

## Impact of the Coach

*"I have come to a frightening conclusion;  
I am a decisive element on the ice.  
My personal approach creates the climate.  
My mood makes the weather.  
As the coach, I possess tremendous power to make my players'  
lives miserable or joyous.  
I can be the tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration; I  
can humiliate, humor, hurt or heal.  
In all situations, my response decides whether a crisis will escalate or de-  
escalate and a player humanized or de-humanize."*

The above adaptation from Dr. Hiam Ginott was originally written with classroom teachers in mind. Since we all agree that coaches are in fact teachers, and regardless of age classifications, we are trying to teach our players how to become better at the game of hockey. Often it is not what the coach knows; it is what the players have learned. Can coaches transfer their knowledge to their players?

Research has indicated that players retain information based on following methods:

- 5% of what they **HEAR**
- 25% of what they **SEE**
- 75%** of what they **DO**
- 90%** of what they **TEACH**

The most effective coaches spend a minimal time talking, allowing their players to learn and develop by doing. Obviously, we will spend time teaching fundamental skill techniques such as skating, puck handling, passing and shooting. Without a proper foundation, the players' development will be limited. Allow the players to practice proper techniques at a slow comfortable speed to insure correctness before you ratchet up the speed. Practicing poor technique fast only insures that the player will become bad quickly.

Research has shown that those players that learned and developed by doing and experimenting have had far more success. Players that do not fear making mistakes during their development have stretched their skill level outside their comfort zone. Too often, the habits that players develop in becoming good enough (comfortable) are the same conservative habits that keep them from becoming great (paraphrased from Tiger Woods).

Practicing with a purpose should be paramount in developing your practice plans. I cannot emphasize enough the use of competitive drill situations that cause players to think and make decisions. Drills should be competitive, have outcomes and consequences. Too many practices are strictly physical; the players follow strict drill patterns as mapped out by the coach. The drills have no options and the players just follow the specific drill pattern as designed by the coach. The game is arguably 85% mental and only 15% physical, yet many of our practices are just the reverse.

### **SMALL GAMES WITH A PURPOSE**

Effective coaches have developed a philosophy and established objectives. These may be modified or even changed as the season progresses. It is important that your players and when appropriate the parents know your philosophy and objectives. I believe the coach does not have to be liked by his/her players. The coach is an authority figure and often must be firm and exercise that authority. However, effective coaches have their players' respect and trust. The most effective coaches are consistent and treat all their players fairly.

Treat all your players, as you would want a coach to treat your own children. At the youth levels, you should hold a pre-season, mid-season, and an end- season parent meeting. Be transparent in your expectations, philosophy, and objectives. I have often used this phrase when talking to parents – “You love them and I will coach them”.

Have fun enjoy your season – What you see is what you coached.

Submitted by  
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