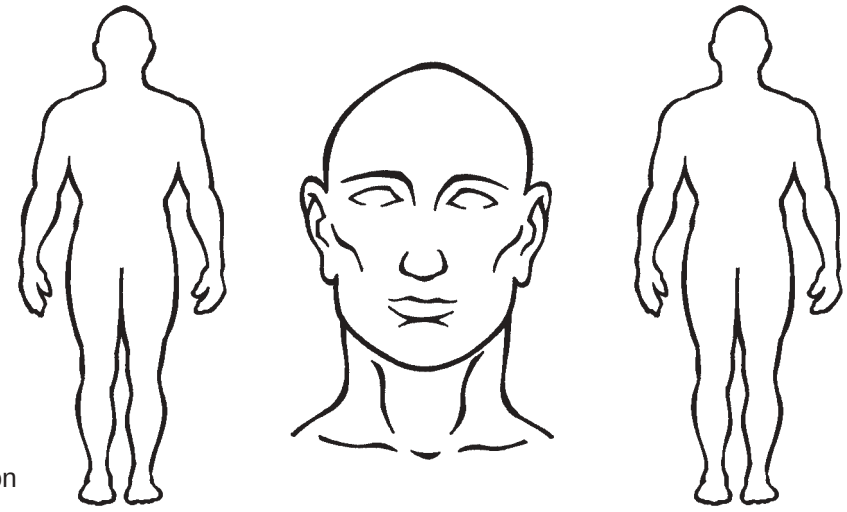
HOW INJURY OCCURRED

- ❑ Contact with boards
- ❑ Contact with goal
- ❑ Body contact with another person
- ❑ Struck by stick
- ❑ Contact with skate
- ❑ Contact with ice
- ❑ Struck by puck
- ❑ No apparent contact
- ❑ Other _____

PENALTY CALLED

- ❑ None
- ❑ Minor
- ❑ Major/Suspension (non-fighting)
- ❑ Suspension (fighting)
- ❑ Other _____

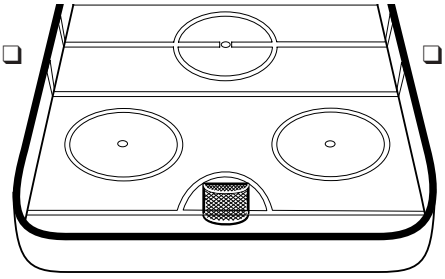
BODY PART AFFECTED (Circle area on drawings below)



FRONT FACE BACK

LOCATION ON ICE (X)

Bench ❑



❑ Penalty Box

FIRST AID

- ❑ On-site
- ❑ Parents/Home
- ❑ Sent to Hospital
- ❑ Hospital Admission

New Injury or Reoccuring? _____

Returned to game or practice (Y/N)? _____

Respondent_____

Phone #: ( ) _____

Brief description of injury _____

_____

_____

_____

Chapter 5
Legal Liability

OBJECTIVES

- **Outlining the responsibilities of a youth hockey coach**
- **Knowing your obligation as a coach**
- **Knowing how to meet the expectation of coaches**

Basis for Liability

The main reason coaches are sometimes sued is because they act in a "negligent" manner. Negligence is another word for conduct that is not reasonable. In determining whether a coach acts in a negligent manner (or whether the coach's conduct is unreasonable), the law will compare the actions of the coach to those of other coaches in the same situation.

Negligence is a civil matter, not a criminal matter. Coaches should act in an alert manner, be aware of the surrounding circumstances, and always use caution when dealing with players, referees and spectators.

The primary responsibility of a coach is to minimize the risk of injury to all participants of the game.

In minimizing the risk of injury, coaches have certain responsibilities with respect to the following areas:

- **the responsibility of properly supervising players either at practice or during a game.**
- **the responsibility of properly training and instructing players as to all facets of the game.**
- **the responsibility of ensuring that the players are wearing safe and proper equipment.**
- **the responsibility of providing competent and responsible assistant coaches and personnel.**
- **the responsibility of warning players of dangers that they may not know.**
- **the responsibility of providing proper medical attention for injured players.**
- **the responsibility of prohibiting injured players from participating in practice as well as games.**
- **the responsibility of placing players of a similar competitive level against one another.**

These are the most common responsibilities required of coaches which can be found in the Bill of Rights for Young Athletes enacted by USA Hockey. When coaches fail to meet these responsibilities, players usually end up injured.

Coaches' Responsibility to Supervise Their Players

One of the primary responsibilities of a coach is to provide proper supervision. In general, coaches must provide the degree of supervision necessary for the age, experience and skill of those supervised. When coaches fail to properly supervise their players, they can be held responsible for any resulting injuries.

For example, in one instance, one of the players on a golf team was killed as a result of being struck in the head by the errant swing of another player. The court found that the coach was liable for the death of the golfer because he failed to provide proper supervision. At the time of the accident, the coach was concentrating solely on one golfer and not paying any attention to the other golfers. The court held that if the coach was providing proper supervision, the accident would not have occurred.

In another case, a wrestler was injured during practice by another wrestler when the wrestler applied a hold taught by their coach. The court found that the coach failed to provide proper supervision because he was supervising two matches at the same time. The court stated that he should have been supervising only one match at a time in order to minimize the risk of unnecessary injury to the wrestlers.

These cases point out that all ice hockey coaches should maintain proper supervision over their players at all times. This includes when the players are on the ice or when they are in the locker room. The easiest way to alleviate any problems in these situations, is simply to pay attention and watch what is going on. Discourage players from engaging in horseplay and do not let them engage in risky activity which is likely to get someone injured.

In addition, when coaches are absent from practices or games, the coach is responsible for providing competent and responsible assistant coaches that can provide proper supervision.

Coaches' Responsibility to Properly Train and Instruct Their Players

Coaches must instruct their players on the skills necessary to compete.

In this regard, it is imperative for coaches to teach players the rules of the game and to ensure that the players are physically fit to compete. Coaches have been held responsible in many instances for failing to provide the injured athlete with adequate training or instruction which would have prevented the injury.

One example where several coaches were found not to provide an athlete with proper training and instruction was when a football player sustained severe neck and back injuries resulting from an improper tackle made on an opposing player. The player sued several of the coaches claiming that they failed to properly instruct him on how to tackle. In this instance, the player was originally a track star and was recruited to play football because of his outstanding speed. The player, prior to injuring himself, had participated in only one practice on tackling. The head coach and the interior line coach were eventually found liable for 6.5 million dollars because they had not properly instructed the player on how to tackle. This case is just one alarming example of why coaches should properly instruct their players on all facets of the game.

In another instance, a wrestler was injured by another wrestler as a result of a hold taught by the coach. The injured wrestler sued the coach for not providing proper training and instruction. The coach was found liable because he failed to teach his wrestlers a defense to that particular hold.

If a coach provides proper training and instruction, however, the coach will not be held responsible for a player's injuries. For example, in another football case, a football player incurred severe neck and back injuries after tackling another player head-on. In this instance, the coach was not responsible for the player's injury because he had demonstrated that he provided all of his players with proper instruction as to all aspects

of the sport. In this case, the coach implemented a program where all football players:

- **had to undergo a complete physical and be certified physically fit to play.**
- **were enrolled through an extensive training program which included calisthenics, weight training and conditioning, instruction as to the fundamentals of the game and instruction on the use of protective equipment.**

This example demonstrates that coaches will not be responsible for a player's injuries if they provide proper training and instruction.

In ice hockey, it is critical that coaches instruct players on all aspects of the game in order to facilitate the safety of all players. One example of such instruction would be to advise players not to check from behind, especially within five feet from the boards, because it can cause severe injury to other players. Coaches should always take the time to teach the fundamentals and rules of the game.

Finally, you should teach players how to protect themselves from injury. This should be particularly important to coaches of lower level players such as Mites, Squirts and Pee Wees. In these instances, coaches should be sure to explain to the players how to properly take a check, how to properly give a check, as well as explain the dangers of the game such as high sticking, boarding, hitting from behind and cross-checking.

Coaches' Responsibility to Ensure that Players are Wearing the Proper Equipment

In the most common situations, coaches are not responsible for providing equipment for their players. However, there are instances when a coach will provide equipment such as when a player's equipment fails during a game. In addition, there may be instances when coaches are responsible for ordering certain equipment for the team. In these instances, coaches should be sure to provide safe and suitable equipment.

In one instance, a prep school hockey coach was sued after a player was injured as a result of being struck in the head with a hockey puck. The coach ordered helmets that were comprised of three separate pieces which allowed enough room for a puck to squeeze between the pieces and strike the player in the head. The coach was found liable for not providing his players with the proper equipment. The court found that based upon the coach's experience, the coach should have known that there was a more safely designed helmet available and provided the safer helmets to his/her players.

As a suggestion to coaches, it is always a good idea to routinely check that the players are using the proper equipment. It might be best to circulate a form for the players' parents to fill out at the beginning of the season, where they can check off the various pieces of equipment that have been provided to the player.

Moreover, the coach must prohibit a player from competing if the coach knows that the player is not properly equipped (for example, a player going out on the ice with a bicycle helmet instead of a hockey helmet). It might be wise for coaches to have a pre-season meeting with the players and their parents to outline the equipment necessary for the players.

Finally, a coach should be aware of the safest and newest equipment available.

Coaches' Responsibility to Provide Responsible Assistant Coaches and Other Personnel

Coaches have the responsibility to ensure that assistants or team managers are responsible individuals, have knowledge of the game, and are persons who will act as the coach would act.

Coaches' Responsibility to Provide Immediate and Proper Medical Care

Coaches are responsible for providing necessary and proper medical assistance for injured players. Coaches, however, should not

provide any assistance that could make the injury worse.

For example, in one case, a high school coach was held responsible for injuries to a wrestler because he moved the wrestler after he suffered a severe knee injury, thereby making the injury worse. The coach was also held responsible because he failed to contact the appropriate medical authorities or the wrestler's parents after the injury had occurred.

Particularly in cases where a player is injured while on the ice, it is absolutely critical that coaches take the time to investigate and evaluate the player's condition. If it appears that the injury is more than the player merely "getting the wind knocked out of him," the coach must obtain immediate medical assistance. If the coach fails to obtain proper medical assistance, the coach will be held responsible.

For example, in one instance, a football coach was held liable for the death of a football player who died from heat stroke because he failed to obtain prompt medical attention which would have probably saved the player's life.

Coaches' Responsibility to Prevent Injured Players from Competing

Under no circumstances are coaches to allow injured players to play if there is a chance that the player can aggravate his/her injury. It is always difficult to keep an injured player from playing when he/she is a very good player and is asking to participate despite the injury. However, courts have routinely found that coaches are responsible for prohibiting an injured player from playing.

For example, in one case, a basketball coach was held responsible for making the player's injuries worse because the coach permitted the injured player to play although he was aware that the player had facial injuries and was ordered by his doctor not to participate in any type of athletic activity.

Therefore, take notice when a player is shaking his hand, grabbing his ankle, or moving his arm in a circular motion which would suggest a possible shoulder injury. Coaches should never wait for a visibly injured player to tell them that he/she is physically injured.

Coaches' Responsibility to Place Players in Competitive Settings

In some cases, coaches have been held responsible for allowing players to play in a "mismatched" situation, such as a player from the Junior level playing against a player from the Pee Wee level.

A recent incident occurring in Brick, New Jersey, emphasized that coaches should always be aware of the competition on the ice. In this case, the injury occurred during a skills clinic where the player, who was 15 years old was hurt by a slap shot taken by a player who was 19 years old. The ice rink was later held responsible for the player's injury because they permitted a "mismatched" situation.

Had this been either a practice or a game situation, it is probable that the coach would be held responsible for allowing one of his/her players to play in a "mismatched" situation.

Vicarious Liability

In certain cases, coaches should be aware that they may be responsible for the actions of their players and assistants under a legal theory known as "vicarious liability." This theory essentially means that coaches may be responsible for the irresponsible actions of others under their control such as the coach's players or assistants.

