

Dear Coaches:

First, I would like to thank you for volunteering to coach for SFYHA. You have volunteered to help shape these young players in life and on the ice. I look forward to working with you this season and look forward to making this a great season for all of our players. It is imperative that we establish a strong foundation of skills for these young players as we try to build upon them in the years to come. Our commitment to each player is to give them the tools to play at the level their desire and ability allow them to play.

### **Coaching Philosophy:**

**We will emphasize individual skill development (ISD) at the peewee and bantam levels, while introducing team concepts at the same time.** We want every player to improve his individual skills at these levels throughout the season while at the same time having fun and enjoying the game. Skills to be developed at this level include: skating, shooting, passing, stick handling, and puck protection. The team concepts players should be familiar with are offensive, defensive, and special teams. **Winning is not the most important goal.** It should be understood that the team with the highest level of individual skill wins and highest ability to execute tactically usually wins. I have yet to see a coach a win or lose a game at the mite/squirt level based upon decisions made on the bench.

### **Goals:**

Our primary goal at the pw/bantams level is for each player to improve their individual skills while also learning and mastering team concepts. This book is loaded with concepts and ideas. We want to measure the development of the players by testing their individual skills at the beginning of the season and at the end of the season. Please design your practices with this in mind. It is very important that the players have fun. As a coach, you a lot of influence on their initial hockey experience, so let's make it a positive one.

### **Practice vs. Games:**

With these goals in mind, practice is way more important than games. Players improve their skills during practice, not games. Games are where players have the opportunity to showcase what they have learned in practice. Focus on individual skill development drills at practice. Better than 95% of our practices at this level should be ISD oriented. They need lots of quality repetitions and feedback with attention to detail to develop.

At this age, team concepts should be more advanced and game realistic than at the squirt level. Remember, if they can't skate or stickhandle it will make any concept/system impossible to execute. At this level you can teach them breakouts, regroup/counter, offensive/defensive tactics, and special teams. Most importantly, get them to understand the ideas of outnumbering, support, and working with their teammates towards a common goal.

If you need help with practice plans or ideas for practice do not hesitate to contact me.

### **Communication:**

One of the keys to a successful season is communication! This includes parents and players. Every team is required to have a preseason meeting with parents-see sample itinerary in the coaching guide.

Thank you again for your time helping shape our players.

-Dan Houck, Director of Coaching