

Minnesota Hockey Set To Launch **HOCKEY EDUCATION PROGRAM**

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Are you tired of players, parents, coaches and fans who are out of control, focused only on winning and standing by the boards with a stopwatch?

Do you see players “acting out in an un-sportsmanlike manner” and hear crazed fans instructing players to “run him” or to hit him again?

The former leads to attrition from a game that if played at its best has no equal, while the latter totally embarrasses the vocal parent’s son.

What do you think when you read the names on NHL rosters? Are you surprised to see fewer skilled players from North America when many hockey parents, coaches and players attend (and play) 84 or more games in a youth hockey traveling season?

Minnesota Hockey shares these concerns and believes its Hockey Education Program or HEP (to be implemented in September, 2004) will address these issues and improve the quality of everyone’s hockey experience.

HEP: Born to Play has been developed collaboratively by Minnesota Hockey and the Mayo Clinic Sports Medicine Center with support from the Minnesota Wild. The HEP Committee was formed with a diverse background in mind. Coaching experts, referees, program administrators, researchers and parents are all included on the HEP

Committee. This is important because HEP has had a wide range of varied input and as a result now has the enthusiastic support of the MH Board of Directors and coaching and officiating personnel. USA Hockey Coach-in-Chief Bob O’Connor has shared his wisdom as the program was developed.

Finally, HEP has greatly benefited from the expertise of researchers and practitioners from Mayo Clinic who have performed hockey-related research and who are concerned about not only the hockey stuff, but also the psychosocial aspects of youth sports – the growth and development of children.

WHAT IS HEP?

The HEP Committee, formed over two years ago, has responded to the following challenges:

1. How can we “grow the game” through recruitment of new players and decrease the attrition of current players, coaches and officials?
2. How can we make the game better?
 - A) How can the kids have more fun?
 - B) How can the coaches, officials and parents have more fun?
 - C) How can we improve skill development in Minnesota Hockey?
 - D) How can we implement zero

COACHES

PLAYERS



tolerance for incidents of “sport rage” or acts of violence?

- E) How can all involved develop better sportsmanship and thus become better citizens?

HEP is a three-component program that, we believe, (with your enthusiasm and participation) will address the challenges outlined. The components of HEP are Skill Development, Coaching Excellence and Fair Play and they will be integrated in a seamless manner.

Although there are other



HOCKEY EDUCATION PROGRAM

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built is skill development. Skills are learned, evolve over time and integrate knowledge, dexterity, coordination and competence. Skills can be taught by coaches and can also be learned by players who practice alone (on or off-ice), desiring perfection.

The goal of the HEP skill development component is to teach, measure and have players master a set of age-appropriate skills that build on each other at each level of play.

Many hockey parents and some coaches believe that young players need to play many games and travel long distances to master their hockey skills. Why? It seems that nothing could be farther from the truth.

A USA Hockey-commissioned study, done during the 2002 Olympics, established that even NHL superstars such as Brett Hull and Joe Sakic touched the puck less than one minute during the Gold Medal game. Youth hockey players on average touch the puck for only a few seconds a game. Consider a 45-minute game: take 45 minutes x 60 seconds, which equals 2,700 seconds. Consider that two teams each have 20 players and that each player gets approximately equal playing time. 2,700 seconds divided by 40 players equals 67.5 seconds per player per game. Even that amount of time for each player to possibly have the puck is too

generous, as it does not account for the time the puck spends traveling across the ice. It also assumes each of the 20 players on both teams gets equal playing time – a stretch in many, if not most, cases.

Throughout Europe, teams have a ratio of four to five practices per game, whereas in the USA teams might average two to three games for every practice. The goal of both USA Hockey and Minnesota Hockey is to have a minimum ratio of three practices to one game.

Why sit in a car, drive long distances, burn up fuel, spend money on motels, etc., for a child to touch the puck approximately 60 seconds? Contrast the gain in skill development that occurs during practice when small ice games, such as “keep away,” and age-appropriate drills can have all the kids skating in “over-speed,” carrying the puck, shooting, passing and having fun.

In a properly run practice a player can get a whole season’s worth of puck touches in one practice – now, that’s skill development. To top it all off when practice is over, kids would have time and the desire to play shinny hockey in their driveways, corner rinks and garages – it’s tough to play shinny and develop hockey skills in the backseat of the car.

Suffice it to say that with fewer games and more fun practices, including age-appropriate skill assessment, greater skill

programs around the United States trying to address many of these challenges, HEP was developed specifically to address all of them head-on using the three components of the program. In addition, all three components had strong research to support the effectiveness of each.

THE 3 COMPONENTS OF HEP

1. Skill Development

The first component of the program and the one upon which the remainder of the program is

acquisition will occur. In addition, kids will feel less performance anxiety, they will have fun, and parents, coaches and officials will suffer less time and financial pressures or guilt. Families less strained will have more quality time and resources!

and parents at the HEP Faceoff, Sept 25 at the Xcel Energy Center.

3. Fair Play

The third component of HEP is fair play. This addresses major concerns in youth hockey such as the lack of respect for opponents,

and self-control must be maintained at all times.

3. Coaches and spectators (parents and others) can forfeit their team's Fair Play point if their behavior shows a lack of respect for the game and its participants.

FAIR PLAY points earned can affect a team's standings and influence how teams are seeded into playoffs.

2. Coaching Excellence

The coaching excellence component of HEP will be centered on an education program unique to both coaches and parents that has been researched over 25 years by Dr. Frank Smoll and Dr. Ron Smith at the University of Washington. Their Mastery Approach to Coaching Workshop (MAC) teaches coaches skills to not only develop well-rounded athletes but as importantly to promote good sportsmanship. Research has examined differences in young athletes playing for MAC-trained coaches versus those playing for non-trained coaches. Young athletes playing for MAC coaches show lower levels of attrition from the sport (6% versus 26%), less performance anxiety, higher self-esteem and higher liking for teammates, coaches and the sport. These findings were independent of their team's win/loss record.

The MAC and the Mastery Approach to Parenting in Sports (MAPS), will be offered to both coaches

abuse of officials, inappropriate spectator behavior, on-ice violence, a win-at-all-costs attitude, pressure on players to win and a lack of fun for youth hockey players.

Fair Play was started in 1979, when violence was an inherent part of the game. Gradually, the initial program evolved and subsequently was funded by the Quebec Nordiques (now the Colorado Avalanche). In September of 2003 in Quebec, Canada, Fair Play was implemented to encourage players, coaches, and parents to be respectful on and off the ice and to hold people accountable for their actions. Fair Play does not change the game, but rewards sportsmanship and withholds that reward when appropriate.

As a component of HEP, Fair Play rules ensure that:

1. Players will be respectful on and off the ice of the rules, their opponents, and of the officials and their decisions.
2. All players are to participate,

Games are won and lost based on the number of goals scored or the saves made. A win still earns two points, whereas one Fair Play point will be won by teams who do not break the Fair Play threshold. Both teams are eligible to earn a Fair Play point in every game. Fair Play points earned can affect a team's standings and influence how teams are seeded into playoffs.

Research on the Fair Play program has shown fewer injuries and actually more success when teams play in accordance with Fair Play rules. We are also optimistic that Fair Play will be empowering to officials and help decrease their too-high annual attrition rates.

SUMMARIZING HEP

The vision of the late Ted Brill, who served as Minnesota Hockey's director of player development, was a program to develop skills for young hockey players and to educate parents, coaches and administrators on why and how. He didn't want a simple "parent police" program that would only address the negative behaviors. TR always said, "We have to teach them the proper behaviors before we can do any enforcing." **MHJ**

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