One example of when a coach may be "vicariously liable" for the actions of others is where a coach specifically instructs his/her players to cause intentional injury to other players. For example, should a hockey coach tell another player to intentionally board, cross check, high stick or hit another player from behind, the coach will be responsible for the actions of his/her player and for the injuries caused to the other player.

Therefore, coaches should always encourage fair and responsible play and

discourage acts that can cause injury to others.

Coaches' Defenses

It is important to discuss some of the defenses available to coaches when others are trying to hold the coach responsible for a player's injuries. These defenses are mentioned not to relieve coaches of their responsibilities but to effect greater safety for the players.

The defenses available to coaches are:

1. Assumption of Risk
2. Comparative Negligence
3. Volunteer Statues
4. Consent/Exculpatory Agreements/Waiver/Release
5. Sovereign Immunity

1. Assumption of Risk

Assumption of Risk is a legal doctrine which holds that players choosing to play in spite of the incidental risks associated with the game cannot blame others if they are injured.

For example, a goalie stands in front of slap shots ranging from 50 to 100 mph. The goalie knows that he/she may be injured as a result of getting hit with the puck, but continues to play in spite of that risk. If the goalie is injured as a result of the slap shot, provided the coach fulfilled all of the aforementioned responsibilities, the goalie cannot hold anyone responsible for his/her injuries.

There are two general rules regarding assumption of risk, particularly for USA Hockey coaches. First, a player can only assume the risk for those risks that the player can understand. In this regard, the player will be compared to other players of the same experience and age. Second, for a player to assume the risk, the risk must be one of which the player is aware.

2. Comparative Negligence

The second major defense is a legal theory known as "comparative negligence." This theory provides that coaches are responsible only for their percentage of fault. For example, if a player injures himself/herself as a result of horseplay with another player, the coach may be held 60% responsible because he/she failed to provide proper supervision, and the injured player 40% responsible for goofing around to begin with. In this case, if there is a verdict of $100.00, the coach would be responsible for $60.00.

In some states, such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania, if it is found that the player was more responsible than the coach, (i.e., the player was 60% responsible and the coach 40% responsible), the player can not be compensated at all for his/her injuries.

3. Volunteer Statutes

Finally, in some states such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania, there are such things known as "volunteer statutes." Essentially, such statutes provide coaches with "immunity" (the inability to be successfully sued,) provided that the coach has satisfied various requirements.

For example, in New Jersey, coaches who are not paid for their services (such as most club league hockey coaches) cannot be held responsible for injuries to a hockey player unless:

1. The coach's conduct is extremely unreasonable (known as "gross negligence"). An example of this situation would be to allow a hockey player to play in a game without any equipment.
2. The coach failed to participate in a safety/training skills program which covers injury prevention, first aid, and general coaching concepts. The USA Hockey Coaches' Clinics is an example of such a clinic.
3. The coach permits an event or practice without supervision such as a "captain's" practice.
4. The coach's services are provided as part of the school's athletic program such as high school coaches.

5. The player is injured as a result of the coach's negligent operation of a motor vehicle (i.e., when the accident is the coach's fault). This situation may arise when coaches give their players a ride to practice or game.

As most people are aware, attendance at USA Hockey clinics satisfies the main criteria for providing the coach with the required safety and training skills program.

In 1989, a New Jersey court interpreted New Jersey's volunteer statute and found that coaches must attend these safety and training skills programs to qualify under the statute. In the New Jersey case, a little league catcher who was struck in the eye by a baseball during a pre-game warm-up while he was not wearing his mask, sued the coach for allowing him to play without his mask. The coach claimed immunity under New Jersey's volunteer statute. The court held that the statute did not apply because the coach failed to attend a safety/training skills program as required by the statute and that he was responsible for the player's injuries. The court stated that the coach was still responsible for attending such a program despite the fact that the league did not offer such a program.

Even if the coach is paid, the coach will still be liable if he commits acts of gross negligence (i.e., extremely unreasonable conduct) or if a player is injured as a result of a motor vehicle accident that is the coach's fault.

4. Waivers, Releases, Exculpatory Agreement and Consent

In some cases, coaches may be able to take advantage of waivers and releases signed by the parents of the players. If the player has attained the age of majority, which is 18 years old, it may not be necessary to have the player's parents sign the release. Essentially, a "waiver" is a document which more or less gives up the right of the player signing the document to sue another person for any injuries he/she may incur. Similarly, a "release" is a document which releases that person from any possible responsibility.

The problem with these documents is that courts will frequently not honor them. The main reason is because people rarely negotiate the terms of these documents and usually a waiver and release is presented to a player who must sign or not play. In such cases, the courts have held that because the player has no choice, these types of agreements are not valid.

Coaches also should refrain from having minor players sign any waivers or releases because they will probably not be valid. For example, in one case, a minor was injured during an ice hockey clinic and later sued the New York City Ice Hockey League. In this case, the court found that the sponsors of the league had inadequately supervised the player while he was engaged in various drills. The court held the league responsible despite the fact that a release was signed by the player's parents. The court stated that the release was not binding upon the player because he was a minor.

Additionally, coaches should be wary of presenting waivers and releases to parents because frequently players' parents will be offended because the waivers and releases appear to attempt to relieve the coach of his/her responsibilities.

Sovereign Immunity

Not much needs to be addressed regarding the defense of "sovereign immunity" as this defense will probably not apply to most coaches who attend USA Hockey clinics. Sovereign immunity is a legal doctrine which applies when a public or governmental institution (i.e., a public high school) is involved. In those cases, suing the government is a tough job. The government may not be sued like any other ordinary person. Public school coaches can avail themselves of this defense because they are considered government employees.

SUMMARY

The legal responsibilities which coaches have for the welfare of their teams include the

teaching of skills, values, and knowledge that will allow young athletes to safety participate in practices and games. Coaches are also accountable for the supervision of their teams during pre-game, intermission and post-game activities that are commonly associated with athletic competition. Specific information about skill progressions, conditioning and first aid is essential, but the judgment required in the application of this information to the hockey programs is a much more important prerequisite to successful coaching than certificates or diplomas.

The responsibilities of the coach have been divided into five categories: the need for **proper instruction**; liability in **failure to warn of potential injuries**; the need for athletes to acknowledge the **assumption of risk**; consequences of failure to **provide proper equipment and facilities**; and the determination of **causation for injuries and requisites in the proper care and treatment of injuries**.

Medical insurance is an essential form of protection for players and coaches. Due to the unpredictable nature of hockey injuries, coaches should also be financially protected by some form of liability insurance. Conditions of coverage and restrictions are specific to each policy; therefore, coaches should be informed about their current protection and the duration of its coverage.

Knowledge of a coach's legal responsibilities can serve two useful purposes. The most important of these is that such information provides a potent stimulus to discharge one's duties in a diligent manner, ever mindful that carelessness provokes situations which could induce injuries. The second purpose is that if coaches have used every possible precaution to prevent injuries, they are in a good position to defend themselves against litigation.

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Chapter 6
Evaluation of Coaching Effectiveness

OBJECTIVES

- **Identifying ways to evaluate your coaching**
- **Learning to evaluate your effectiveness**
- **Learning to use self-evaluation**

Introduction

All coaches should evaluate the results of their coaching activity. **Evaluation allows the coach to determine the effects of coaching and, when necessary, alter coaching practices to obtain better results.** The results of an end-of-the-season evaluation can be used to improve coaching effectiveness for the next season. Evaluation(s) during the mid-season and at the end of the season, can result in making important changes in coaching action for the remainder of the season, plus the following season. Generally, **more frequent evaluations, followed by appropriate changes in coaching actions results in more rapid improvements in coaching competence**.

Evaluation can be defined as making a judgment of merit. Evaluative judgments can be formal or informal, based upon many or no facts, and accurate or inaccurate. In order to make accurate decisions, it is helpful to follow several evaluation guidelines. **The guidelines suggested in this chapter are easy to implement and useful in determining coaching effectiveness.** They can be used to evaluate the entire season, a portion of the season, a practice or even part of a practice. The guidelines provide a flexible and systematic way for you to improve your coaching actions that will help you obtain better results.

Evaluation of the results of our coaching actions is a prerequisite to making needed improvements

Evaluating Player Outcomes

Making an evaluative judgment requires comparing the results and actions of coaching with an acceptable set of standards. Two sets of standards are appropriate. The first is based upon player outcomes (skills, knowledge, and attitudes) and the second on coaching actions (organization, implementation, and evaluation).

The first, and most important information you can obtain to determine **the degree to which your coaching activities were effective is revealed in the degree to which your players achieved the objectives set for the season**. Your evaluation should include all the players on the team and all of the season's objectives.

Even if every player mastered every skill, knowledge or attitude you taught, there is still room for coaching improvement

For example, all of your players may have improved in one or more of the skills included in one of the performance areas of the form, but you may feel that several of those players did not achieve enough to receive a "yes". A "no", however, may also seem to be an inappropriate entry. To resolve this difficulty, it is important for you to **consider the amount of player achievement in each performance area that you are willing to accept as evidence of effective coaching**. Achievement of a significant and important improvement (or refinement and/or maintenance of a pre-existing highly refined ability) on at least 80% of the objectives included in your season plan is a common standard for making this determination. Extending that standard to obtain an evaluation of the entire team, requires 80% of the players achieving 80% of the objectives.

Initially, you should **evaluate your effectiveness in facilitating player competence using the form described above. Self evaluation is usually the most important source of information for improving coaching actions. Although it is an important input for making changes, some changes that are apparent to others are often missed in a self evaluation. There are several ways that you can obtain additional insight**. This will require identifying a person who is familiar with your coaching actions, the progress of your players, and whose judgment you respect. This person(s) could be an assistant coach, parent, official, league supervisor, other coach or a local hockey expert. One or more players could also rate the status and improvement of an individual player or the team relative to other players in the league. The results of this type of evaluation can be very helpful to you because it identifies player strength and weaknesses, as perceived by others.

For evaluating a player or the team, relative to other players in the league, use the form entitled, "Player Performance Relative to Others". For example, **when rating individual players, a simple check mark can be entered in the appropriate column for each performance area. When rating the entire team, the number of players judged to be in each column can be entered**. The actual number or a percentage could be used.

Rating of player performance at the end of the season is not very useful without knowing player performance levels at the beginning of the season. It is the change in the performance levels of the players that provides insight as to how effective your coaching actions have been. The best way to determine change in a player's performance, therefore, is to obtain a rating prior to the period of time that coaching occurred and another rating subsequent to the coaching.

Two or more ratings may be difficult to obtain, however, because of the time involved and the busy schedules of your evaluators. A good alternative is to have the evaluator(s) record changes in player performance they have observed using a double entry system. For example, when using the second instrument, if three of your players were perceived to be in the top 10 percent of their peers at the beginning of the evaluation period, and four were elevated to that performance level by the end of the evaluative period, the appropriate ratings would be B3 and E4. The Player Performance Relative To Others form is found at the end of this chapter.

Using the Results

It would be nice to look at your evaluation of player performance and the evaluation(s) of their performance by others and see only "yes" or top 10% ratings. Such a set of responses, however, would not be very helpful for improving your coaching effectiveness. This kind of rating pattern would probably signal the use of a relaxed set of standards. **Every coach misses the mark of coaching perfection in one or more of the four listed goal areas and/or with one or more of the**

players on the team. It is these failures that are most useful in revealing what principles of coaching effectiveness are not being met. It is important, therefore, to use evaluative standards for your self-ratings (or for the ratings of others) that result in no more than 80% of the responses being "yes" on your evaluation of player performance or in the top 20% when compared with others. This does not mean that you are unable to attain high levels of coaching effectiveness. Rather, it provides a means to determine areas where your effectiveness is relatively strong or weak.

How do you rate as a coach?

