

Practice Planning Considerations

THE PRACTICE CHEF

There are 10 key ingredients a coach should mix into practices. Collectively, these lead to enjoyment and learning for both players and coaches.

1. Coaches should have a minimum of 50 pucks in their basket.
2. Coaches set the standard for being on time, all of the time. Educate parents and players on the importance of being on time.
3. Don't waste ice time stretching. Stretching should be performed in the dressing room prior to the ice time.
4. The use of stations for the development of skills and individual tactics are the bread and butter of practices. Stations keep participants active enabling them to achieve high levels of repetition. Have players spend 3-8 minutes per station before switching. Two to three stations are recommended.
5. Basic skill development (skating, puck control, passing, shooting) should compromise 90% of your practice time. Remember, you can work on basic skills in game-like drills. Skill development does not have to be boring.
6. Positive and specific feedback is imperative. Consider a head coach who always stands at center ice and never provides feedback to his players. How often during the practice is the coach able to reinforce something a player is doing correctly or provide constructive feedback? Teaching is done in the trenches (corners, lines).
7. Routines in practice are dangerous as players will pace themselves and become bored very quickly. In essence, routine practices develop great players at half-speed.
8. "Tell me, I'll forget. Show me, I might remember. Involve me, I'll understand."
9. Practice execution by coaches is of principle importance. Great drills that aren't executed properly by coaches are useless. Execution involves using all staff on the ice, having pucks spotted in the proper areas, informing players of the whistle sequence (1st whistle begin, 2nd whistle stop, 3rd whistle begins next group) and providing appropriate feedback. To assist in practice execution, name your drills ie. "Killer Bees"
10. Relate what you do in practices to games and vice versa. "Players, we are doing this drill because in our last game we were unable to finish around the net." or "This drill will assist you in keeping your stick and body away from the checker and in an effective scoring position."