

THE PRO AMBITIONS HOCKEY SUMMER CAMP



TIPS FROM JEFF

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WELCOME TO THE PRO TIPS FROM JEFF BOOKLET

Players and parents,

Welcome to the Pro Tips from Jeff Booklet! This booklet is filled with articles that Jeff Serowik has written for his website and/or various hockey magazines throughout the years. Jeff has based many of these articles on his life experiences in and out of hockey. Each article is filled with invaluable tips and knowledge that Jeff has been exposed to throughout his life in hockey.

At the end of this booklet there is a Q &A page (for thought) with several questions regarding the articles in this booklet that relate to your knowledge and experience of the game. Players and parents are encouraged to go through these articles and then spend a few minutes discussing these topics.

*** Once again these articles and the Q and A page are only for discussion between players and parents. Nothing has to be filled out and brought to camp.**

Jeff and his staff at Pro Ambitions Hockey hopes that you will enjoy these articles and get something new out of each of them. Have a Great rest of your season! And we look forward to seeing you this coming summer at camp!

THE PRO AMBITIONS COMMITMENT

Pro Ambitions Mission Statement

It is the Mission of Pro Ambitions Hockey, Inc to provide each player with... hockey training that will introduce, teach, train, develop and enhance their physical and mental ice hockey skills allowing each player the opportunity to become smarter, stronger, more confident hockey player.

The Pro Ambition Hockey Philosophy

Ice hockey has been referred to as a game of mistakes, which is half correct. More correctly, ice hockey is a game of constant change, transition and adaptation. Players that can transition and adapt to the constant changes are the players that will succeed.

Jeff believes that each and every hockey player can always continue to improve his/her hockey skills by learning and developing their skills through useful, intelligent training methods. The Pro Ambition Hockey camp training curriculum focuses on skill development through game situational drill training. This training curriculum is a fun, yet challenging way for players to learn and develop the ability to adapt their skills to the ever-changing game of ice hockey.

The Pro Ambition's Training Philosophy

Jeff Serowik's training philosophy has always been pretty straight-forward in that the best way to teach and develop ice hockey skills to young players is to make it challenging, yet, "fun". The more exciting the camp and the more fun the players have; the more focused the players will stay and the harder they will try every time. The Pro Ambition Hockey camp curriculum has been designed and developed in just this manner by challenging each player to develop his/her ice hockey skills and confidence with its unique and exciting hockey training curriculum. Another area of training that Jeff strongly believes in is "**Positive Reinforcement**". Players that are more confident in their abilities become not only stronger players, but also more self-confident young people.

Pro Ambitions Summer Ice Hockey Camp Goals

Pro Ambitions Hockey camps are designed to provide each of its campers with a unique and exciting opportunity to learn develop and grow as young hockey players and people. It is the goal of Pro Ambitions Hockey to offer this opportunity to all of it's participants at each and every Pro Ambitions Hockey camp.

The Pro Ambitions Hockey Ice Hockey Training Curriculum

The Pro Ambitions Hockey camp curriculum is a unique and awesome experience for all hockey players. Jeff Serowik has created a system of teaching and training that has evolved over his 35+ years of hockey- from a six-year-old mite, learning to skate, all the way up through the NHL. His unique training program uses a cohesive building block method that uses a compilation of the best teachings/drills that he has come across throughout his career. His copy written training system has been sold to youth hockey organizations nationwide.

Ice Hockey is a game of small battle that is fought throughout the game all over the ice. Every player can/will benefit from this training curriculum that focuses on not only skill development, but on skill adaptation training through Battle/game situational training. The Pro Ambitions Hockey training curriculum places great attention on this area of the game that few other hockey camps really get into and cover, so completely. Therefore those players that can learn to limit their mistakes and rebound quickly from the mistakes they make will become the stronger skilled hockey players/ the better team players, the more complete players.

Jeff Serowik believes that a player will never stop learning from good coaching/instruction at any stage of the game. The Pro ambitions signature camp, "The Battle Camp" was designed by Jeff to encompass the entire realm of the game of ice hockey through game simulated drills that teach both the physical and mental aspects of what we call, "The Small Battles" that are played out throughout the game all over the ice. Pro Ambitions Hockey camps teach players to be mentally as well as physically prepared for these battles. Each player that attends a Pro Ambitions Battle Camp leaves with superior skill understanding and development.

"The Pro Ambitions Hockey is the camp that is often imitated, but has yet to have been duplicated"

WHAT THE PROS ARE TO SAYING ABOUT THE PRO AMBITIONS HOCKEY “BATTLE CAMP”

I love the battle camp concept, great drills and very effective for the kids growth and improvement” As a former NHL player and now a coach at the amateur level, the Pro Ambitions Battle Camp curriculum is hands down the best I have seen. The game of hockey is all about 1 on 1 battles and puck possession. The Pro Ambitions Battle Curriculum drills were designed with this in mind. I have been the lead instructor for 4 Pro ABC camps and have seen each and every kid improve after just one week. The kids learn the skills necessary to play on both sides of the puck (offence & defense). I am a strong believer in Jeff’s methodologies and trust that Jeff will continue to challenge players of all ages.

Tony Amonte

Former NHL Star

“I have attended many camps in my day, but Jeff and his staff are truly professionals and some of the best teachers of the game I have seen.”