Checklist of Effective Coaching Actions

The real benefits of evaluating player achievement on the objectives of the season in each of the performance areas listed comes with evaluating the reasons why, "no" or "few" top 25% responses are recorded for your players. It is the answer(s) to the "why"? question that reveals the changes you can make to improve your coaching effectiveness. **To help you determine the reasons why you were not effective in certain player performance areas, a "Checklist of Effective Coaching Actions" was developed.** The checklist provides a guide for you to use when considering some of the characteristics associated with effective coaching. For example, if Johnny made insufficient progress in his puck control skills, you could review the checklist to determine which coaching actions you could change in order to get players like Johnny to be more successful with puck control. As you identify coaching actions that may have detracted from player performance, check the chapter reference and read the information included in that portion of the manual. Based on the information contained in that chapter, alter your subsequent coaching actions accordingly. The Checklist For Effective Coaching Actions is found on page 43.

Interpreting Unmet Expectations

The previous suggestions provide a positive way to improve your coaching ability. There are, however, ways to interpret a lack of improved performance. One often-used excuse is to blame lack of performance on lack of interest. Although it is commonly done, there is seldom justification for claiming this excuse. **Effective youth hockey coaches significantly alter player skill, knowledge, fitness and attitudes regularly, and even with below average talent, rarely finish in the lower division of their league.** The most helpful approach you can use to improve your coaching effectiveness is to **assume that when results do not meet expectations, the solution to the problem will be found in your coaching actions**. This may prove to be the wrong reason, but you must be **absolutely sure that you have considered all possibilities for self-improvement prior to accepting other reasons for unmet expectations**.

You must also evaluate the performance standards that you expect your players to attain. If you determine that poor player performance cannot be attributed to ineffective coaching actions, **it is possible that the level of expectation you hold for your players is unrealistic**. Remember, motivation is enhanced when players are achieving performance expectations that are self imposed or communicated by the coach. If these expectations are too high, they can have a negative effect on achievement. **There are many valid reasons why the vast majority of Mites will not perform as well as Squirts or Bantams.** Although it is appropriate to hold high expectations for your players, they must also be realistic. **A combination of high expectations that are divided into achievable and sequential performance steps is the creative alternative that is most likely to yield appropriate and effective standards of performance.**

The allotment of insufficient time to the practice of the season's objectives can result in poor player achievement, even when performance expectations and coaching

actions are appropriate. Players must have sufficient time to attempt a task, make errors, obtain feedback, refine their attempt, and habituate abilities before it is reasonable to expect these abilities to be used within the context of a game. Attempting to cover too many skills within a limited amount of practice time is a major cause of delayed achievement. Even when the quality of coaching is excellent in all other areas, player performance expectations may not be met simply because the amount of coaching and practice time was too short.

Taking Appropriate Actions

The reason for conducting an evaluation of your coaching effectiveness is to learn what you can do to improve your contribution to your players. Coaches would all like to receive excellent ratings in all categories, but no one attains that status. **We all can find ways to improve our effectiveness.** It may be in-season or practice planning, implementation of plans, knowledge of the game, or even in our ability to evaluate ourselves. Regardless of our level of expertise, by systematically relating high and low levels of player achievement to our coaching actions, we can find ways to be more effective and/or efficient coaches.

What changes can you make to improve your effectiveness?

Merely identifying what changes can lead to improvements, is a waste of time if those changes are not acted upon. As you discover answers to the following questions, revise your coaching actions accordingly and then re-evaluate the results. You may be surprised at how effective you can become.

- **Are your expectations of player performance appropriate?**
- **Are your coaching actions effective?**
- **What changes can you implement to increase your effectiveness?**

SUMMARY

By evaluating player outcomes on the objectives of the season, you can estimate the effectiveness of your coaching actions. Limited achievement by some players in some performance areas usually signals the need for change in some of your coaching actions. Use of the "Checklist of Effective Coaching Actions" may reveal what changes are needed and where in the manual you can find information that can help you make the appropriate change. By taking action on the changes identified, you can take giant steps toward becoming a more effective coach.

Checklist of Effective Coaching Actions

Introduction

The following checklist can serve two useful purposes. First, it can be used to review coaching actions that are related to player achievement of desired outcomes. Secondly, it can be used as an aid to identify the reason(s) why a player (s) did not achieve one or more of the expected outcomes.

Use of the Checklist as an Overview of Desirable Coaching Actions

Using the checklist as an overview of appropriate coaching actions is an excellent way to acquaint yourself with the content of this coaching manual. Items on the checklist that are familiar to you can be ignored or briefly reviewed. Those with which you are not familiar will require study if they are to help you make decisions that improve your coaching effectiveness. To use the checklist in this way, ignore the columns provided for rating the degree to which you have used the stated or implied coaching action(s). Instead, use the chapter reference information to guide your reading.

Use of the Checklist to Improve Coaching Actions

Subsequent to completing your evaluation of player outcomes as suggested earlier in this chapter, **the checklist can be used as an aid to identifying, "why" one or more player(s) did not meet a performance expectation**. To use the checklist in this way, go through the instrument and read the questions in each content category (i.e., Organization, Effective Instruction, etc.) and ask yourself the question, "Could my coaching action (and/or inaction) have contributed to the undesirable result obtained? Answer the question by responding with a "yes" or "no". If you wish to rate the degree to which your actions (inactions) were consistent with the guidelines implied by the item, use the rating scale. Items which result in "no" or "low" ratings indicate where you are in discord with effective coaching actions. As you go through the checklist, seek to identify your coaching deficiencies. This process of seeking answers to specific concerns is an excellent way to obtain the coaching information most important to you.

CHECKLIST

Directions: Rate the degree to which each of the listed actions occurred during practices and/or game situations. Use a simple (yes), (no), or the following 5 point scale where: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree.

ITEM	EVALUATION				
Coaching Role	**(NO)**				**(YES)**
1. The benefits (skill, knowledge, fitness and costs (time, money, injury, etc.) of participation in hockey were clearly in mind during planning and coaching time.	1	2	3	4	5
2. My primary purpose for coaching was to maximize the benefits of participation in hockey for all the players.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I used the information on benefits of participation and costs of participation to clarify my goals for the season.	1	2	3	4	5
Organization					
4. I completed a written draft of season goals and objectives to guide the conduct of my practices.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I consciously decided which objectives must be emphasized in the pre, early, mid and late season.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Objectives for developing each practice were drawn from those identified and sequenced from pre to late season, and entered on a season calendar.	1	2	3	4	5
7. The objectives selected for my season plan were consistent with the USA Hockey age recommendations.	1	2	3	4	5
8. The amount of practice time allocated to each objective was appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
Hockey Skills, Strategies					
9. I was sufficiently familiar with the need for each skill included in my practices and clearly communicated its purpose and described how it is to be executed to my players	1	2	3	4	5
10. I was able to visualize and recognize the key elements of performance that were present or missing in my players and used them as the basis for my instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I was familiar with the common errors of skill execution and used the players' suggestions for coaching to plan my practices.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I clearly communicated the key points or key elements to be learned for each objective included in my practices.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Practice on an objective was initiated with a brief rationale for why perfecting that skill was important.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Instruction on one or more "key elements" of an objective was preceded by an evaluation of player abilities.	1	2	3	4	5

ITEM	EVALUATION				
	(NO)				(YES)
15. Instruction did not continue without player attention.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Practice on an objective provided each player with many practice trials.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Accurate feedback was closely associated with each practice trial and was regularly given.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Monitoring player achievement of objectives continued through all practices and games.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Performance expectations set for the players were realistic and attainable.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I communicated through actions and words that I expected each player to succeed in improving their level of play.	1	2	3	4	5
21. My practices would be characterized by others as orderly, safe, businesslike and enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I grouped my players in accordance with their different abilities to practice the objectives and appropriate "key elements" included in the practices.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Practice sessions were organized to maximize the amount of time that players were practicing "key elements" of skill.	1	2	3	4	5
24. Objectives were broken down as necessary to allow players to achieve them in several successful small steps.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I asked my players questions to determine if they understood the objectives and/or instruction.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Players sensed a feeling of control over their learning which resulted from my emphasis on effort and encouragement.	1	2	3	4	5
27. My practices were pre-planned and included written objectives, time, activities, drills and equipment needs.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I evaluated my practices and incorporated appropriate changes for subsequent practices.	1	2	3	4	5
29. The instructional activities and/or drills I used were selected to provide a setting for achieving one or more objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
Motivation					
30. My practices and games resulted in the players achieving many of their goals for participation in hockey.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I taught the players how to realistically define success in hockey.	1	2	3	4	5
32. An expert would agree (upon observing my practices) that I effectively use a positive (vs. negative) coaching approach.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I helped my players set realistic goals.	1	2	3	4	5

ITEM	EVALUATION				
Communication	(NO)				(YES)
34. There was no conflict between the verbal and non-verbal messages I communicated to my players.	1	2	3	4	5
35. I facilitated communication with the players by being a good listener.	1	2	3	4	5
Discipline					
36. Accepted behaviors (and consequences of misbehavior) were communicated to players at the beginning of the season.	1	2	3	4	5
37. Players were involved in developing (or confirming) team rules.	1	2	3	4	5
38. Enforcement of team rules was consistent for all players throughout the season.	1	2	3	4	5
Involvement with Parents					
39. Parents of the players were a positive, rather than a negative, influence on player achievement of the season objectives.	1	2	3	4	5
40. When asked to help with a specific task, the parents of the players responded positively.	1	2	3	4	5
41. Each parent learned something significant about their child and/or the game of hockey.	1	2	3	4	5
42. I communicated to the parents my purpose for coaching and the responsibilities I have to the team.	1	2	3	4	5
43. I communicated to the parents the responsibilities of parents and players to the team.	1	2	3	4	5
44. Parents were well informed of the purpose of hockey, potential injuries, practice and game schedules, equipment needs and other information necessary to successful play.	1	2	3	4	5
Conditioning					
45. The physical conditioning procedures I used were appropriate for the age of the players.	1	2	3	4	5
46. Where appropriate, I conducted practices to improve the aerobic and anaerobic energy production systems of the players.	1	2	3	4	5
47. Where appropriate, I conducted practices to improve the muscular system fitness of the players.	1	2	3	4	5
48. I routinely used a systematic warm-up prior to practices and games.	1	2	3	4	5
49. I routinely used a systematic cool-down after practices and games.	1	2	3	4	5
50. Where appropriate, the intensity, duration and frequency of my practices overloaded the muscular and energy systems in a progressive manner.	1	2	3	4	5
51. My conditioning work appropriately simulated the conditions of practice and play.	1	2	3	4	5

ITEM	EVALUATION				
Injury Prevention	(NO)				(YES)
52. I followed all recommended procedures designed to prevent injuries associated with the use of improper equipment.	1	2	3	4	5
53. I implemented the recommendations for preventing injuries associated with facilities.	1	2	3	4	5
54. I maintained good control of my players while they were in the arena.	1	2	3	4	5
55. I did not use contraindicated exercises in the warm-up and cool-down periods.	1	2	3	4	5
Care of Common Injuries					
56. I effectively administered first aid as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
57. I established and followed appropriate emergency procedures as they were needed.	1	2	3	4	5
58. I obtained the information necessary to appropriately care for individual players.	1	2	3	4	5
59. I had a well stocked first aid kit at each practice and game including player medical history information.	1	2	3	4	5
60. I have a record of each injury that occurred during the season.					
Rehabilitation of Injuries					
61. I appropriately supervised the rehabilitation of those players who did not need the services of a physician.	1	2	3	4	5
62. None of the players experienced a recurrence of an injury that could be attributed to inappropriate rehabilitation.	1	2	3	4	5
Prevention of Liability Events					
63. I completed the six obligations I have as a coach to preclude liability from hockey injuries.	1	2	3	4	5
64. I am knowledgeable about the type and frequency of hockey injuries that commonly occur.	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluation					
65. I completed an evaluation of player improvement in the performance areas included in my season plan.	1	2	3	4	5
66. I identified the coaching actions (inactions) that appeared most closely related to unmet player expectations.	1	2	3	4	5
67. I made the changes in coaching action needed to improve my coaching effectiveness.	1	2	3	4	5

COACHES' EVALUATION OF PLAYER OUTCOMES

Date_____

EVALUATIVE QUESTION: Did significant, positive results occur on the objectives included in the performance areas listed below?

