

PRACTICE TIPS

There are 10 key ingredients a coach should mix into each practice. Collectively these lead to enjoyment and learning for both players and coaches

1. Coaches should have a minimum of 50 pucks in their bucket.
2. Players must be on time, all the time. Coaches set the standard and lead by example. Parents must be encouraged to buy in.
3. Don't waste ice time stretching. Stretching should be performed in the dressing room prior to the ice time.
4. The use of stations in practices leads to a dynamic practice. Stations keep participants active enabling them to achieve high levels of repetitions. Have players spend 3 - 8 minutes per station before switching. 2 - 3 stations are recommended. (Must be a coach at each station)
5. Basic Skill Development (skating, puck control, passing, shooting) should comprise 90% of your practice time. Remember you can work skills in game-like drills. Skill Development should not be considered boring.
6. Positive and Specific Feedback are imperative. Consider the Head Coach who always stands at center ice and runs drills. How often during the practice is this coach able to effectively teach??? Teaching is done in the trenches (corners, lines).
7. Routines in practice are dangerous. Players will pace themselves and become bored very quickly. Routine practices develop great practice players. Strive to change things up, create an element of surprise, utilize variety, and generate enthusiasm. Players also enjoy time on their own. 2 - 5 minutes per practice should be sufficient. This enables players to be creative and try new things.
8. "Tell me and I'll forget, show me and I might remember, involve me and I'll understand."
9. Practice Execution by coaches is of principle importance. Great drills that aren't executed properly by coaches are useless. Execution involves using all staff on the ice, having pucks spotted in the proper areas, informing players of the whistle sequence (1st whistle begin, 2nd whistle stop, 3rd whistle begins next group) and providing appropriate feedback. To assist in practice execution, name your drills ie. "Killer Bees".
10. Relate what you do in practices to games and vice versa. "Players, we are doing this drill because in our last game we were unable to finish around the net." or "This drill will assist you in keeping your stick and body away from the checker and in an effective scoring position."

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