Bobby Orr

Boston Bruin Legend

Hall of Famer

“Jeff, I can't wait to send my kids to your camps. What a great experience these kids are getting. Too bad there was not a hockey instruction outfit like yours back in our day!”

Jeremy Roenick

Former NHLStar

My kids and I have been involved with Pro Ambitions Hockey for 7 years now and they continue to put out the best coaching/drills year after year blowing away any other camps we have attended. My kids look forward to these camps every summer and really improve.

Joe Sacco

Colorado Avalanche Head Coach

Former NHL Star

My kids and team love attending the battle camps. Great drills, lots of fun and always seems to challenge the kids. The kids are always moving and get great skill development.

Scott Young

Former NHL Star

“Pro Ambitions has an outstanding reputation and does a great job training the kids. Keep up the great work”

Marty McInni

Former NHL Star

“What impressed me most about your camps which my son attended (2 weeks) was the game situation drills you teach. Everyone needs to attend a battle camp at any age because it's the meat and potatoes of what the game of hockey is whether your in the NHL or a mite player. Your angling drills, puck protection, pinning, timing, shooting drills under pressure, all skill drills and battle drills were fun, very creative and I saw big improvement each day in my son.

Bob Halkidis

Former NHL star and teammate of Jeff

Hi Jeff, I just wanted you to know my kids had a great time at your camp. I really enjoyed the format and how the kids stayed moving. I couldn't believe how much Ryan (forward) picked up on all the body position techniques. If your in NY again we will be back. Thanks!

P.S. I bought your video and incorporated a few of the drills in my mini camp.

Scott Gordon

Former Head coach of the NY Islanders

Former NHL Goaltender

Jeff, My son has attended several of your camps the last couple years and always looks forward to coming back. Your camps are fun, challenging and non stop action with great instructors who truly care about each player.

Brian Leetch

Hall of Fame Defenseman

Former All-Star Defenseman

“From what I've seen, Pro Ambitions camps are among the best hockey camps offered anywhere. The combination of a well-designed curriculum with a knowledgeable and experienced staff gives young hockey players the tools and training they need in order to prepare and achieve at their next level. I've worked at several Pro Ambitions camps and feel good knowing the camps always deliver on their promise.”

Tom Chorske

11 year NHL Vet

“Love the Battle camp and curriculum. The kids work hard, have fun and at the end of the day go home with great tools to utilize during their season.”

Tom Fitzgerald

18 Year NHL Vet

Pro Ambitions is one of the best programs I have seen in the NY/NJ area. The Battle Camps are great, my son loves to attend as many as he can. Great job boys!!

John Madden

NJ Devils, NHL

HOCKEY IS A GAME OF BATTLES

One-on-ones, Two-on-ones, Three-on-twos ... Players that can win battles will ultimately help bring a win for their team. Jeff Serowik, owner and director of Pro Ambitions Hockey, Inc. has patented this concept camp curriculum that has the hockey camp business taking notice nationwide.

Jeff Serowik, a former NHL'er, ended his pro career in 2000 due to a severe concussion while playing for the Pittsburgh Penguins. Drafted by the Toronto Maple Leafs while playing for a New England prep school, is when he started mentally cataloging drills that would later end up in his own coaching curriculum of today. He does not want parents and players to shy away from the word battle. This is the game. He focuses on teaching young players how to win battles safely and effectively. Pro Ambitions Hockey, Inc. is celebrating its sixteenth year anniversary in the camp business.

ONE ON ONE BATTLE IN A DANGEROUS AREA (Along the Boards)

You Are Approaching The Puck...

COLLIDE AND RIDE - two players after the puck. Use strategy. Calculatingly collide into your opponent as you are nearing puck, ride in with him together and prepare to get puck during this entire encounter.

PEARL HARBOR ATTACK - this is a surprise attack. Get to the puck first, transfer your body weight onto your back leg and lean back into him/her for a clean hit coming from your back or butt. This will take your opponent off guard and distract-now make a clean get away with puck.

HEAD FAKES AND ANGLES - obviously good players get to the puck first but let's get smarter. Let's strategize here! Head fakes and Angles. Start practicing this at a young age. Opponent coming in on you-head and/or shoulder fake, and angle your body in to the puck-it is safer and harder to anticipate.

BUTTS AND MUGS - When your opponent has the puck and his butt is facing you, you should be in attack mode. Take away his/her time and space. Your nemesis can not see you - this is your advantage. Pinch into the boards on an angle - don't hit from behind. Remember the heads up program, hit safely but effectively, never from behind. Get the hands and stick. Force away from your net, destroy opponents offensive capabilities - DISTURB! When the mug is facing you - be in containing mode. Come in cautiously on an angle. Get Low. Stabilize your core. Stick on puck and dictate where your opponent goes by positioning of your body and stick. The checker is always in charge.

- 5. GRIT AND DETERMINATION** - The puck is the golden ticket. It is a life or death battle to maintain possession of the puck. Every second you have the puck is a second closer to scoring and keeping the other team off the scoreboard. The best players possess the puck. Stay low and strong on your stick. Get gritty and hungry and take pride in the puck. Suggestions: push ups, wrist gripper device (always with you, all day) and squats. You need to build the strength in your arms and legs- no way around it, you have to be strong!