PERFORMANCE AREA	Player Name														Yes responses (%)
SKILLS															
Skating															
Puck Control															
Passing/Receiving															
Shooting															
Checking															
Goalkeeping															
Team Play															
KNOWLEDGE															
Rules															
Common Infractions															
Penalties															
Nutrition															
Conditioning															
FITNESS															
Energy Systems															
Muscular Systems															
ATTITUDES															
Personal															
Social															
Yes Responses (%)															

EVALUATIVE RESPONSES:

Record your assessment of player outcomes in each performance area by answering the evaluative questions with a YES or NO response.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Record your assessment of player outcomes in each performance area by answering the evaluative questions with a YES or NO response.

(1)_____

(2)_____

(3)_____

(Continue on reverse side)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT (cont.)

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

(7) _____

(8) _____

(9) _____

(10) _____

(11) _____

(12) _____

(13) _____

(14) _____

(15) _____

(16) _____

(17) _____

(18) _____

(19) _____

(20) _____

(21) _____

(22) _____

(23) _____

(24) _____

(25) _____

(26) _____

(27) _____

(28) _____

PLAYER PERFORMANCE RELATIVE TO OTHERS

Evaluator: _____ Player/Team: _____ Date(s) _____

EVALUATIVE QUESTION: **In comparison with other players in this league,** how does this player (or the players on this team) perform in the Performance areas listed below?

PERFORMANCE AREA	Player/Team Performance Levels													
	Top						Mid		Bottom					
	10%		20%		30%		40%		30%		20%		10%	
	B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E	B	E
SKILLS														
Skating														
Puck Control														
Passing/Receiving														
Shooting														
Checking														
Goalkeeping														
Team Play														
KNOWLEDGE														
Rules														
Common Infractions														
Penalties														
Nutrition														
Conditioning														
FITNESS														
Energy Systems														
Muscular Systems														
ATTITUDES														
Personal														
Social														
TOTALS														

EVALUATIVE RESPONSES:

Individual Players: For each performance area indicate (by placing a check in the appropriate column) the beginning (B) and ending (E) performance level of the player.

Team Evaluation: Estimate the number of players in each performance area who began (B) and ended (E) their performance in each of the performance level columns. For example, if three players began in the top 10% and four ended in the top 10%, enter a 3 in the B column and a 4 in the E column.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Record your assessment of player outcomes in each performance area by answering the evaluative questions with a YES or NO response.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

(Continue on reverse side)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT (cont.)

(4) _____

(5) _____

(6) _____

(7) _____

(8) _____

(9) _____

(10) _____

(11) _____

(12) _____

(13) _____

(14) _____

(15) _____

(16) _____

(17) _____

(18) _____

(19) _____

(20) _____

(21) _____

(22) _____

(23) _____

(24) _____

(25) _____

(26) _____

(27) _____

(28) _____

Chapter 7
Player Selection and Evaluation

OBJECTIVES

- **Developing different evaluation methods**
- **Designing outline for tryout sessions**
- **Assigning evaluators responsibilities for player evaluation**
- **Developing a plan for releasing players**

Initial Consideration in Developing a Player Selection Plan

In most youth hockey situations, coaches are faced with the task of choosing from a large pool of players to fill a limited number of positions on a team. Coaches are usually expected to complete this task in a relatively short period of time. Therefore, it is very important for the coach to be organized in advance with a plan for the player selection process. To properly develop this plan, the coach must take into consideration a number of significant factors. The answers to the following questions will assist the coach in designing the most effective player selection plan.

How Many Players will Attend the Team Tryouts?

Ideally, there should be some form of pre-registration so that the coach can be given a complete list of players in advance of the first tryout session. This may not always be possible and, thus, a coach may have to be prepared to make some last minute adjustments for the initial session. Having a reasonable estimate of how many players will attend will greatly assist the coach in deciding how to use the available ice time. For example, it may be unrealistic to plan for a 30 minute scrimmage if there are only 22 players. On the other hand, a number greater than 50 may require splitting into two separate groups for the first few sessions.

How Much Ice Time is Available?

The amount of ice time available for the try outs is another important consideration. Knowing how much time you have to get down to the final team will affect not only the content of the individual tryout sessions but also the timeline for the release of players. The norm in youth hockey is a relatively brief tryout period with about five to eight hours of ice time. Thus, the coach must plan the tryout sessions to be as efficient as possible.

How Many Players Do You Plan to Keep?

Obviously you must determine in advance the desired make-up of your team. Do you plan to keep 12 or 17 players on a team? Nevertheless, in youth hockey you must

consider how many players you can effectively use in games to ensure they receive sufficient opportunity to play. Very little benefit will be gained by marginal players who see limited ice time. **You have a responsibility to play the players you choose.**

In addition to the absolute number, the coach must also consider what special qualities to look for in players. For example, it may be desirable to have at least a few players with the versatility to play both forward and defense positions.

Criteria for Evaluation

In order to select the best players from a talent pool, it is necessary to establish criteria on which to make comparisons among players. Thus, the first step in player evaluation is to determine what variables to measure. What qualities are you looking for in your players? Are some of these more important than others? The answers to these questions will depend to a great extent on the age category as well as the competitive level of your team.

The following is a list of some of the player qualities which might be evaluated during the tryout period:

- **Individual Skills**
  - skating
  - passing
  - pass receiving
  - shooting
  - puck control
  - checking

- **Team Skills**
  - offensive ability
  - defensive ability
  - ability to play with others

- **Mental Qualities**
  - hockey sense
  - reading and reacting
  - concentration

- **Physical Qualities**
  - strength
  - endurance
  - balance
  - agility
  - coordination
  - power
  - quickness

- **Individual Characteristics**
  - self-control
  - coachability
  - patience
  - desire
  - attitude

What About Goaltenders?

As you might expect, the characteristics which should be evaluated for goaltenders will differ significantly from those for players at other positions. In addition to individual skills, such as skating, puck handling and passing, goaltenders must be evaluated on their ability to stop the puck, using the stick, gloves, pads and body. Physical and mental characteristics should also be evaluated.

Evaluating

Once you have determined what to evaluate, the next step is to organize your tryout sessions in such a way that the players can be assessed on the identified variables. This assessment may be carried out using the following methods:

Specific Skill Drills

Individual skills such as skating and passing can be evaluated using combination skill drills. Initially these drills may be very artificial with little or no resistance, however, there should be an attempt made to simulate game conditions in a progressive manner.

Skill Testing

A number of skill tests are now available, particularly for skating speed and agility. These can be used by coaches as a means of comparing players. As a cautionary note,

however, it must be remembered these tests are typically far removed from actual game situations. In addition, they can use up a great deal of ice time, particularly for a large group of players.

Competitive Drills

Paired races and other drills which pit two players against one another in a confined space with a specific objective (i.e., beat your partner to the loose puck) are excellent methods of evaluating individual skills as well as mental and physical abilities.

Although competitive evaluation drills can be used throughout the tryouts (and during the season as practice drills), they are particularly useful in the latter stages of the tryouts when the coach wishes to create specific pairings to compare players being considered for final positions on the team.

Scrimmage

Naturally, the best way of evaluating a player's ability to play the game is to evaluate the individual under game conditions. Such conditions can be easily simulated in scrimmages. Scrimmages can be effectively used throughout the tryout period, beginning with the first session. You can evaluate most of the previously listed player characteristics during these scrimmages.

Here are a few additional considerations related to the use of scrimmages and exhibition games in your evaluation of players:

- change line combinations and defense pairings in order to observe players under different situations.
- use exhibition games to help you make decisions about borderline or marginal players.
- unless skill deficiencies are extremely obvious, you should not release a player prior to seeing that individual under game conditions (i.e., scrimmage and/or exhibition game).

An important task for any coach, then, is to plan the tryout sessions in such a way as to make the most efficient use of the available player assessment methods.

Designing the Tryout Sessions

A constructive way to approach a tryout is to see it as a way of placing athletes on teams where they will benefit the most, not as a dead-end experience where players are cut away from hockey.

The tryout is a good opportunity to get some pre season skill observations which can tell both you and the athlete where work may be needed. It should be as well thought out and organized as other parts of your program.

Planning for the First Tryout Session

Proper planning will eliminate a lot of potential problems at the first tryout session. Therefore, the coach should ensure that the administrative details are taken care of in advance. In many situations, the youth hockey association will assume responsibility for some of these tasks but the coach should be aware of them in any case. The following are some guidelines related to the first tryout session.

Inform Parents/Players of Tryout Details in Advance

Parents and players should be advised, well in advance, about the requirements for the tryouts. This is particularly important at the younger age levels where parents may not be aware of the need, for example, of full and proper protective equipment. In addition to informing them about the association's policies regarding such aspects as protective equipment, medical examinations and age classifications, they should also be provided with a complete schedule of sessions and other pertinent information regarding the conduct of the tryouts. Where feasible, this information should be provided at a parent meeting in order to permit parents to ask any additional questions. This meeting format will also provide you with an opportunity to outline your player selection process.

Ensure that Necessary Resources are Available

To be able to plan the content of the sessions, it is necessary to know what resources will be available. You should have sufficient pucks (at least one for every player), pylons, and scrimmage vests. It is also desirable to have water bottles, particularly if the sessions are intense or longer than 50 minutes in duration. A first aid kit should also be available for all sessions, along with a qualified first aid person or trainer.

Obtain Required Support

You must anticipate your needs in terms of human support to ensure that the required assistance is available to handle any last minute details. For example, it may be necessary to have someone available to handle late registration and collection of registration fees. Support might also be required to assign identification jersey numbers to players. As already mentioned, a trainer or first aid person should also be available. By assigning these responsibilities to others, you will be able to concentrate on the more immediate tasks of coordinating and conducting the sessions. A coach should also have a minimum of two other individuals to assist with the on-ice sessions. A large number of assistants may be required depending on the number of players in attendance.

Arrive at the Rink Early

Although proper planning should eliminate most problems, it is advisable to arrive at the rink well in advance of the actual starting time. This will provide you with ample time to check that everything is in place and to answer any questions from parents, players or your support staff. Since most of the administrative tasks have been assigned to others, you should also have time to review the tryout plan with your assistants and make any last minute adjustments.

Prepare the Players

Prior to going on the ice, you should outline the tryout process to the players. This session should include the following information:

- what player qualities you are looking for.
- explanation of the drills to be run and their purposes.
- objectives of scrimmage sessions.
- target timeline for team selection.

In addition, you should stress the importance of stretching and a proper warm-up. The players should be led through a series of stretching exercises in the dressing room or corridor and on the ice. The first few ice sessions should include a good 15-20 minutes warm-up period to ensure that players are physically ready to go through the evaluation drills and scrimmages without risking injury.

Assigning Responsibilities for Player Evaluation

The third step in the player evaluation process is the recruitment of other personnel to assist in the assessment of players.

On-Ice Assistants

You should have two or more on-ice assistants to help conduct the tryout sessions. These individuals can assist in player evaluation for specific positions (forwards, defensemen, goaltenders), by carrying out evaluation drills with small groups of players. In drills involving a larger number, they can also focus on specific individuals.

Impartial Observers

Another means of obtaining player assessment information is to use “expert” observers in the stands who are assigned the task of rating players on specific criteria. In addition to providing you with a second opinion on borderline players, observers can also be used to record more detailed player assessment information for later analysis.

Does a certain player win consistently against all other players? Where you have

three relatively equal players, is there one who comes out on top of most match-ups with the other two? If possible, try to get a rating of every player at the end of each session.

Coaching Staff

In the end, final decisions for player selection rest with you the coach. In some cases you may be familiar with a number of players, having observed them in previous seasons. Such prior information, combined with player assessments from observers and on-ice assistants, is invaluable. However, it is also essential that you create opportunities for yourself during try outs to screen and evaluate all players as effectively as possible.

