



Best

Play
As A
Team

Play Smart

Play Hard

Form Good Habits

District 9 Hockey Principles

Every successful endeavor needs a plan. A plan functions like a map: it shows you how to get where you want to go. Plans don't insure that you accomplish what you set out to accomplish any more than maps guarantee that you'll get where you want to go, but both are useful things to pull out and revisit when you hit detours or construction, or when things aren't going the way you want them to. From Mite hockey to high school and beyond, this plan will help you become a better player on a better team. See you at the rink.

Will Fish, District 9 Head Coach

Our goal as a team is to win the state festival. That's it. Anybody who doesn't share this goal should reconsider their association with this team and with District 9 Hockey.

We also want to give all of our players the best chance to continue playing at the highest level that they're willing to earn. That means learning mental skills and using tactics and systems that will help players move on.

Our plan is the set of things we need to do and how we need to do them in order to accomplish our goal. It looks like this:

Form Good Habits: Excellence is good habits in action. Hockey is islands of order in a sea of chaos: great team play requires several people working together at high speed, reacting effectively and immediately to constantly changing conditions. To do so, players must execute skills without taking time to think about them, and they must manage the emotional ups and downs of the game without getting distracted. Developing solid mental and physical habits allows us to focus on the game itself.

Be accountable: Excuses are like anuses: everybody has one and they all stink. Take responsibility for your actions. If we eliminate "Yeah-but-it is," we'll be putting our energy into getting better, not accepting second best effort. Learn to profit from your mistakes—use them to be ready for what's ahead.

Show character and leadership: We all know there are right and wrong ways to do things. Character and leadership are making a commitment and keeping it even when no one is watching. Be willing to stand up for the things that you know are right.

Be disciplined: Show the courage to continually and consistently get things done. Dare to keep your eyes on the prize.

Be organized/detailed: No job is little. And most of your performance as a player is details.

Be prepared: Take care of equipment, body, and mind.

Spend positive energy on things you control: Not refs, bounces, opponents, onlookers, or anything else that is out of your hands. Focus on what you can do.

Always. Anything else is a waste of time and energy. In every case, the most important play is your next one.

Be selfless: Each of us is only a reflection of our teammates. It's true.

Play Hard: Always give your best effort. Nothing replaces hard work. Will beats skill.

Have great work ethic: Outwork your opponent in practice and in games.

Play aggressively and physically: Take the play to them. Hustle mends many mistakes. We put pressure on opponents by giving them no time or space to make plays. Keep a tight gap. Apply back pressure. Sprint to support. Get the puck. Attack the net.

Be intensely competitive: Find a way to get it done.

Be highly conditioned: We're in shape. We start before they do. We establish our game: finish checks, gain zones, hammer shots and rebounds. Then we own the third period.

Push your comfort zone: Make it a habit to expand your abilities—constantly look for ways to improve—get busy getting better.

Play Smart: Let your mind guide your effort. The bull usually loses the bullfight.

Play physically without penalties: Learn the refs' limits and play there. Look to make contact. No lazy or angry penalties. Play whistle-to-whistle hockey.

Be mentally alert and know situations: Know where you are in your shift, zone, period, game, and special team situation. Recognize your opponents' tendencies and exploit them.

Be emotional but controlled: Play with fire, but don't burn yourself. You are only thoroughly dangerous when you have your wits about you.

Be good fundamentally: Do the little things well; base your habits on solid principles and do them until they are automatic: play the body, use the blue lines, be strong on your stick with two hands in traffic, protect the puck, shoot low from out, drive the net, face the play, keep the defensive side of the scrum, etc.

Know how to play with and without the puck: Know what you have to do defensively to get us the puck, what you have to do to support the puck so we can keep it, and what your options are *before you get the puck* so you can make good decisions when you get it.

Figure out how to improve your game: Learn how to learn. Gather feedback and put it to good use. Work on the skills you will need to become a more effective player. Occasionally ask yourself: "What am I pretending not to know?"

Be ready.

Play As A Team: Many hands make light work. None of us is better than all of us.

Make it easy for your teammates: communicate on the ice, fill in for each other, present yourself as a passing option and make good passes early in the play (before you have to), create space for your teammates, fill lanes, back each other up.

Know our game plan and systems: Understand what we are trying to do. Get on the same page, so we're all effective together. If you don't understand, ask questions and find out.

Support each other physically: Think of the fingers of a fist: if one is sticking out, it's likely to get broken; when the fingers stick together, the fist works. We stay as a group on the ice: we play together before the whistle and stay together after the whistle. After a play, we're looking to line up for the next one, but if someone wants trouble, we are one player, all at that spot, getting ready for the next play, never chirping at our opponents. We can't afford a roster spot for a goon, and all of you need to play without fear. Know that you have backup and that you are backup.

Support each other emotionally: Contribute to the reserve of positive energy that we generate. Hockey is a demanding game that is full of mistakes—learn from your own and make new ones; learn from your teammates' and move on together. Help each other out. Bring out the best in each other. Dare to care about your teammates; they will repay your efforts.

Best: This is the culmination of all your work as a player and as a team—these are the times when the whole is greater than the sum of its parts—when you are completely in the moment and making plays. Whether in hockey or elsewhere, these are the shining moments that you will treasure as long as you live.