AREAS WE INSTILL INTO EACH AND EVERY CAMP

My name is Jeff Serowik, owner/President of Pro Ambitions Hockey, Inc and former NHL and 10 years Pro Player. I was very fortunate to play over 750 games pro as well as attend Providence College and Lawrence Academy Prep School. I always tell my students that I wasn't the best player on the team each year. In fact I played on the B team many times and were over looked on numerous all star teams and travel teams growing up.

I played hockey because I loved it and always promised my parents that as long as they supported me and drove me to the rink each day that I would be able to look in the mirror every time I got off the ice and say "I gave everything I had on the ice that particular day". I always felt that there was no substitute for hard work. All kids can skate fast and shoot hard but I realized that hard work, perseverance and determination got you to the next level.

I shot 500 pucks every single day for 10 years of my life. I even shot pucks every summer in my off-season as a Professional player. I was a huge fan of flexibility, weight training, conditioning, boxing, karate, mental conditioning, whatever it took to help me improve my game and make me better than the guy next to me.

I was also a very selfless teammate. I wanted my teammates to do well, and wanted my defense partner to do well because that means we would all have success as a team, which would make me a better player.

I was very vocal on and off the ice and worked hard to please my coaches. I always took any advice coaches would give me as constructive criticism and a great learning tool to better myself as a player.

I have been screamed at, berated, belittled, embarrassed and told I would never make it to the next level by certain coaches. But I would shake it off and keep going forward because I believed in myself and I loved the game and nothing was going to get in the way of that.

Each day when I wake up I say "what can I do to better myself as a player and person" and that is how I live my life. Have fun, work hard and do the little things necessary to bring your game to the next level.

GROWING UP HOCKEY!

After completing a busy summer with over 2000 campers and talking with many of the parents; it dawned on me how passionate we all are about this game. We are all affected one way or another by the emotional ups and downs that come with winning, losing, with team selection and player placement. It was not just talent that enabled me to play hockey at a prep school, in college, and for the pros. There is a lot more to the recipe of building a successful athlete. I want to share some thoughts and a few helpful tips on this crazy game. These were integral parts of my development as a player and person. I hope they will help you as hockey players and parents. Here's some of it:

Embedded Work Ethic:

Discipline and a sense of responsibility are vital in anything you do in life. Kids need responsibilities outside of hockey that will help them throughout their lives. There was not a day growing up that I didn't have at least a half-hour of chores to do around my house. It wasn't an option, - whether it was stacking a cord of wood, cooking dinner, washing the dishes, cleaning my room, or sweeping out the garage. My parents both worked. If I wanted to play the game I loved, I had to carry my share of the family load. I also worked full time in the summers from age fourteen. My dad always taught me to look in the mirror at the end of the day knowing I did everything I could do to improve, both as a person, and as an athlete.

Learning:

Hockey is much more than skating skills and brute force. It's a constant learning process. Emphasize education with your kids, so if they are someday drafted into the NHL, they'll have a solid education to deal with that high-pressure life. And they'll also need a solid education to have a worthwhile life after the NHL. And if the NHL isn't in your kid's future, - that good education will help him/her buy NHL tickets. I am pleasantly surprised how well my campers are doing in school. This is a testament to the values instilled by their parents. Kids also need to be "students of the game". I used to study Bruins games. I focused on every shift of my favorite player, Ray Bourque. I'd analyze every shift he played and I tried to emulate his moves, his demeanor, and his calmness in my own game. I learned a lot just by watching him. Brains win games!

Persevering:

My folks said if I wanted to start something, whether it was sports or Cub Scouts, I was to give it everything I had. They always taught me to be my own person, an independent thinker, to not simply follow the pied piper. And they insisted that once I started something I had to finish it! If I wasn't happy on a particular team or in my class at school, they wouldn't pull me out and take me to another program. I had to figure out a way to get through that situation, whether it was communicating with the coach or the teacher, or to work my way through it with extra help or extra work off the ice. They were really preparing me for adult life.

GROWING UP HOCKEY!

(Continued)

Support:

My immediate family, my parents then, - and now my wife and my kids, were and are my biggest supporters through thick and thin. Growing up I was a good hockey player, but not great one, - so I had many hurdles to overcome. I worked hard for every break I ever got in this game on and off ice. I remember the discouragement of not making the A team or not making the USA Select teams. I remember not being named the captain, and not being invited over the most popular kid's house for a sleep over. Today as I watch young players with their parents, I still quietly thank my folks for helping me deal with those disappointments. Thanks Mom, - Thanks Dad!

Adversity:

If hockey were an easy game, everybody would play it, - and no one would bother to watch. But it's a tough game about overcoming adversity. You make your own breaks, so when something goes wrong, - take the blame and find a way to fix it. Even in the pros, there are some players who are quick to blame their line mates, their coach, or whoever is handy for their own failures. They should look in a mirror. Players need to learn to "own it". This means accepting a mistake, learning from it, and being a better person because of it.

I was always marveled at how well Ray Bourque bounced back from mistakes. Yes, even one of the greatest defenseman made his share of mistakes. It's how he reacted to the mistakes and how he was always able to recover and not allow it happen again. That's one of those intangibles that made him such a great player. He never lost confidence in his ability. He always wanted to make up for any mistake and he always did.