Although it is probably more efficient to assess players from the stands since this usually affords a wider view of the various drills and scrimmages, you should also spend some time on the ice in order to get closer to the action and observe some of the more subtle aspects (i.e., emotional characteristics, passing and receiving skills, soft hands in handling the puck and the ability to understand instructions). As a general guideline, however, you should spend considerably more time observing from the stands during the player selection period.

Releasing Players

Once decisions have been made regarding the release or cutting of players during the tryout period, you must have a plan for informing these players. Although the details of this plan will vary from coach to coach, and will depend to some extent on the age level of the players, the following guidelines should be adhered to as much as possible.

Avoid Public Announcements

Do not post a list of player cuts or read the names of players to be released, in front of the rest of the team. Instead, whenever possible, you should try to take individual players aside briefly towards the end of the session and ask them to meet privately with you afterwards.

Speak with the Player Individually

Talk to each player individually and briefly explain the player's weaknesses as well as pointing out some strengths. Be honest and straightforward.

Invite Questions from the Player

Provide the player with an opportunity to ask further questions about the evaluation. In addition to helping you select the team, a major objective of the evaluation process should be to provide the player with constructive feedback to guide improvement.

Direct the Player to Another Team

If your association has teams at other levels of competition, ensure that released players are provided with a schedule of their tryouts. Ideally, the coach of this team should also be at the arena in order to personally meet the players. Where no such tiering system exists, you should make the player aware of whatever options do exist (i.e., recreational league, school league).

Leave on a Positive Note

Thank the player for participating in the team tryouts and encourage the individual to continue working to improve in areas of weaknesses.

PLAYER EVALUATION

Name: _____ Team: _____ League:_____

Date of Birth: _____ Stick:_____ Catch:_____ Ht:_____ Wt:_____

Goaltender

Overview	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Mobility	0	1	2	3	4	5
Positional Play	0	1	2	3	4	5
Skills	0	1	2	3	4	5
Reaction	0	1	2	3	4	5
Rebound Control	0	1	2	3	4	5
Competitiveness	0	1	2	3	4	5
Character	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Category	N.R.	Poor	Fair	Avg.	Good	V.G.	Exc.
Mobility							
• Balance/agility	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Challenge/retreat	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Lateral movement	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Timing	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Positional Play

• Alignment	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Body	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Horizontal angle	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Vertical angle	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Skills

• Feet/pads	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Glove/blocker	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Stick/blocking	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Stick/moving	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Reaction

• Anticipation	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Quickness	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Recovery	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Reflexes	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Rebound Control

• Controlling	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Covering	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Cushioning	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Placement	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Competitiveness

• Communication	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Crease movement	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Work ethic	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Character

• Consistency	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Discipline	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Leadership	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

PLAYER EVALUATION

Name: _____ Team: _____ League:_____

Date of Birth: _____ Position:_____ Shot:_____ Ht:_____ Wt:_____

Player

Overview	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Skating	0	1	2	3	4	5
Hands	0	1	2	3	4	5
Shooting	0	1	2	3	4	5
Sense	0	1	2	3	4	5
Competitiveness	0	1	2	3	4	5
Toughness	0	1	2	3	4	5
Character	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Category	N.R.	Poor	Fair	Avg.	Good	V.G.	Exc.
Skating							
• Balance	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Mobility	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Quickness	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Speed	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Hands

• Puckhandling	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Passing	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Receiving	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Shooting

• Accuracy	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Release	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Scoring	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Velocity	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Sense

• Anticipation/instinct	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Defensive awareness	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Offensive awareness	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Competitiveness

• Communication	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Intensity	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Work ethic	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Toughness

• Aggressiveness	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Grit	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Nastiness	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Character

• Consistency	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Discipline	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5
• Leadership	NR	0	1	2	3	4	5

Comments: _____

_____

Chapter 8
Mental Preparation For Peak Performance

OBJECTIVES

- **Identifying Peak Performance**
- **Identifying Skills and Attributes**
- **Describing Strategies for Peak Performance**

Introduction

This chapter is designed to examine psychological strategies for mentally preparing athletes for peak performance. To accomplish this objective, a pyramid model of peak performance is presented and discussed. Components of the model include: (1) foundational or psychological make-up and performer personality factors; (2) psychology of peak performance strategies; and (3) coping with adversity strategies. Within each component of the model a variety of mental preparation skills and strategies are examined. It is argued that for athletes to consistently achieve peak performance, psychological skills and strategies within each of the three components must be developed and continually refined.

Mental Preparation for Peak Performance

"I had a lot of rituals in terms of getting dressed. At the building I had a lot of rituals about how I got dressed or the route I would take to the arena or the ice ... I follow an order ... I think the order is what's important at a very stressful time or at a competitive time." [National Champion figure skater (Gould, Finch & Jackson, 1993, page 459)].

"I felt ready, I felt prepared ... My approach was basically win or take me off on a shield. I was either going to win the match or they were going to carry me off. So I was very positive. I wasn't going to hold back at all." [Seoul Olympic wrestler (Gould, Eklund, & Jackson, 1992, page 368)].

"Acknowledging that you were nervous. Using your nervous energy in a positive way. That was totally effective. To acknowledge it first of all. Instead of saying, "no I'm fine," and then going up and totally freaking out, you just say, "I think I'm o.k. I'm just really anxious to get out there and use it. Don't let it just totally screw you up." Everybody gets nervous. It's just who handles nerves the best." [National Champion figure skater, (Gould et al., 1993, page 459)].

"I was focusing on his style, what he liked to do, the pace of his wrestling, what side he leads on, what he likes to do as far as inside position ... So I was focusing on what I could do, for me it was picking up the pace on him, staying inside, trying to push him harder than he wanted to be pushed, but at the same time

I wanted to be fairly under control and conservative ... [National Champion figure skater, Gould et al., 1992, page 369].

Quotes from elite athletes like these clearly demonstrate the varied ways athletes mentally prepare for peak performance. Moreover, because the salience of mental preparation for athletes and coaches is a topic that interests sports psychologists, in the last ten years considerable gains have been made in our knowledge on the topic.

A Unifying Model of Peak Performance

A good way to understand mental preparation for peak performance is to consider a general framework for organizing how mental skills are involved in achieving athletic excellence. One such framework appears in Figure 1. This framework was developed by Gould and Damarjian and considers three important sets of psychological factors that interact to produce peak performance in an athlete. These include: the psychological foundation or make-up/personality of the individual involved; psychology of peak performance strategies; and coping with adversity strategies.

At the base of the pyramid of success is the psychological foundation or make-up/personality of the individual. While our understanding of the role of personality in sports is far from complete and the identification of the personality profile of the superior athlete has not been identified (Vealey, 1992), a number of personality characteristics have been shown to influence the quest for athletic excellence. For example, an individual's goal orientations, trait self-confidence and trait anxiety are examples of important factors to consider. Other factors

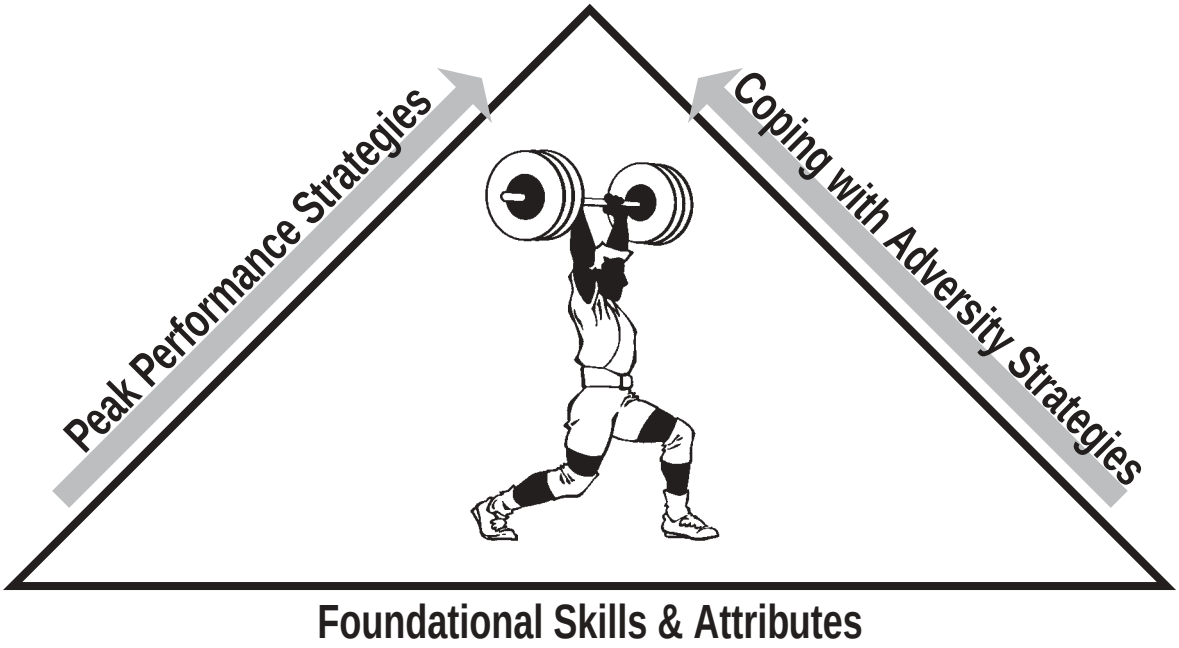

Figure 1. The psychology of peak athletic performance pyramid model.

that might be important for future researchers to consider would be meaningfulness, hardiness and optimism.

The left side of the pyramid consists of peak performance strategies, which sport psychologists have spent considerable time identifying as necessary for peak performance. Examples include such things as concentration, a focus on performance goals, the use of specific mental preparation routines and strategies. While the use of such skills will not ensure success, their use "sets the table for success" by creating a psychological climate that increases the probability of exhibiting a good performance. Hence, when designing mental skills training programs, decisions should be made to teach and develop the specific peak performance strategies most relevant to the sport and athlete involved.

A common mistake made in mental skills training is to focus sole attention on peak performance strategies. This is problematic because athletes must also learn to deal with adversity. For example, Gould, Jackson and Finch (1993) found that National Champion figure skaters experienced more stress after winning their national titles than prior to achieving it. Stress resulted from such factors as their own and others' performance expectations, time demands, the media, injuries and general life concerns. Therefore, to achieve and maintain athletic excellence, athletes not only need psychology of peak performance skills, but also psychological coping strategies which can be used to effectively help them cope with adversity. Such psychological skills might involve stress management techniques, thought stopping or social support mechanisms.

It is highly recommended that this psychological pyramid model of peak performance be considered when considering mental preparation for peak performance. Consider the personality and psychological make-up of the athletes that the program is aimed at, and if components of the program should be focused on developing or enhancing specific personal characteristics or orientations deemed important. In addition, identify the most important psychology of peak performance skills to be taught and what strategies will be most useful in coping with adversity. Mental skills training programs which address psychological factors at the base and on the two sides of this pyramid have the greatest probability of helping athletes consistently enhance performance and achieve success.

The remainder of this chapter will examine applied strategies used to mentally prepare athletes for peak performance. In so doing these specific strategies will be discussed within the three elements of this model. This has the advantage of fitting specific strategies within a broader more holistic perspective.

The Psychological Make-Up/Personality of the Athlete

This element of the peak performance model is extremely important, but the most difficult to work with. This results from the fact that it is very difficult to change one's personality and motivational dispositions once they are established. However, this is one reason those interested in elite performance should be interested and informed of the youth sport research. Children's sport research has identified the important role perceived competence plays in motivation and achievement (Weiss & Chaumeton, 1992), how positive coaching practices facilitate the development of positive self-esteem, reduce trait anxiety and lower dropout rates (Barnett et al., 1992; Smith & Smoll, 1995; Smith, Smoll & Barnett, 1995), how one's goal orientations influence achievement behavior (Duda, 1993) and what makes sports stressful for young athletes and how levels of stress can be reduced.

