



High Performance Player Development  
Mike Sullivan – Head Coach Pittsburgh Penguins  
(Pertains to 12 year and older player)



### Qualities of the High Performance Player

- Characteristics
  - Competitive Spirit – this is the essential foundation of the top players
  - Functional Intelligence – game sense, hockey sense
  - Puck Possession skills
  - Speed of foot and thought – physical speed & mental quickness
- Competitive Spirit
  - Next play effort – no quit – does not give up on play/game
  - Wins 1 vs. 1 battles
  - Strong wall and net front play
  - Play without the puck – back check
  - Does thankless jobs – plays for the team
- Functional Intelligence
  - Game Sense – Hockey Sense
  - Good decisions with and without the puck
  - Situational Awareness – “chunking” - identifies various elements of the game, groups them into a meaningful framework and responds accordingly. Read & React skill
  - Disciplined
- Puck Possession Skills
  - Puck handling
  - Puck protection
  - Passing & Receiving
  - Shooting – accuracy, quickness
- Speed
  - Skating – Agility
  - Recognition
  - Awareness

Definition of Development – A commitment to the long term growth and development of the individual player. There is development of the player, the team and even the coach.

- Eliciting of hidden skills and hidden potential
- Bring out natural talents

Style of play has a strong influence of development.

“You will become clever through your mistakes” - German Proverb

Deep Practice Concepts from ***Talent Code*** by Daniel Coyle

- Identify the comfort Zone – target the struggle – push the player just beyond current abilities
- Development occurs when a player operates beyond current ability

- Struggle is not an option – operate at edge of ability. Mistakes make you better/stronger

**Sports Gene** by Dave Epstein - recommended read

#### Coaching Methods Impact Player Development

- Flexible skill circuits vs. consistent skill circuits
- Game becomes the teacher
  - Learning to walk example – observation, trying, learn from failure, wobble to run
  - Non Conscious learning – learn by doing
  - Activity becomes the teacher
- Bottom – Up Method – Early Success
  - Part to Whole
  - Isolation of Skill
  - Progressions
  - Instant feedback
  - False environment in practice
- Top Down Method – Long Term Success
  - Conceptual
  - Competitive drills
  - Emphasis on decision making
  - Random
  - Variable
  - Delayed feedback

“The best teacher/coach is one who makes himself progressively unnecessary” - Thom Caruthers