



Reflect and Recharge

April is the in between month where we want spring but winter still lingers around the neighborhood. There is still some pretty good hockey going on and the pull back to the rink is strong for many coaches. It is also a time to relax and think about fishing, golf and outdoor sports. It is also a time to think about the past season and see what you might do in the off season to become a better coach. It takes a long time to learn to coach well and understand the nuances of the position, especially the mental side of the game and dealing with players and their parents. I will continue to send you a steady diet of ideas and thoughts on the hope that they will stimulate you to seek more information, ask questions and expand your knowledge base in the art of coaching.

There is a great article attached from the USOC that discusses coach characteristics and qualities. It is entitled "**Gaining and Maintaining Credibility**" I hope you read it and if you are so inclined, send me some feedback.

Why is so hard to understand?

I recently had the occasion to visit with a couple boys who were on a pee wee A this last year. I knew they had a so so season in the win loss category, and I asked them about their season and if they had fun. Both of them said they did not have a good season and it was not fun. I suspected it was because their team had not won many games, but I continued my search and asked them why they felt it was not fun. Both said it was because they very rarely got to play in games. Shocked, I again asked why. The answer was simple; "We were first year players and they hardly ever get to play on the A team." My head was spinning. We know that kids would rather play on a .500 team and play rather than play on a championship team and sit on the bench. What possesses coaches to keep kids sitting on the bench? The reality is that the kids just want to play. In this case the team had a losing record and some of the kids did not get to play. It is no wonder that so many kids quit playing after pee wees.

I was also informed that a group of parents of a winning pee wee team requested that the coaches quit playing the third line once the play offs began. The theory was that the third line was preventing the team from winning the big games. In this instance the coaches refused the request and the team had a great run through play offs. Kudos to the coaching staff.

A casual conversation at the pee wee B Regionals with a parent from another team pointed out to me that one of the teams in the tournament plays the first line more than 50% of the game. The third line saw very limited duty. This had occurred all season. I had the opportunity to watch the team in question and the parent was right on the money. This type of coach behavior is very detrimental to all the players and uncalled for in youth hockey. It is time for associations and parents to put a stop to this unfair treatment of kids.

Two years ago when I agreed to coach a pee wee B team I decided that we would focus on skills and having fun. That meant a 2-1 practice to game ratio and only 30 games. We also decided that we would not have captains and that we would rotate the lines equally regardless of the game situation. We did this for the past two years with the result of the players and parents all having a great experience and lots of fun. Gone was the bickering, jealousies, and unhappiness that seems to lurk on the edge of so many teams. Both teams were a pleasure to coach and the boys all had a great time. Both teams have very successful seasons. Check out the article about a group of pee wees from Canada, "[**A Great Idea.**](#)"

Game Limits: A year ago the twelve District Coaches in Chiefs recommended to the Minnesota Hockey Board that game limits be imposed for Bantams, pee wees and squirts. It was noted that squirts are allowed 35 games and the group agreed that was too many. The thought was that squirts play 20 games, pee wees 30 and bantams 40 games. Regional and state tournament games would be extra and allowed. Corresponding to the games was the recommendation of a 3-1 practice to game ratio for squirts, and a minimum of 2-1 for pee wees and bantams. If you have any thoughts about this please go to the Minnesota Hockey website, www.minnesotahockey.org and register your opinion on the current poll. We really want your opinion on the matter.

Great Report: Each level up for players requires an adjustment but perhaps none more than squirts to pee wees. Barry Froemming from Elk River Youth Hockey took an in depth look at this issue for his USA Hockey Level 5 Masters Thesis. It is very well thought out, researched and presented. It is well worth your time to print it off and read through a few times. Thanks to Barry for sharing "[**The Great Transition:Squirt to Pee Wee Hockey**](#)".

If you have any topics you want addressed or would like to write an article for this newsletter please send them to me at halt@minnesotahockey.org

The Minnesota Youth Hockey Coaches Association has doubled its membership roster to 2 members. Actually, I consider all registered coaches in the state to be members. The mission is to make the game better for the kids and to improve the level of coaching across the state. I have some ideas about how to accomplish this mission; I would like to hear ideas from you.

See you at the rink,

Hal Tearse
Minnesota Hockey Coach in Chief
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