While it is much easier to develop positive psychological attributes through effective coaching practices when performers are young, this does not imply that nothing can be done in this area by seasoned adult competitors. When asked to consult with elite performers who are experiencing performance difficulties, highly respected North American mental training consultant

Ken Ravizza, for example, spends considerable time having them discuss why they participate in their sport and what meaning it has for them. It is his opinion that athletes perform much better when they are not questioning the reasons for their involvement and it's meaningfulness. In a similar vein, Terry Orlick (1986) begins his mental training efforts by having athletes consider their long-term goals for sport participation, including a discussion of their dreams and overall aspirations. Finally, it must be recognized that meaningfulness differs greatly across athletes. Some may have their lives in total order with clear sport and non-sport goals and objectives. Others, like former diving great Greg Louganis, may have (had) a life out of sports which is totally chaotic (Louganis & Marcus, 1995). For these individuals, however, sport serves as a refuge or safe haven from their troubled outside world. And still others may be in a process of transition, where the once clear sport and life objectives and goals are being questioned as they face retirement from sports (Danish, Petitpas & Hale, 1995; Murphy, 1995).

Lastly, seasoned athletes may change or learn to more effectively deal with their motivational orientations and personality characteristics. For instance, an elite athlete who is very outcome-oriented and focuses primary attention on winning may learn that thinking about the outcome of competition close to, or during performance often interferes with achieving his objective. Hence, he or she learns not to focus on winning, before or during the competition. It is only effective to do so at other times. Similarly, it has been recently found that perfectionism is associated with sport burnout in elite junior tennis players (Gould, Udry, Tuffey & Loehr, in press). However, many of the most effective world class athletes are perfectionistic in their orientations. However, they have learned to deal with their perfectionistic tendencies in a positive manner, allowing these tendencies to facilitate, as opposed to inhibit their development.

Peak Performance Strategies

Both research and the experience of sport psychologists have taught a great deal about the psychological strategies needed to consistently produce outstanding performances. While it is beyond the scope of this review to dismiss all of the work in this area, six strategies that are particularly important will be examined.

One reason outstanding performances occur is because top athletes set **goals** (Burton, 1992). We have learned, however, that not all goals are equal in terms of assisting individuals in achieving peak performances. Goals must be specific as opposed to general, difficult but realistic, and arranged in a ladder or staircase progression of short-term goals leading to more long range goals. They should also be frequently evaluated, and, if needed, modified. Finally, it is most important that a systematic approach to goal setting be taken and that the athlete be intimately involved in the goal setting process.

While setting and working towards goal achievement is important, goals alone are not enough. Athletes must make a **commitment to achieving excellence**. In their extensive study of Olympic athletes, for example, Orlick and Partington (1988) found that those who performed up to, or exceeded their personal bests in Olympic competitions were totally committed to achieving excellence. Similarly, in their study of Seoul Olympic wrestlers, Gould, Eklund and Jackson (1992) found that a commitment to excellence was a prerequisite to outstanding performance. It is very important to recognize that this commitment to excellence does not occur just on game days or in competitions, but at practices as well. In fact, many applied sports psychologists now contend that setting goals, mentally preparing and making a commitment in practices, is, as or more critical than at competitions for achieving consistent athletic success.

Research in the last decade has emphasized the importance of focusing on performance as opposed to outcome goals

during competition (Buront, 1992; Duda, 1993; Gould, 1983; Orlick & Partington, 1988). In particular, **performance goals** are self-referenced performance objectives such as improving one's time in a 100 meter swim or making a certain percentage of foul shots in basketball, while outcome goals focus on other-based objectives like winning or placing higher than a particular opponent. The logic behind this recommendation is that performance goals are more flexible and in one's control, as they are not dependent on another competitor while outcome goals are less flexible and dependent on another's performance. Because of this, outcome goals often create anxiety and interrupt psychological functioning (Burton, 1992).

An excellent example of focusing on performance goals in competition was given by Olympic gold medal skier Tommy Moe. When asked by the media prior to this gold medal performance whether he was thinking about winning (an outcome goal), Moe indicated that he certainly wanted to win, but had found in the past that when he thinks about winning while racing, he tightens up and does not perform well. He skis at his best when he focuses on "letting his outside ski, run" and keeping his "hands out in front" of himself - clear performance goals.

The above is not to imply that elite performers do not hold outcome goals. Most have these types of goals and find them very salient (Hardy, Jones, & Gould, in press). However, in the heat of competition they do not focus on these outcome goals - only on what they can control; their performance objectives.

An excellent way elite athletes prepare for peak performance is by employing **imagery** (Gould & Damarjian, in press a; Orlick, 1986; Vealey and Walters, 1993). They see and especially feel themselves being successful. Moreover, they employ imagery in a number of ways: for error correction, to mentally prepare, to see themselves achieving goals, and facilitating recovery from injury. It is no wonder that Orlick and Partington (1988) found imagery to be a key variable separating the more and less successful performers.

One reason top performers achieve athletic excellence on a consistent basis is that they have developed mental and physical preparation routines and adhere to these in the face of adversity and failure (Boutcher, 1990; Cohn, 1990). Gould et al. (1992) found, for instance, that more successful Olympic wrestlers had better developed **mental preparation routines** than their less successful counterparts. Hence, they utilize systematic ways of physically and mentally readying themselves.

Finally, it has been consistently shown that more successful competitors are more confident than their less successful counterparts (McAuley, 1992; Williams & Krane, 1993). Moreover, these individuals develop **confidence** via all four of Bandura's (1984) sources of efficacy [performance accomplishments, vicarious experience, persuasion and physiological status interpretation and control] with performance accomplishments being the most important source of information. Elite athlete confidence comes from employing the previous mentioned psychology of peak performance strategies on a regular basis.

Coping with Adversity Strategies

An athlete can have good foundational skills (motivational orientations, perspective on the meaningfulness of involvement) and strong peak performance strategies and still fail to achieve consistent success. The reason for this is that they have not developed skills for coping with adversity. And no matter how successful athletes have been in the past, they will be faced with adversity. In the study of U.S. national champion figure skaters, for instance, it was found that the vast majority of these athletes experienced more stress after, as opposed to prior to, winning their championship. Stress resulted from such things as increased self and other performance expectations, media attention, and travel demands (Gould, Jackson & Finch, 1993). Moreover, the longer an elite athlete's

career the more likely he or she will sustain a major injury. For instance, most members of the U.S. Ski Team have sustained at least one major season-ending injury and in so doing had to cope with the stress of the injury and the challenge of physically recovering from it. It is imperative that the successful performer develop coping strategies for dealing with adversity.

A first step in preparing to cope with adversity is to learn to expect the unexpected. From the study of 1988 Olympic wrestlers (Gould, Eklund & Jackson, 1992) for instance, it was learned that more (versus less successful) competitors were positive in their orientation, but did not expect things to run perfectly and actually anticipated unexpected circumstances such as bad calls from officials, transportation hassles and delays in the event. By doing so, these athletes were better able to cope with such events when they actually arose. Their less successful counterparts, had experienced the same unexpected circumstances in international competition in the past, but did not expect them to occur in "their" Olympics. They became frustrated and distraught when they did so.

Given the above, it is effective to prepare elite athletes for major competitions by holding team discussions where potential unexpected events and sources of stress were identified prior to a competition and ways to cope with them if they arose. For example, in helping elite figure skaters mentally prepare for the U.S. senior nationals (especially their first time), parents and loved ones can unintentionally interfere with a skater's mental preparation (e.g., the skater needs to be alone the night before the competition but the parents insist on taking him or her out to dinner). To remedy this state of affairs, skaters are instructed to inform their parents of their mental preparation needs prior to the competition and actually plan family reunions and get togethers. In a similar vein, discussions were held with the U.S. freestyle ski team prior to the Lillihammer Games, where securing tickets for significant others and increased security (soldiers with machine guns) were identified as potential stress sources. To cope with the first stressor, the athletes on the team organized a ticket exchange system among themselves so those athletes needing tickets could obtain unused ones from other team members. Nothing could be done to change the second potential stressor, but by recognizing that such feelings would occur, the athletes felt better prepared to deal with them.

Lastly, great coaches like the former University of North Carolina Chapel Hills' basketball coach, Dean Smith, prepared their teams for the unexpected through game simulations. For example, Coach Smith ended every practice with a referee on the court and the clock running with his team in varying circumstances (down by 2 and on defense, up by 3 with the ball). By doing so, over the course of the season his teams become accustomed to dealing with a variety of late game pressure situations and tactical and mental strategies for dealing with them. Hence, they practiced unexpected situations and how to effectively cope with them.

It is effective to have athletes and teams develop and practice what are labeled "psychological fire drills." For example, the importance of having and adhering to a routinized mental and physical preparation routine was previously discussed. However, during an athlete's career, things out of his or her control will sometimes prevent the initiation of optimal mental preparation. For example, a mechanical problem will cause the team bus to arrive at the venue late, a power outage will delay or interrupt an event or inclement weather will cause the event to be delayed. Just as school children practice fire drills in the event a fire occurs at their school, athletes are taught to have emergency mental preparation plans. For instance, a short plan to use if they are rushed and do not have the ideal time available to ready themselves, or a "stretch" plan to employ if there is a delay in the competition and must maintain their focus for an indefinite time. Having these emergency mental preparation plans and practicing them from time to time gives the

athlete confidence to deal with unexpected circumstances.

Although no casual relationship has been identified, recent research (Gould, Eklund & Jackson, 1992; Finch, 1994) has suggested that it is extremely important that athletes have their coping strategies so well learned that they become automated. For instance, in the study of mental preparation in Olympic wrestlers, there were no differences between medal versus non-medal winning competitors in terms of the types of coping strategies they used (Gould et al., 1992). However, the medal winning wrestlers were found to have their coping strategies so well learned that they were able to employ them without hesitation. This suggests that coaches and sport psychology consultants not only teach athletes appropriate coping skills, but structure practice situations in such a way that these skills become so well learned that they can be employed with hesitation.

One of the most powerful coping skills available to individuals today is social support (Cohen & Willis, 1985; Hardy & Crace, 1991). It is not surprising that social support is an essential skill that athletes striving for peak performance develop. This may come in the form of tangible social support where material assistance and expertise is provided, emotional social support where individuals are available to listen and provide emotional comfort, informational social support where others acknowledge one's efforts as well as confirm opinions and when appropriate challenge thinking (Hardy & Crace, 1991). The old myth that mental toughness involves having an athlete do everything on his or her own needs to be disputed and replaced. Athletes must be open to, and learn to seek social support.

Finally, when employing coping strategies, athletes must learn when to focus on the problem and when to focus on their emotional reaction to it. In the coping literature this is called the "goodness of fit" hypothesis and is based on Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) notion that two classes of coping behaviors exist; problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Problem-focused coping strategies are those which deal directly with the source or cause of stress an individual experiences. For example, an athlete who is stressed because of not having enough time to train may reprioritize his or her activities and learn better time management skills and in so doing, lower the amount of stress experienced. In contrast, emotion-focused coping does not involve changing the source of stress but one's emotional reaction to it. Hence, an athlete who is nervous because she is awaiting the finals in her competition may use progressive relaxation to lower the stress she is experiencing.

The key contention of the "goodness of fit" notion is that at times it is realistic to change the stress source (e.g., asking parents who unknowingly place pressure on a young competitor not to talk with him or her until after a competition) while at other times, changing the stress source is not feasible (e.g., canceling a competition because an opposing team is particularly talented). Problem-focused coping efforts are thought to be most effective when something can be done to modify the stressor. However, when the stressor cannot be modified, it is more productive to focus on dealing with the emotions resulting from the stressor.

The key practical implication arising from the "goodness of fit" notion is that when an athlete is experiencing undesirable stress levels, coaches, athletes and sport psychology consultants should analyze the situation and determine whether it would be more useful to focus on problem or emotion-focused coping strategies. By doing so, their stress management efforts will be more efficient and productive.

