



YOUTH HOCKEY FORUM

HOCKEY MADE EASY

Early Season Tips for Coaches, Parents and Players

Minor and Youth Hockey, executives, coaches, managers, webmasters and other e-mail recipients. If you are working with players between 5 and 14 years of age, these early season hockey tips are for you. Feel free to post them on your hockey web site, or consider forwarding it to them or their parents if you so desire, but please credit Hockey Made Easy for the information.

Thank you, John Shorey - Hockey Canada Award winner and Author of "Hockey Made Easy" Canada's Best Hockey Instruction Manual.

Many Youth/Minor Hockey tryout camps are over and the coaches have made their final selections, now what?

Well, now the real work begins. Coaches must plan for a full season of providing players with specific hockey information as well as running a multitude of organized and challenging on ice and off ice practices that will help **all** players improve their individual and team skills over the course of the entire season so they can hit their peak at playoff time.

The second big challenge facing many coaches is molding 15 or more individuals with different personalities, different learning abilities and skill levels into a cohesive hockey team.

Both of these challenges can be accomplished using the following simple methods:

1. Holding weekly 1.5 to 2 hour Off ice teaching sessions in a school gymnasium or a large hall
2. Conducting challenging On ice practice sessions that duplicate game like situations
3. Using a number of experienced Assistant or Guest Coaches to help you at both venues.

These above methods will develop your player's hockey skills as well as build team unity, spirit and cohesiveness.

For first time Rep/Travel Team or House League coaches this can be a challenging time as to what to teach and when.

For players, this is also a challenging time, as steady improvement on their basic individual skills, then team skills, will determine how competitive your team will be throughout the regular season and how far you will advance into the playoffs.

One piece of advice for all Head Coaches in 06/07, one person cannot coach by him/herself. There is just too much teaching to do. You need a number of Assistant Coaches to help you run practices and to help out on the bench during a game. Try to find the most qualified or experienced hockey people to assist you, and you will find the job of coaching much easier and still very rewarding.

Another tip for Coaches, a good early season starting point is to assess your team's skills during scrimmages, exhibition and early season games. Assess the Team's positive points and the skills that will

need more work. Make a list, and then decide what the immediate priority is and what skills, systems etc. can wait for a later time during the season.

Points to consider, what physical condition are your players in, can your team score goals, can they prevent goals, can they pass the puck accurately, are they good, quick skaters, or a bit slow of foot?

Do they understand the different forechecking and backchecking systems?

What about their positioning on clearing/breakout plays?

Do they understand the importance of the transition game and the difference between offensive and defensive hockey?

And last, but not least, with the new rules regarding obstruction there are going to be a lot of penalties called. You will need to spend some early time on practicing your Penalty Killing and Power Play.

What should be taught first?

Depending on the answers, your on ice practices and off ice teaching sessions should be based on their assessed needs.

No matter what age or caliber of team or players you are coaching, i.e. "AAA" All Star players or Recreational House Leaguers, if you keep it fun, everybody will have a good time and will learn how to play hockey correctly and safely.

Tips for Parents and Players

There is a saying "practice makes perfect" and this especially applies to hockey skills.

Players must attend practice regularly if they and their Team are going to improve.

Players must listen attentively to their coach and do the drills to the best of their ability.

Practices are where individual skills and team improvements are made, not during games.

Parents must ensure their child gets to every practice or he/she will fall behind the other players. Coaches cannot set lines or work on specific offensive or defensive plays if players don't attend practice. I realize players love to play games and hate to practice, but players rarely learn a lot about hockey during games. It's the practices that prepare you for the games. So whether it's an off-ice teaching session or an on-ice practice it's in your best interest for your child to attend every single practice and to work on improving their skills.

A final tip, " players must listen to their coaches ". They are the men or women who were selected by your local Minor/Youth Hockey Association to be in charge of the hockey team. They have the special hockey training and completed the compulsory coaching courses to become a Head or Assistant coach. They are giving a lot of their free time to help you improve your game so please show respect to them and pay attention to what they have to say.

Or please consider sending them to the hockey volunteers who took your place or hockey parents who might find the information useful.

Good luck to all Minor/Youth Hockey coaches, managers, players and parents this hockey season.

John Shorey

Author "Hockey Made Easy"

Canada's Best Instruction Manual