When someone beats you 1-to-1 and they score on you, don't bang your stick and show weakness. Skate smartly back to the face-off circle like nothing happened and tell yourself there is nothing you can do to bring back that mistake. But you can finish a great shift. Let's get real; - you just got scored on. Big deal! Someone just gave you a free hockey lesson! Figure out how they did it and go do it to their goalie.

Appreciation:

Learn to enjoy this wonderful game on and off the ice. In my hockey career I have met so many great fans, teammates, coaches, parents and campers. It's really all of these people who give me my greatest memories at the end of the day. So get to know your teammates and their folks. Show genuine interest in them. After all you spend the greater portion of seven months with them. Thank your coaches, your teachers, and above all your parents. Let them know that you understand and appreciate the tremendous financial sacrifice and the huge investment of their lives they are making to let you enjoy this great game.

FINDING THE RIGHT ORGANIZATION AND TRYOUTS

It's that time of the year again... the end of another season or the beginning of your child's very first season of organized hockey. What do you and your child need to know and/or should look for when looking at youth hockey organizations and their programs. Here's a little advice that might be helpful in making that very important decision for your hockey player in the upcoming season.

Coaching, Coaching, and Coaching!

Obviously the most important factor, since you're entrusting your son/ daughter in this person's care for an entire season. Make sure you know who the coach is and what his / her credentials are. Have they coached before? Have they worked with kids before? Do they have a son / daughter on the team? What is their history with winning / losing and with allocating playing time for each kid? [As you know, many coaches' kids get the benefit of the doubt]. How do they communicate with the kids / parents / other coaches? Is he a positive or negative person? A screamer? Will he instill confidence in your athlete? These are very important years in your kid's life, and I strongly believe that confidence and feeling good about yourself are most important. Do the kids have fun in practice? Do they respect the coach?

Do your homework:

This will require both checking out a practice this year [before try outs] to see what your are getting yourself into, and using the hockey contacts you have to learn what kind of person this coach is. Ask questions of current teammates, and other hockey families.

Don't be afraid to call a coach:

Ask as many questions as necessary to get a good feel for his style and coaching techniques. A coach who is a caring, legitimate person will take time to talk with you and share perspectives.

Selecting a league:

Will it be too challenging or not challenging enough? What is the general consensus of how the league is run? Is it well organized? Is ice available on a routine basis? Do games get cancelled because of scheduling snafus? Can we afford it? How far will we have to travel?

Development: Absolutely a necessity with the kids. How many practices and skill sessions will the kids receive? Are they full ice, half ice, or shared practices?

Skill sessions:

This is a great time for the kids to work on individual areas to improve their game. Whether it is the skating stride, quickness, passing, shooting, or conditioning. Does the program offer this? I believe kids should have 3 practices to every 2 games.

FINDING THE RIGHT ORGANIZATION AND TRYOUT (continued)

Practices: If run properly are the most important tool to get your player to the next level. In a game kids touch the puck maybe 2 minutes total. [As a point of reference, Jaromir Jagr of the Washington Capitals touches the puck an average of just 1.5 minutes per game].

Does the organization offer a curriculum for the coaches to follow? Is it overseen by anyone? Are the officers listed and available? Do coaches have to answer to anyone? It's nice to have an independent person to give perspective once in a while.

Cost: What is the cost and what am I getting for my money? Many organizations have hidden costs. How many games, practices, skill sessions, accessories (bags, sweats, and jerseys), tournaments, and summer camps are included in the season fee? Will there be additional charges for tournaments or playoffs? Are you expected or required to participate in fund raising events? What will be the cost of travel?

Location: Where does your player want to play for the next 6-7 months? Have a thorough conversation with your player to see if he / she wants to make the hour commute 3 days/week; - or if he / she wants to play on a friend's team or with school buddies. Let them express their feelings; because if they're not committed or happy, it's a waste of time, money, and precious opportunity.

Contract: Must you sign a contract? Many organizations [especially Metro] make you sign a commitment letter. This is fine; - but make sure you have an 'out clause' in case things that are promised do not become reality. Often, if you sign a contract and then don't adhere to it, - you jeopardize your child's future eligibility with that league. You can ask your director these questions.

Set your player up for success! Last but not least, what is it about a particular program which will have your hockey player smiling every day as they tug off their skates? This is most important. They need to have fun and feel good about themselves. Be careful not to subconsciously push your player too hard. A few parents don't get it; - they live through their kids, sadly putting them into more demanding situations than they can handle.

Just remember that not all young players are initially ready for the select or metro level of play and there are many different reasons; the level of maturity, skill, desire, or work ethic. As a kid I played for a town team...the Manchester (NH) Flames. I never played select or metro, and I made it into the NHL! The key was that I had fun every day and I always had the support of my parents. All they ever asked was that I give it everything I had when I stepped out onto the ice.