SUMMARY

If an athlete is going to consistently achieve peak performances a variety of mental preparation skills must be developed. This presentation has tried to organize key mental preparation skills into a pyramid model of peak performance. All three components

of the model must be developed and continually refined. However, it is critical to recognize that no standardized set of mental preparation skills exist, and although the most generic skills, considerable individual differences and variation in strategy use is evident. Hence, while those choosing to use the model to guide practice will find the general strategies and guidelines useful, it is critical that an awareness and appreciation of individual differences be recognized and mental preparation programs modified accordingly. By doing so, the model will be of most use in guiding practice.

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Chapter 9
Heads Up Hockey

OBJECTIVES

- **To introduce the overall *"Heads Up Hockey"* program**
- **Provide coaches with information regarding severe head and spinal injuries**

INTRODUCTION

You know what it takes to help your team score goals, play solid defense and have fun: knowledge , skating, passing, shooting and stick handling skills , each player's commitment and motivation , good teamwork and lots of practice.

But we're sure that's not all you care about. **Your instructions and actions can have a big influence on the safety of every player on the ice** – especially when it comes to preventing potentially serious injuries. Unfortunately, the information and help you need for this part of your job aren't widely available.

That's where *"Heads Up Hockey"* comes in. In this program, USA Hockey has developed and assembled the information, advice and techniques to help you reduce the risk of head injuries.

"Heads Up Hockey" starts with medical information and specific actions you can take to prevent head injuries. But there's a lot more to it.

USA Hockey is a firm believer in the benefits of high-quality protective hockey equipment for its players. **But no equipment can prevent a serious spinal injury without other training and instruction.** And unfortunately, some players get an "invulnerable" feeling from wearing today's high-tech protective equipment, resulting in more reckless play.

By following the *"Heads Up Hockey"* techniques in this chapter, you will be developing new awareness and playing skills in each of your players. When you tell your kids "Heads Up"! you'll be telling them not just to play safe, but to focus. And player focus means ... BETTER HOCKEY!

Much of the material in this chapter is directed toward age levels where body checking is permitted. But the basic principles apply to all age levels of hockey.

When you get your team playing *"Heads Up Hockey"*, you're helping your players, helping your team and helping the whole game of hockey, by making the sport even more appealing at a time of growing popularity.

Let's play HEADS UP HOCKEY!

HEAD INJURIES ARE PREVENTABLE

Hockey is a contact sport, but like any other contact sport, it has its share of sudden jolts. Players routinely make contact with other players, goal posts, boards, pucks, sticks and with the ice itself. It's all part of the game. But injuries - especially potentially serious head injuries - are not part of the game.

You can raise your player's awareness of spinal injuries and concussions by learning more about how injuries happen, by passing this information along to your players and by practicing specific prevention and playing techniques detailed in this chapter.

Let's start by learning more about how these injuries happen.

How Spinal Injuries Happen In Hockey

The upper spinal column has a natural curve, which lends flexibility to the head and neck when the neck is held in a normal, "Heads Up" position. (See illustration A)

Illustration A. The natural "Heads Up" position, which gives your neck the maximum flexibility to take a hit.

But when the head is flexed (chin toward the chest), this normal curve is removed, and the cervical spine becomes straight, as illustration B demonstrates.

Illustration B. When the neck is flexed (head down), an impact can result in serious spinal injury.

In this "head down position", when a player hits the boards or a goal post head on, the head stops suddenly, but the body's movement continues, compressing the spine. This force can produce a shock greater than the neck's discs and muscles can cushion, resulting in a fracture or break of one or more of the vertebrae. And if one breaks, it can cause compression of the spinal cord, resulting in paralysis below the level of the fracture.

According to research done among a wide range of hockey players, almost all on-ice cervical spine injuries have been due to the head being slightly flexed (head down) while making head-on contact with the boards or goal post.

A player doesn't have to be going at full speed for this to happen — it can occur at walking speed.

So that's the basis for Rule One of "Heads Up Hockey": Heads Up – Don't Duck!

How Concussions Happen In Hockey

There are differences of opinion on the definition of a concussion, and on how to judge its severity.

But one working definition is: "a clinical syndrome characterized by immediate and transient post-traumatic impairment of neural functions, such as the alteration of consciousness, disturbance of vision, equilibrium, etc., due to brain stem involvement."

Simply put, it's an injury that arises from a blow to the head, usually when the head is moving. Symptoms of a concussion range from mild dizziness to "seeing stars" to severe headaches and nausea to unconsciousness.

In hockey, concussions are not the most common form of injury, but they require your attention for two important reasons.

1. Concussions, especially mild ones, may be hard to recognize. Players may show only momentary confusion from being "dinged" or "having their bell rung".
2. A concussion, even a mild one, may significantly increase the chances of getting a second concussion, and may endanger the player's awareness and safety on the ice.

No head impact injury can truly be regarded as minor. Each incident requires your prompt evaluation and attention.

What Can You Do?

The risk of head injuries at all levels of hockey can be reduced through your participation in *"Heads Up Hockey"*.

1. Play Heads Up Hockey
   - Know the basics of injury prevention and pass them along to your players.
   - Practice the team on-ice safety exercises in this chapter.
   - Promote fair play and clean checking on your team, and insist on it from your opponents.
2. Check your players' equipment before, during, and after each practice session or game, and teach them to inspect it as well.
3. Keep your team in good shape through the flexibility and strengthening exercises in this chapter.
4. Know what to look for and how to respond when a player gets hurt by using the information in this chapter.

PLAYING HEADS UP HOCKEY

Incorporating *"Heads Up Hockey"* Into Team Practices

In this section, you'll find specific ways to improve the safety and quality of your team's play. Here are some ways to incorporate this material into your practice routine.

- Show the *"Heads Up Hockey"* Challenge videotape at the beginning of each session. Invite parents and team managers to see it.
- Plan on 15 minutes of *"Heads Up Hockey"*at every other practice session.
- At each of these *"Heads Up Hockey"*sessions:
  - 5 minute (max) pre-session talk with Q & A
  - 10 minute on-ice drill
- Five *"Heads Up Hockey"* sessions total

Heads Up — Tell Them What It Means

When we hear the phrase "Heads Up", we hear "be alert" and "be careful". Good advice for hockey players! But in *"Heads Up Hockey"*, it has a literal meaning too.

At your first practice session, start by asking your players what they think "Heads Up" means, and help them translate it into hockey terms. You might get answers like:

- know where the puck is
- know where your teammates are
- know where your opponents are
- know where you're skating to
- be ready to receive a pass or take a shot
- know where your "man" is
- look for open ice

Next, you can refer to the idea of "Heads Up" as playing safe hockey. Ask players what else the phrase means to them.

Depending on their age level, players might say:

- skating to avoid other players
- avoiding goal posts while driving to the net
- keeping your stick down
- not losing control on the ice
- controlling your temper
- knowing when you're about to get hit or be checked
- preparing for impact along the boards

Now it's time to tell them Rule One of *"Heads Up Hockey"*: in hockey, "Heads Up" literally means exactly what it says: "Keep your head up on the ice, especially when it looks like you're going to take a hit."

Tell players that this is the single most important thing to know and to do to prevent head injuries and tell them that you're going to be looking for it from now on. Explain that most people duck when they see a hit coming, but doing so puts them in danger.

DRILL #1

Heads Up — Say it Loud

During your first on-ice *"Heads Up Hockey"* session, you don't need any specific drills or plays to reinforce what you've told you team. Just watch their play, and shout "Heads Up" from time to time throughout the session. Use it to remind players to keep alert, to point out unsafe situations and to encourage skaters to keep their heads up, whether they're skating or sliding after a fall.

ANGLING IN

Skating into the boards at an angle means better puck control and less risk of injury.

When the puck goes into a corner, everybody wants to dig it out and dig it out fast. But what's the best way to get it out? And what's the safest way? Skating in on an angle is the best and the safest way.

- Skating in on an angle affords players a **better approach angle** to the puck, and by giving the body a safe position to accept an impact with the boards, it allows players to **keep skating** and gain control of the puck.
- When players skate into the corners at an angle, the risk of hitting the boards with their helmets first is greatly reduced. A leg, side or arm will absorb most of the impact.

Start this *"Heads Up Hockey"* discussion by inviting players to imagine a puck moving through a corner when they're close to the nearest end zone face-off dot. How should they go after the puck and why?

Now ask players to imagine the same puck moving the same way, but with an opponent behind them. Should there be any difference in the approach? Why?

After getting answers from several players, explain the advantages of skating to the puck on an angle, rather than head-on into the boards.

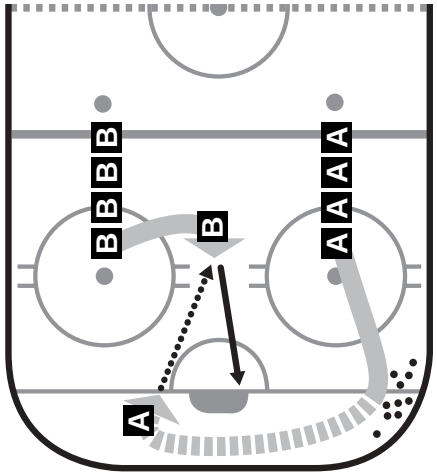
When demonstrating "angling in" be sure to cover these points:

- Go in **on an angle.**
- Keep a **low center of gravity**.
- Knees **bent, back straight and head up.**
- Absorb the shock over the **widest. possible part** of your body.

- Keep your **feet parallel to the boards.**
- Forearms – hands – legs **ready.**
- **Lean into** the impact.
- **Never** hit the boards or glass with the **tip of your shoulder** – it can cause an injury.
- Check over your shoulder to see **where your opponent is.**

Drill #2

1. Set up two lines of four players (A and B) behind the face-off dots and a pile of pucks (P) in the left corner.
2. On the whistle, the first player on the left face-off spot (A) angles into the corner, picks up a puck, skates behind the net and makes a pass to (B), who has moved from the face-off spot to the slot area.
3. Player (B) takes a shot on goal and joins the (A) line. Player (A) goes to the (B) line.



Variations

- Halfway through the drill, move the pucks to the right corner so that players learn to pick up a puck and pass off both the forehand and backhand.
- A coach can stand to the side of the (A) line and slide a puck into the corner one at a time.
- For age levels with body checking, add a line of chasers who try to catch the puck carrier and angle him or her into the boards.

HITTING THE BOARDS

Good ways and bad ways to have a close encounter with a goal post, the boards or another player.

It's going to happen: you play hockey, you're going to skate into things. But how players skate into the boards, the goal post or another player is important for their safety as well as their ability to stay in the play.

Here are two simple rules:

- Don't duck
- Hit the boards with anything but your head first

In section 1, you told players why they shouldn't duck their head on impact - here's an opportunity to reinforce it.

Start discussion by asking players what they should hit the boards with first when they know an impact is coming.

They might answer:

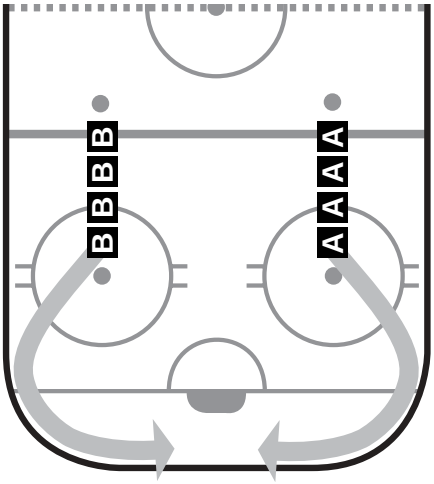
- an arm
- their back
- a skate
- a leg
- their side
- their stick

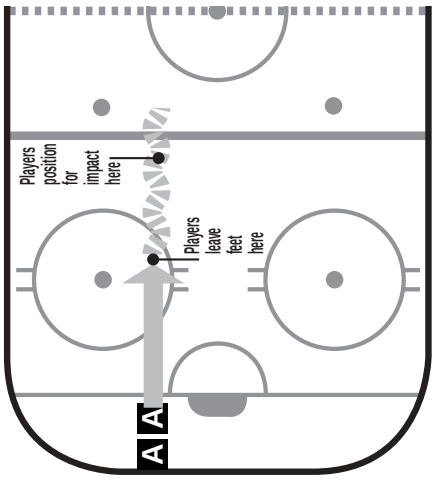
All of these, of course, are right answers. Players probably won't say "your head" as a possible answer, and you should congratulate the players for that.

