



ROLE OF THE COACH

ROLE OF THE COACH

In order to run a successful hockey program, the Coach must be prepared to fill various roles and accept many responsibilities. Coaching is much more than simply teaching the basic skills of hockey. You do not usually realize how much there is to coaching until you become involved in it! If you have the commitment to be an effective coach, you will have the motivation to make the time to do all that is necessary to be effective at coaching.

Chapter Overview:

- identify, and understand the specific roles of the coach as a;
 - Leader, by appreciating the influence you have on athletes
 - Teacher, realizing the importance of teaching athletes
 - Organizer, by recognizing the value of an organized program

The Roles of the Coach

Coaches can have a great influence on their athletes. The type and amount of influence you will have on your players is determined by your personal skills. You significantly affect your athletes' motivation to achieve and the enjoyment they receive from participation in hockey. Mutual respect for each other and the longer you are together with your players will increase the influence you have on them.

The three major roles of the coach are:

- The Coach as a Leader
- The Coach as a Teacher
- The Coach as an Organiser

To have a positive and lasting impact on the athletes you coach, you need to be effective as a leader, teacher, and organiser; encourage and support your players; coach enthusiastically, and express genuine concern for the athletes' total well-being.

Your athletes' decisions about long-term participation in hockey are largely determined by the type of impact you have on them. Your role becomes more important when you consider that the influence you have on your players extends well beyond the contact you have with them in the hockey environment.

The Coach as a Leader

An important role of the coach is to be an effective leader. As a leader the coach must be able to:

Establish Seasonal Goals and Objectives:

Start by suggesting five or six general goals that you want your athletes to be able to achieve by the end of the season. These goals should reflect your league's philosophy, and should be consistent with the general goals. For example general goals could be: The players will be able to demonstrate 1) basic hockey skills necessary to participate in practices and games at a level appropriate for their age, ability, and maturity; 2) sportsmanship in practices and games.

After having established the general goals, it is then necessary to more specifically define each goal, keeping in mind what your athletes will need to learn in order to achieve the goal. For example, under goal number 2, sportsmanship, there could be listed such objectives as; a) demonstrate respect for referees, opponents, teammates, coaches, and parents; b) use of appropriate language; c) control of emotions; and d) play by the rules.

Other examples of specific observable and measurable goals could include the following: a) to be able to skate well both forwards and backwards; b) to be able to change from forward skating to backward skating and vice-versa; c) to increase the number of positive comments given to each other; and d) to reduce the number of penalties received in a game.

The examples given illustrate that goals are set both in skill performance areas and behavioural areas. Be sure to receive input and feedback from assistant coaches, players, and parents on the goals you have suggested. The players will show a greater commitment to achieving the goals if they participated in the setting of them.

Set both short and long-term goals. The attainment of short-term goals provides feedback of improvement to the athletes and charts progress toward the attainment of an ultimate long-term goal. Also, remember that the goals you and your athletes set should be challenging but realistically attainable.

Use a Democratic Coaching Style

The goals you want your athletes to achieve are expressed through your coaching style and behaviours. Most coaches will indicate the following goals in the prioritized order given: a) to assist athletes to develop physically (e.g., to learn basic hockey skills), psychologically (e.g., to develop positive self-images), and socially (e.g., to learn to cooperate with each other in practices and games); b) to have fun; and c) to win.

How do you prioritize the goals? How important is winning to you? Does your coaching behaviour reflect your priority of goals? If winning is the least important to you of the three goals, then be sure to behave in a manner which shows that the athletes' development and having fun are more important than winning. Striving to win provides healthy competition, provided the proper significance is placed on the winning. To keep winning in the proper perspective will allow for the optimal development of your players while having fun.

A democratic coaching style is most appropriate in achieving these goals. Coaches who use this style understand their responsibilities in providing leadership and direction to their athletes while allowing the athletes the opportunity to share in the decision-making and responsibilities.