HOCKEY TIPS FROM JEFF

Here are some key areas that we cover in our camps/teams that I've coached and consulted with. They should be part of every coach's game plan. If you're able to get the kids to buy into these concepts, your team will have a great advantage. Please pass this along to your teammates, coaches and board members. Your player hasn't done a

Battle Camp yet? I recommend Battle Camps before they start their SQUIRT year. We cover some of the most important concepts of the game like battling for loose pucks, puck protection, and game situational drills and protection. Highly recommended for Mites as well. Kids need to learn how to compete!!! Characteristics / Identity / Goals for your team: Hard to play against / hardest working team on the ice. Practice habits and effort, drills done the right way, kids stopping for rebounds, making good passes, communication, high tempo, fun, keep kids moving.

Vocal/Communication all over the ice all 3 positions including and most importantly goalies. (They have the best view of the ice and should be leaders back there).

Never quit-no matter what the score (there are lessons to be learned even when you lose).

Game Preparation - are the kids prepared to play, how is your locker room 10 minutes before a game?

Conditioning- this is one element that is in everyone's control. Whether your team is undefeated or hasn't won a game the kids should be the best conditioned team on the ice.

Nutrition: challenge kids that are overweight or don't eat properly. Set up guidelines of what kids should be eating, i.e. McDonalds or turkey sub? We've all seen Jared on the Subway commercials.

Finish all checks- this wears down other teams, which will make a difference at the end of the game. Don't have to kill but do have to get your body in the way. (Peewee level and up).

Take pride in winning all battles- Watch a NHL game and you'll see that hockey is a series of 1-on-1 battles. Good players are able to come out of the corner with the puck .Untrained kids expose too many pucks. This is the meat and potatoes of our "Battle Camps Curriculum".

Beat opponent to all pucks, - hockey is a race to the puck.

Hit the Net / Drive to the Net, stop for rebounds.

Pay the Price to make the play- Take a hit/block a shot-all great areas to earn points with your coach. These are key intangibles that all players can bring to the ice!

Leadership - be first in line, demand excellence from your teammates. Lead by example and others will follow. Speak up and hold everyone on the team accountable for their behavior on and off the ice.

Accountability- if you make a mistake own it. Look in the mirror. Selfish penalties / lazy penalties have a consequence.

Move the puck / selflessness - the puck moves faster than the skater. Gray areas don't lose the puck, turnovers at the two blue lines, critical for success. Area passes. Take pride in team defense/play as a 5 man cohesive group. Centers are the 3rd defenseman always supporting puck in defensive zone/sticks on ice/sticks in passing lanes, take away the middle of the ice, play inside the dots.

Winning face-offs: the center is in charge - make sure teammates are in the correct positions and know what responsibilities are.

Puck possession wins games and face-offs are critical. Poise with the puck "you have more time than you think but not as much as you'd like "D-to-D passing in all areas of the ice, -spread out and use the whole width of the ice.

Pass the puck with conviction- Always face the play, be ready for a pass or a loose puck and always be a good target. Using your defensemen in the offensive zone/activate the defense high cycles, sniper shots to the net. Have them join the attack as 5-man units.

Understanding the GAP!!! Most important facet of the game, all areas of the ice take time and space away from opponent.

Have fun with the kids in a hard working environment- reward kids for doing small things correctly like taking a hit, - blocking a shot,- nice assist, - big save, - drawing a penalty, - leadership, etc...Play hard without the puck, work to get open, support teammates in all areas of ice.

Lastly Parents, make sure your team coaches are positive and not screaming at the kids all the time. Take a step back once in a while and realize this is just a game and these are your kids!!! Don't take it too seriously. If you lose, there is always tomorrow. Even a loss is a hockey lesson. Have fun_

THE IMPORTANCE OF GAP CONTROL

JEFF SEROWIK'S GAP CONTROL-

Gap control is the focal part of the Pro Ambitions Hockey Inc. Battle and Defense camp curriculum. It is one of the hardest skills to master in the game. Gap control is a skill that comes with practice and confidence and watching and studying the game of hockey. After a week of our camp you will greatly improve your gap control - guaranteed to make you a better player instantly. Youth players should become aware as early as possible the importance of gap control. Take baby steps in your youth hockey games and practices on controlling the gap and you will be so far ahead of the game as you grow in the sport. Please watch NHL and college games with your parents and focus on how the players are handling gap control. Coaches don't work on gap control because it takes time, repetition and you have to be allowed to make mistakes to learn the mastery.

WHAT IS THE GAP- The amount of space between you and your opponent.

WHAT IS GAP CONTROL- Taking away time and space from your opponent. Gap is getting in your opponents face in all areas of the ice.

DEFENSEMAN ON GAP CONTROL- After the break out pass, defensemen need to skate up as fast as you can up the ice-even try beating your forwards up the ice. Dominate that gap right out of the gate. This gives the D a chance to contribute offensively or if there is a turn over you can get right in your opponents grill. Make sure you have your stick on the ice in front of you and you poke check front to back, keep forwards outside the dots (make them go wide)

This type of play is a biggie at the Defense camp. I like to teach the Defensemen about "**BUTTS AND MUGS**" in the Defensive Zone. If your opponent has his or her **BUTT** to you -attack, he is not looking and catch him off guard, get right in close on him and **CLOSE THE GAP**. If your opponent has his or her **MUG** in your face that means he or she is looking right at you. Let's say you are in front of the net guarding the **HOUSE** or your Goalie, and a forward (your opponent) is coming out of the corner. Take away his time and space by driving him towards the boards. It's all about playing angles. Angle him/her away from your net with your body and your stick. So many times I will see youth players swing their stick in front to the side and completely take themselves out of the play because your off balance. Don't do that. Get low, get cautious, use your stick to steer him or her towards the boards. If you go head on right at the opponent he or she may be able to go around you. Keep your shoulders square, angle the opponent where you want him to go, once again get low and cautious and poke check your stick back and forth. Play defense with an edge. I was always scared to get beat one on one thus improved because it was so critical and I gave everything I had every time I had a 1 on 1 battle in practice, game, on the pond, garage wherever!!!