Conclude your discussion by demonstrating the best way to cushion an impact with the boards: with both hands on the stick if possible, and with their arms out creating a three-part "shock absorber". Players should try to absorb the impact over as much of their body as possible.

Drill #3

1. Set up two lines of players (A and B) at the face-off dots.
2. On the whistle, a player from each line skates at an angle toward the corner boards. The players should make contact with the boards and glass with their extended arms, forearms, side of body and legs but with no head contact at all.
3. Players should alternate between lines (A) and (B). The speed at which the players hit the boards must be managed, depending on the skill level of the players. Proper head, arms and body position must be stressed.





Variation

From the goal line, players skate full speed toward the blue line. At the top of the face-off circles, they should leave their feet and slide on their side, back or stomach. Have them imagine the blue line as an impact with the boards.

Players should pretend to slide into the end boards, using arms, knees, legs and skates to absorb the impact. Proper heads-up position must be stressed.

TAKING A CHECK

What players should do when they see it coming.

Since USA Hockey-sanctioned games do not include checking at some levels, this session might not be appropriate for all teams. But if you are coaching a younger team, you might still find the information useful as "body-contact" techniques, especially for less skilled skaters.

Preparing for a body check takes split-second timing. But how a player prepares for a check determines whether he or she will keep or lose the puck, or how quickly he or she will be back in the play. Quick reflexes and smart moves when a check is coming also lessen the chance of a head injury.

By this time, players will have some familiarity with the basics of *"Heads Up Hockey"*. So you might just ask them to see how many of these four basic safety techniques for taking a check they can come up with. Look for: **Heads Up – Don't Duck.** It's just as important in taking a check as in any other impact.

Keep your head out of it. The more players can avoid impact with their heads, the more likely they are to come through safe and in control. They should take the impact with anything else first.

Know where your opponents are. As players become more experienced, and as they start thinking more about strategy and less about skating, their peripheral vision and

overall awareness should start to improve. When they know where their opponents are, they'll be less likely to get checked without any warning.

Skate through the check. Although it may seem safer to slow down or stop if a hit is about to happen, your players' balance and momentum will be much better if they keep their legs moving and concentrate on skating right through the impact. They'll not only avoid head injury, they'll have a better chance of maintaining their balance and staying in the play.

And if they get in a situation where they can't skate through a check, players should keep their arms up, knees bent and, of course, their head up.

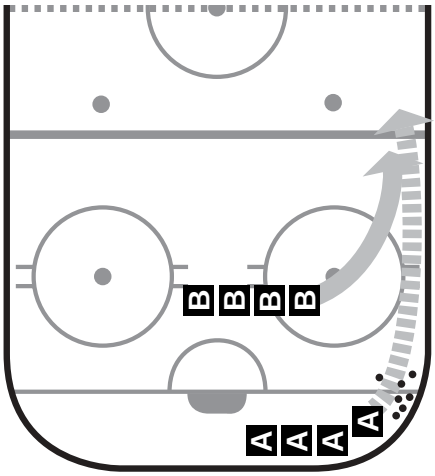
Be sure to cover these points:

- skates parallel to the boards
- move out of the area quickly
- keep your feet moving
- arms/legs as shock absorbers
- feet apart, knees bent, low center of gravity
- no shoulder contact on the boards, if possible

Drill #4

Use this exercise to reinforce proper ways of giving and taking a check.

1. Set up a line of puck carriers (A) in the corner behind the goal line and one line of checkers (B) at the face-off dot.
2. The puck carrier (A) moves up to the boards and skates through the check of the (B) player.
3. For the puck carriers, stress heads-up position, keeping the legs moving and the stick down.
4. For the checkers, stress contact with the shoulders, not the head, elbows, knees, stick or feet.
5. In this drill, players should alternate from puck carrier lines (A) to checking lines (B).



For best use of your ice time, set up the same drill in the other corner, too.

GIVING A CHECK

Separating the puck from your opponent, not separating your opponent from consciousness.

As with the previous session, this material may be less appropriate for younger age levels where checking is not allowed, but the information is still valuable.

Hockey rules are specific about a legal body check: it's when a player checks an opponent who is in possession of the puck, by using hip or shoulder from the front, diagonally from the front or straight from the side, and does not take more than two steps/strides in executing the check."

The point is, checks and body contact are not about intimidation and not about inflicting pain and injury. They're just one part of the game, along with skating, shooting, passing, and puck handling.

In preparing your team for this *"Heads Up Hockey"* session, start them thinking by discussing the checking they see in NHL games on TV. Do they find it exciting? (Definitely). Do they wish they could give a check like that themselves? (Probably).

Now invite them to imagine themselves on the receiving end of some of those spectacular NHL checks. Could they take it? Remind your players that the checks they see on TV are given and taken by world-class athletes in top form, who have the experience and control to play physical hockey at that level.

As a coach, the caliber and sportsmanship of your team's play is in your hands. We hope you'll promote safe, legal checking for your players. We also hope you'll insist on clean, legal checking from opposing teams, too. It's another way of keeping your team safe without suffering any competitive disadvantages.

Checking from Behind

It's illegal. And it's extremely dangerous. Even a light hit from behind could inflict a severe head or neck injury.

Be sure to tell your players that no matter how intense the game becomes, they must not hit another player from behind, ever. And, of course, checking from behind exposes your team to the possibility of a major penalty.

A Word About Reckless Play: DUMB!

In the heat of the game, players can occasionally get so psyched up they forget everything they've learned, and get into a play they have no chance of finishing safely.

Some players drive to the net so fast they just can't stop, making a dangerous collision practically a sure thing.

You know this is bad hockey and that it is dangerous hockey. The sad truth is, many hockey injuries are "self inflicted" by players skating way past their limits and "going for it" at all costs.

Be sure to tell your team that reckless play like this does nobody any good. It rarely results in a goal or a good play, and often ends up as a penalty, an injury or both.

PROTECTIVE HOCKEY EQUIPMENT

The Superman Syndrome

Avoid the "Superman Syndrome" on the ice, and get the best use out of today's protective equipment.

As good as it is, there isn't any protective equipment that can keep a player from getting a serious spinal injury in a head-on collision with his head down.

But protective equipment can prevent or reduce concussions, as well as facial, mouth and other injuries, so we've included guidelines for the proper care and maintenance of protective equipment.

Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird! It's a plane...

We spoke of reckless play as being "dumb hockey," and it is. One factor leading to reckless play may actually be the "can't get hurt" feeling some players get as a result of wearing protective equipment.

So it's worth your while to tell your players that the purpose of their protective equipment is to protect them from sticks, pucks, skates, and other objects, not to allow them to skate recklessly.

Maintaining Protective Equipment

Helmet

- Make sure all helmets are HECC-certified.
- Fit should be snug on top, back and sides of the head.
- All padding and manufacturer's hardware should be in place.
- No cracks! Throw out a cracked helmet immediately; it's not only ineffective, it's dangerous.

- Neck strap should be working and comfortable.

Facial Protection

- HECC-certified only.
- If it's a plastic shield, no cracks or scratches.
- If it's a wire cage, no bars bent or missing, and wire coating must be intact.
- Chin cup should be in place, and chin should sit comfortably in it.
- All straps and snaps should be in place and working.

Mouth Guard

- Follow manufacturer's instructions for proper fit.
- Make sure breathing is not inhibited when in place.

GETTING YOUR TEAM IN SHAPE

Head and Neck Exercises

You know the value of regular exercise and general fitness to your players. In addition, a strong neck can actually help prevent head injuries. We hope you'll include these neck exercises in your team's loosening up and strengthening routine, as a valuable addition to their *"Heads Up Hockey"* program.

Players should complete this full routine five times a week.

Flexibility Exercises

As a warm up exercise and to obtain full mobility, isotonic exercises are repeated five times each in a sitting or standing position. Shoulders are down and back in the starting position. Keep them there.

1. Drop your head sideways and hold it for a slow count of six. Push against the tension, but not too hard.
2. Now drop it to the other side for a slow six count.
3. Turn your head to one side for a slow count of six, pushing against the tension.
4. Now reverse it and push to the other side. That's one rep of this exercise. Repeat it four more times.

Strengthening Exercises

Strengthening exercises are repeated five times each in a sitting position. They may be done individually or with a partner of similar size and strength who resists the movements.

1. Hands together behind your head. Press against your hands for a slow count of six.
2. Now keep pushing with your head, but ease your hand's resistance to tilt your head back slowly.
3. One arm up, hand over your ear. Try to turn your head to one side, but resist with your hand. Hold for six.
4. Now the same on the other side, for a slow count of six.
5. Now try to drop your head sideways, but resist for a slow count of six.
6. Change sides, press and hold for a slow six again.
7. Both arms in front, head in your hands. Push with your head and resist with your hands for a slow count of six.
8. Same position, but let your head move forward against your hands, slowly. Now repeat this whole exercise four more times.

WHAT TO DO IF A PLAYER GETS HURT

You're a coach, not a doctor. But sometimes you need to make a medical decision on the spot.

One of those situations is deciding whether or not to take a player out of a game after he or she has had a head impact. In the case of a concussion, your judgment is important, because even a mild concussion can have serious consequences.

Identifying and Dealing with a Spinal Injury

In the case of a potential spinal injury, your immediate care and attention can make a big difference in the player's well-being until medical care arrives.

If you think a player may have sustained a spinal injury, your immediate role is to get help and keep the player calm and immobile. After a spinal impact, look for these symptoms:

- pain in the area of the injury
- buzzing or tingling in the arms and/or legs
- loss of movement in the arms or legs
- radiating pain in the arms or legs

After calling for immediate medical help, give care as follows:

- Ensure adequate airway and breathing.
- Observe the ABC's: airway, breathing and circulation.
- Reassure the player.
- Do not allow the player to move. Instruct the player not to move, and immobilize him or her to prevent any motion.
- Keep the player warm.

Identifying and Dealing with a Concussion

We've adapted the following guidelines from the Colorado Medical Society Sports Medicine Committee, developed in 1991. These are not intended to be used as medical diagnoses.

They can help you judge the presence or absence of a concussion, and if present, its severity, as well as letting you know how to deal with appropriately.

Grade 1 Concussion

- Confusion without amnesia
- No loss of consciousness

This is the most common form of concussion in contact sports, commonly called a "ding" or "having your bell rung."

Guideline for return to play: Remove the player from activity. Examine him or her immediately and every five minutes thereafter for the development of amnesia or post-concussion symptoms both at rest and with exertion. Let the player return to play if neither amnesia nor concussion appear for at least twenty minutes.

Grade 2 Concussion

- Confusion with amnesia
- No loss of consciousness

Guideline for return to play: Remove the player for the remainder of the game or practice, and seek medical help. Examine him or her frequently for signs of developing symptoms. Re-examine the next day. Let the player return to practice only after one full week without symptoms.

Grade 3 Concussion

- Loss of consciousness

Guideline for return to play: Seek medical help immediately for transport from rink by ambulance (with cervical spine immobilization if indicated) to the nearest hospital for medical evaluation. With medical approval, the player may return to practice only after one full week without symptoms.

Sideline evaluations for concussion

Use these guidelines to help decide whether a player may have sustained a Grade 1 concussion:

Orientation: Ask the player the time, place, the players, and the situation of the injury.

Concentration: Ask the player to tell you the months of the year backwards.

Memory:

1. Ask the player the names of the last two teams you played.
2. Ask the details of the game or practice in progress: strategies, moves, plays, etc.

3. Ask the player to recall three words and three objects immediately, and then the same three words and objects five minutes later.

SUMMARY

You can obtain a full multimedia kit including all elements of the *"Heads Up Hockey"* program by contacting USA Hockey directly at 719-576-8724, by logging on to our Web site — www.usahockey.com, or e-mail us at usah@ usahockey.org.

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