

GET BETTER

A message to coaches

Detroit Red Wings coach Mike Babcock makes it clear that he appreciates all of the hard work and dedication shown by youth coaches.

But he is also wants to make sure that youth coaches know that they have made a very important commitment when they volunteer.

"Once you say you are the coach then you have a responsibility to those kids and those parents to do one heck of a job," Babcock said. "You have to be there, you have to be prepared, you have to be organized and you have to love the kids."

Babcock remembers all of his youth coaches, and said the "when we are looking for a place for my son or daughter to play the number one thing we look at is the coach."

The reason Babcock remembers them all is because they all had an impact on his life.

"So who do you want to impact your kid's life?" he asked. "Good people who care about them? I would assume that would be a priority. People say 'this guy has won three state championships! They get good players, but to me that is not what it's about. Do they care about them? Do they treat them with respect? Do they demand a work ethic and attention to detail? That to me is what coaches do."

INCREASE THEIR PASSION

Babcock got into coaching because he "loves people" and to survive the pressure at the NHL level he has to "get better every day."

"But you're not coaching pro hockey though, you're coaching kids and they want to feel good about themselves everyday," said Babcock. "You have to help them get better and increase their passion for the game.

"Your number one job, your number one priority as a youth coach is for your players to love the game more when they leave than when they arrive."

Babcock believes hockey is pretty simple and that we sometimes make it more complicated than we have to.

"Players need to be able to skate – if you can't skate you won't be able to continue to play. You have to be able to pass and shoot, and you have to be able to think the game."

EVERYONE PLAYS

And it's clear to Babcock that when kids have fun they get better and they love the game more. And having fun means playing in every situation.

"If you play for the Red Wings, everybody plays. Some play a little bit more, but everybody is important because everyone has a role," said Babcock.



PHOTO BY DAVE REGINEK/DRW

Red Wings coach Mike Babcock's message to youth coaches: "your number one priority is for your players to love the game more when they leave than when they arrive."

And that philosophy is even more true in youth hockey.

"Everybody has got to play," said Babcock. "Everyone on your team is important. That little Johnny, who can't even skate, if he loves the game more than your star player, in two years Johnny is going to be better.

"So if you get a penalty and you've got three guys on a line. Two of them go out first and the third one goes out next with the guy on the next line. And you have to actually teach everyone to penalty kill.

"And then the powerplay comes and you got to put everyone out on the powerplay. And you have to work on the powerplay and have a system so they believe they will be successful."

Babcock knows he got to where he's at with the help of youth coaches that cared about him.

"They really cared about kids," he said. "And that's what you want your players to say about you one day. The way they are going to do that is if you cared about them, if you're organized, if you know how to deal with the parents and if you have a development plan and you play them all. Not just the best ones."

By Philip Calvin

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Three Passes and a Shot Drill

Source: weiss hockey.com

1. Players line up in two lines on the blueline at opposite sides.
2. Each line has pucks.
3. On the whistle the first player from each line skates down the blueline and receives a pass from the opposite line.
4. The receiver controls the pass and sends a pass back to the player who passed to him.
5. After giving the return pass, the player continues around and presents himself as an option in the receiving zone (green), where he receives a pass from the line he originally left from.
6. Receiver turns up ice to take a shot and then skates to back of the other line.