FORWARDS CLOSING IN ON THE GAP- Put pressure on your opposing defensemen. Move your feet in the neutral zone as fast as you can. I hate when I see kids slowing down in the neutral zone, put on the gas here and take away time and space. Come hard here and take away the defensemen's time and space by not letting them make a D to D pass. Force the play down the boards and go for the turnover. Speed, angles and positioning is the key to disturbing the defensemen from making an effective play. Finish all your checks and go hard right at the Defensemen. Offensive zone same thing, forecheck with vengeance, using angles, using your stick to steer your opponent and keep your feet moving. Older players finish your checks at all times. If I know I am going to get hit every time I touch the puck as a defenseman I will rush the play. Nobody likes constant pressure.

CONFIDENCE GROWTH IS THE KEY TO YOUTH HOCKEY GAP CONTROL, BABY STEPS- This is the key. Tight gaps in youth hockey are harder to come by but be aware of that and change that statistic. Players are worried about getting beat and getting yelled at by coaches and parents. I say go for it all the time in practice and at games that are not extremely tight. In those cases you have to use your head and play things aggressively safe. Angles, stick positioning and skating ability are all keys to great gap control.

A LITTLE ADVICE ON STICK LENGTH FOR FORWARDS AND DEFENSEMAN- Defensemen go longer-I suggest 2-4 inches longer than you currently have. Forwards stay with what you have. When I made the Penguins, my coach Kevin Constantine had me go 6 inches longer than I was accustomed to playing with. It helps for poke checking and getting to on the opponents puck.

PLAY THE BODY NOT THE STICK- Watch your opponents chest to see where he or she is going. I like to tell the kids to look for the guys heart beating. You never have to look down at the puck your stick is taking care of that task. If you can't hit a guy at least get **BIG** and make him go through you. Impede any forward movement they might have.

FORWARDS PLAYING THE GAP - WATCH ZACH PARISE IN THE OLYMPICS- Take the defenseman's time and space away and force him or her to make a mistake. You have the puck you are in the driver's seat. Zach is so quick and never stops skating thus putting so much pressure on the opposing defense thus getting turn over's and creating scoring chances. Watch Brooks Orpik's gap control on a 1 on 1 and how he gives no time and space to the forwards he is playing against.

**GAP CONTROL- LEARN IT, LIVE IT, KNOW IT.
YOU CAN'T PLAY THE NEXT LEVEL WITHOUT THIS MASTERED.
COME FIND OUT HOW!!!**

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFF-ICE TRAINING

The best piece of hockey advice I believe that I have ever received was given to me at age 10 by my coach Wayne Pecknold about the importance of Off Ice training. He told me that if I want to succeed in hockey, “you must hone your skills off the ice as well as on the ice. You must religiously shoot five hundred pucks everyday at home to improve your shot accuracy and speed.” He told this to an entire team of 10 year olds and whether or not he literally meant to actually count to five hundred everyday or just practice shooting is questionable. But, let me tell you there are very few days from that day on that I missed shooting five hundred pucks. Many broken garage windows later, my parents can attest to my dedication and determination. I believe that this invaluable piece of advice I was given about one aspect of off-ice conditioning helped pave my way to the NHL.

I come across about 2500 young players per year through my day/boarding hockey camps. I stress the importance of dry land training and conditioning to players as well as parents. I pass on this piece of advice of shooting five hundred pucks every day to every camper. You must learn to shoot to score not just shoot to shoot. Let me tell you, the ones that do it will succeed. Shooting pucks also integrates stick handling, faking the shot, head fakes and agility moves. There are a few players that god gave very special hockey hands to like Jeremy Roenick and Wayne Gretzky. There are also a lot of players like Jeff Serowik who worked for those hands! As parents can fully attest to, hockey is an extremely expensive and all consuming sport due to the nature of the expense and limited availability of ice time. If your child is really dedicated to hockey there is much “hockey homework” that can be done at home!

Young American hockey players should take a page from the book of the young European players training regime. After playing with many of the great European NHLers I found it very interesting to discuss with them the emphasis on dry land skill development. Jaromir Jagr, Alexei Kovalev, and Martin Straka told me that they were instructed to work on their hands via stick handling, shooting and polymeric for hours daily. (Jagr for instance stickhandles daily after practice with a 45 lb. weight at the bottom of his shaft of his stick.) Typically European hockey players have the stereotype for being finesse players. This may ring true due to the dedication and amount of off ice training that is expected of them as young players.