Using a democratic coaching style does not mean that the athletes have input on all the decisions made. It is necessary for you to provide an appropriate amount of structure and rules to allow for the optimal total development of your athletes. In so doing, you give direction and make decisions when it is necessary, but you also realize when it is more beneficial to let the athletes make the decisions and take the responsibilities.

If you provide too much structure, an autocratic coaching style will become your dominant coaching style and will result in decreasing the satisfaction athletes could receive from their participation. Providing just the right amount of structure that is optimal for the athletes you coach is the objective of the democratic coaching style.

Using a democratic coaching style will enhance your players' abilities to make decisions and become responsible, independent adults. A democratic coach places more trust in the abilities of the players, which has a very positive effect on their self-images. As well, this coaching style improves communication between the players and the coach and improves the motivation of the athletes to achieve and feel more personally satisfied with their participation.

Provide an Appropriate Role Model from Whom Your Players can Learn

You are a very significant role model for the athletes you coach. Set an example that is desirable for your players to follow. For example, demonstrate a healthy lifestyle with respect to physical fitness and the use of alcohol.



Develop Leadership Abilities in Your Athletes

Athletes deserve the right to share in the decision-making of their participation in hockey. Along with the right to make decisions comes responsibility. Allow your players to take responsibilities for their participation. For example, let your athletes run parts of the warm-ups and design new drills. Under your leadership, your players will develop into individuals who will accept themselves, others, and responsibilities.

Establish a Positive Relationship with the On-Ice Officials

You demonstrate leadership to your players by establishing a positive, respectful relationship with officials. The coach should be a model of sportsmanship toward referees. The coach's behaviour should demonstrate to the athletes the proper behaviour they should have toward the officials. As well, through the coach's behaviour the players should become aware of the necessary role of officials in hockey to make the game fair and more enjoyable for the players.

Deal Effectively with Well-Meaning but Difficult to Handle Parents

Parents sometimes place unrealistic expectations on their children and the coach. Remind parents that hockey is only part of their children's lives and that it needs to be kept in the proper perspective. Parents need to be reminded that the game is for the players, not the parents. Be sure you explain to the parents the goals and objectives of your program and encourage them to provide positive support to the players in their striving to achieve the goals. Through meetings and discussions with parents, the coach should be able to effectively handle problems that arise with parents.

Demonstrate a Sincere Interest in Helping Athletes to Maximize their Potential

Your enthusiasm as a coach will encourage your players to improve their skills. Athletes deserve to have a qualified, sensitive leader who has a genuine concern for their development.

The Coach as a Teacher

Being an effective teacher is an important role of the coach. As a teacher the coach must be able to:

Teach the Necessary Hockey Skills

Being skilled in hockey does not mean that you can teach the skills well, although it is beneficial to be able to perform the skills you will be teaching. You need to be knowledgeable in the skills, rules, and strategies of the game to be able to teach them. Teaching is a skill that needs to be learned. As a teacher, you should always be learning how to improve on this important skill. As effective communication is necessary to becoming a good teacher, you may wish to review the chapter entitled "Communicate with Players." As an effective teacher, you will enhance the enjoyment your athletes receive from learning new skills.

Teach Skills Using the Proper Sequences and Progressions

Develop a list of the skills to be taught and identify the order in which they should be taught. Basic skills (e.g., skating, passing, shooting) should be taught first. Not all basic skills are easy to learn. The most fundamental skill in hockey is skating but it is a difficult skill to learn well. After teaching the basic skills, the remaining skills should then be taught in the order of simple (e.g., back-checking) to more complex (e.g., positional and team play).

Each skill should be taught using the correct progression. Your athletes will have less risk of injury and frustration if skills are taught properly. Teaching skills using the proper sequences and progressions will enhance learning by your players and will be more enjoyable for you and your athletes. More specific and detailed information on how to teach hockey skills is presented in the chapter entitled "Demonstrate Proper Use of Teaching Techniques"

Teach Skills Using Understandable Language

Remember the age and skill level of your athletes when teaching skills. Use language that is easily understood by all your players. Use simple key words to reinforce the main points of a skill. Take no more than three minutes to demonstrate and explain the total skill. Make use of appropriate audio-visual materials to supplement your explanation and demonstration.