Over the years I have come to realize that anything in life that is good is hard. Most times hard efforts that are put into whatever endeavor you are working on will eventually come back in rewards. I always tell my campers this. Hard work will pay off. Motivation is the biggest key to success when working off ice. If a player is not into it and works at hockey half- heartedly he or she will not see results on the ice. Ice time should be treated as a gift. Unlike other sports, one cannot just jump on ice at will to practice. Do the little things right off the ice and really make the most of your ice time. (When I was playing I carried a wrist grip in my car and would work on my hand and wrist strength while sitting in traffic.)

We skate 4 hours daily at our camps and now are really focusing on stick handling and dry-land circuits the remaining 2 hours of the camp. Other activities you can focus on this summer at your home are: flexibility (karate, boxing) quick feet drills, running (long and short distances), biking, slide board, wrist rolls, hand strength, weight training (check with your doctor first), dry-land, ply metrics, racquetball, tennis shooting pucks, stick handling and rollerblading.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFF-ICE TRAINING

Basic off Ice Training Program

*Before starting any training program it is important to consult your Doctor or Physician and make sure your son/daughter is old enough to do these exercises!!

Before each training session it is very important to begin with a warm-up and stretch to avoid injury and obtain optimal results from each training session.

Warm-up - Run, bike, swim, any activity that will get your heart rate up and make you break a light sweat. A good warm up will be at least 10-15 minutes long. The purpose of a warm-up is to get the blood flowing and warm up the muscles.

Stretching -When stretching it is good to find a routine and then stick to it every time you stretch. That way you will be sure not to miss any important stretches. A good rule of thumb is to stretch starting at the head and work down to the toes. All stretches should be slow and controlled. Do not bounce the stretches, that will only lead to injury. Slowly increase pressure on the stretches and hold for 30 seconds to 1 minute. Make sure every stretch is active. Do not simply go through the motions of the stretches, but take the time to do each stretch correctly and feel the pull and loosening of the muscles.

Stretches:

Neck - Slow clockwise and the slow counter-clockwise head rolls

Shoulders - Extend right arm out straight and grasp elbow with left hand. Slowly pull elbow towards chest. Repeat process for left arm.

Triceps - Bend right arm and place right hand in between shoulder blades. Right elbow should be pointed straight up. Then grasp elbow with left hand and pull behind head. Repeat process for left arm.

Wrist - Grasp hockey stick in the middle with right hand. Extend right arm and slowly rotate stick back and forth. Repeat for left wrist.

Pectorals - Extend right arm straight out and place palm flat against a wall or sturdy support. Slowly turn body away from the wall. Repeat process for left pectoral muscle.

Trunk (abs and dorsal) - 1) Rest hockey stick on shoulders behind head with arms over stick. Slowly rotate upper body while keeping lower body stationary. 2) Keep stick behind head with arms over the stick. Bend at the waist to a 90 degree angle. Rotate upper body, trying to touch toes with each end of the stick.

Quadriceps - Grasp right foot while standing straight. Pull foot up making sure the right knee points straight at the ground. Repeat for left leg. (stretch can be done next to a wall for balance support)

Butterfly Stretch - In sitting position, bring feet together so that the bottoms touch. Reach forward and grasp toes with both hands and gently pull toes towards body while gently pushing down on knees with elbows.

Gluteus Maximus - In sitting position, extend both legs straight out in front. Take right leg and cross it over left leg. Grasp the bent right knee and hug it into chest. Repeat for left leg.

Hamstrings - 1) In sitting position extend both legs out straight. Reach forward to touch toes. Make certain that knees remain flat as you reach forward. Try to get your nose as close to your knees as possible. 2) In sitting position spread legs as far apart as possible. Reach out to touch toes both right and left, and then reach as far to the middle as possible.

Calves - In push-up position cross left ankle over right ankle. Walk hands back until right heel just touches the ground. Gently push down with left leg. Keep right leg straight during stretch. Repeat for left leg.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFF-ICE TRAINING

(continued)

After completing warm-up and stretching you can begin training sessions.

Muscle Strengthening- Along with stretching muscles it is important to strengthen them. It is not healthy to begin lifting weights at too young of an age, because it may interfere with proper growth and body development. However there are many exercises that can be done without weight at any age to strengthen muscles.

Regular Push-Ups - Push-ups strengthen chest and shoulders. Lay flat on stomach with hands placed palm down on the floor shoulder width apart. Keeping the entire body straight, push body up off the ground. Done properly elbows will go from 90 degrees to straight and the entire body will remain flat.

Hand and wrist strengthening exercises: very important for your shot and stick handling ability. Do wrist rolls or buy a wrist gripper/foam grip to increase hand and wrist strength.

Diamond Push-Ups - Diamond push-ups strengthen triceps and chest. Lay flat on stomach with hands placed palm down close together on the floor, with index fingers touching and thumbs touching. A diamond should be formed with index fingers and thumbs. As with regular push-ups body should remain straight while pushing up.

Pull-Ups - Pull-ups strengthen biceps and upper back. Grasp a pull-up bar with hands shoulder width apart. Pull body up until chin is even with the bar, then slowly lower body.

Abdominal Strengthening - These exercises strengthen the abdominal muscles.

1) **Crunches-** Lay flat on back with feet flat on the floor. Tighten abs enough to lift shoulder blades off the floor.

2) **Leg Lifts** - Lie flat on back with legs extended straight out. Extend arms straight down by sides with palms flat on the floor. Lift legs to a 60 degree angle and the lower until the almost touch the floor. Make certain that knees remain straight.