Understand that Athletes Differ in their Readiness to Learn a Skill

The athlete's prior experiences and level of maturation affect the athlete's readiness to learn a skill. All athletes are not ready to learn the same skill at the same age. Carefully evaluate the skill levels of your athletes to be able to select those skills which your players are ready to learn.

Understand that Athletes Acquire Skills at Different Degrees

Your athletes will learn different levels of skills in one season. Athletes differ in their abilities to comprehend the information. Try to individualize your teaching to account for differences among your athletes. Provide time at each practice for athletes to work on those skills in which they are weakest.

Teach More than Just Hockey Skills

Participation in sport provides a tremendous opportunity for athletes to learn many more skills than just those necessary to play hockey. Through playing hockey, athletes can learn physical, psychological, and sociological skills necessary for everyday life. Players will respect your ability to teach them other skills (e.g., sportsmanship, emotional control) from the respect you have earned from them by your ability to teach them hockey skills.



The Coach as an Organizer

An important role of the coach is to be an effective organizer. As an organizer, the coach must be able to:

Plan Effective Practices

Schedule your goals and objectives into the practices for the season. Practices should provide athletes with an opportunity to maximize their learning in a fun and safe environment. Practices need to be well-organized to make effective use of practice time. Maximize the activity of your players while making the best possible use of the ice surface. Do not always view the ice as one large area but divide it into sections using the markings that are already present on the ice surface. This will allow you to have a number of drills going at the same time. For example, you can divide the ice into stations with separate groups of players simultaneously taking shots on your goalkeeper, practising backward skating, and scrimmaging across-ice. This will allow you to efficiently utilize the ice surface, your assistant coaches, and also to have most of your players active at any one time.

Rotate by groups of players from one drill to another so that each group can receive instruction and practice in each drill (if appropriate). This will maintain the athletes' interest in the drills, especially when running two to three drills simultaneously. Individual instruction can also be readily given with this ice set-up as the coach can easily move from group to group and work with players who need individual attention.

Select Assistant Coaches who will Provide Maximum Benefit to Yourself and Your Players

Select your assistant coaches carefully. They will reflect you and your hockey program. Your assistant coaches should have a coaching philosophy and style that is consistent with yours. Select your assistants on the basis of skills they possess which will complement your skills. Look for assistant coaches who are knowledgeable in hockey, good teachers, possess good communication skills, demonstrate leadership, and show enthusiasm. It is also important to select individuals with whom you enjoy working.

Plan your goals and objectives and practices with your assistant coaches. Assign each of your assistants specific responsibilities for practices and games. Review practice plans with your assistants so everyone clearly knows their responsibilities. Selecting assistant coaches who are effective teachers, well-organized and prepared for the practices will most benefit the players.

Seek the Assistance of the Parents of your Players in Running the Activities of Your Program

Parents can be of invaluable assistance to you in your program. They can be used to organize car pools for practices and games, carry out fundraising activities, arrange team socials, and take statistics at games. Your time is at a premium. Letting others assist you means more time for you to commit to your other life activities.



For the Coach:

Using the following chart, evaluate how well you carry out your roles as a leader, teacher, and organizer. For each statement, select the word which best describes you. This chart can be used to assess yourself throughout the season.

	Excellent	Good	Needs Improvement
Leader			
1 Establish goals			
2 Use a democratic coaching style			
3 Am a good role model			
4 Develop leadership skills in my athletes			
5 Have a positive relationship with referees			
6 Interact effectively with parents			
7 Help athletes maximize their potential			
Teacher			
1 Teach the necessary hockey skills			
2 Teach skills using the proper sequence and progression			
3 Teach skills using understandable language			
4 Realize athletes learn skills at different rates			
5 Teach more than just hockey skills			
6 Teach more than just hockey skills			
Organizer			
1 Plan effective practices			
2 Select very good assistant coaches			
3 Have parents assist in the program			