3) **Oblique's** - Lay on right side with knees bent at a 90 degree angle. Lift right shoulder off of the ground as high as possible and then lower back to the floor. Repeat equal amount while lying on left side as is done while lying on right side.

Back Extension - Back extensions strengthen the lower back muscles. Lay flat on stomach with legs straight and arms straight above head. Lift chest on feet off the ground together, as high as possible.

Lunges - Lunges strengthen hamstrings and quadriceps. Stand straight with feet shoulder width apart and toes pointing forward. Step forward with right foot as far as possible while keeping balanced. This step should be far enough that your left knee touches the ground. Push back with right leg to bring it back to the starting position. Repeat while stepping with the left leg.

Squats - Squats strengthen quadriceps and the gluteus maximus. Stand straight with feet shoulder width apart and toes pointing forward. Lower your body as if you were going to sit in a chair. Do not bend forward, but lower your butt. Make certain that your nose stays over your knees and that your knees remain over your toes.

Calf Raises - Calf raises strengthen calf muscles. Stand straight with feet shoulder width apart and toes pointing forward. Lift heels of the ground as high as possible, and then lower back down.

Stick Raises - Stick raises strengthen forearm muscles. Standing straight, hold a hockey stick by the butt-end. Hold stick straight out in front of you and raise it up and down just moving your hand; do not move your arm at all. Perform exercises in equal amounts for each arm.

*When muscle strengthening it is very important to know which muscles each exercise targets, and how to properly perform each exercise. While training focus on perfect form and technique with each exercise for safety and for maximum performance results.

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFF-ICE TRAINING

(continued)

Endurance Building- Endurance is what allows you to play a full three periods of high intensity hockey. The best hockey players are the ones with high endurance levels. To build endurance you can do anything that will get your heart pumping, make you sweat, and breathe hard. The key to building endurance is to carry on whatever activity you chose for long periods of time. The longer you can keep moving and sweating and breathing hard the more endurance you will build. The least amount of time to build endurance is 30 minutes, so make sure whatever activity you chose to build endurance off of, be certain to remain active and moving non-stop for at least 30 minutes. An optimal endurance workout time would be 1 hour. Some good endurance activities are hockey (Ice, roller, or floor), Tennis, racquetball, soccer, lacrosse, swimming, jump rope, biking, punching a punching bag, and anything else that you could carry on constantly for at least 30 minutes.

Speed and Agility- To increase speed and agility you must practice getting your feet moving very quickly with short bursts of energy. All speed and agility drills must be done at top speed to produce results in performance.

Flat land running sprints- Land sprints are very good exercises for foot speed.

Set 1- Mark off 10 yards. Sprint distance forwards and backwards for one complete rep. Repeat for 10 reps.

Set 2- Mark off 20 yards. Sprint distance forwards and backwards for one complete rep. repeat for 10 reps.

Set 3- To finish flat land running sprints, sprint one full lap around a track or if a track is not available, sprint a distance of 200 yards forward only.

Rest between reps should be 10 to 15 seconds. Rest between sets should be no more than 11/2 minutes. Longer rests will not yield desired results.

Hill Sprints- If a hill with a fairly steep grade is accessible to you, than you can sprint downhill to increase foot speed. When sprinting downhill, gravity will pull your body down quickly forcing your feet to move fast to keep from falling. A good speed workout is to sprint downhill and then jog back uphill and then begin all over. Repeat for 20 reps or as many times as possible. Rest between reps should be no more than 10 to 15 seconds.

Agility Drills - A number of different agility drills can be done on a simple four square box. Mark off an 8 by 8 ft square. Bisect the large square into 4 4ft squared boxes.

1) Perimeter Run - Start at one outer corner and run the perimeter of the large square. Always face the same direction. Sprint forward, karaoke sideways, sprint backwards, and then karaoke sideways to the finish.

2) Iron Cross - Start in the middle of one side. Run entire drill facing in the same direction. Sprint to the middle of the large square, karaoke to one side and then back to the middle. Sprint forwards to outer edge and then backwards to the middle. Karaoke sideways to the last outer edge and then back to the middle and finish by backwards sprinting to where the drill began.

3) Side to Side Hops - Stand in the center of one of the smaller boxes. Jump sideways back and forth with feet close together from the center of one box to the center of the box adjacent to the starting box. (Back and forth is 1 time and, 20 times equal 1 rep)

4) Front to Back Hops - Stand in the center of one of the smaller boxes. Jump forwards and backwards with feet close together from center of one box to the center of the box in front of the starting box. (Front and back is 1 time, and 20 times equal 1 rep)

5) Corner Hops - Begin in one corner, and face in same direction at all times. Hop sideways with feet close together to next closest line intersection, then sideways to the next corner. From that corner hop forwards to then next closest line intersection. From there hop sideways to the center of the large square. Continue in this fashion until you return to the starting corner.

When doing agility drills do 10 sets of each drill. These drills are not the only drills that can be done to increase agility. Any drills that make you use your feet and exercise your balance will increase your agility on the ice. Use your imagination!

THE IMPORTANCE OF OFF-ICE TRAINING

(continued)

WEEKLY OFF SEASON WORKOUT

A weekly workout schedule should consist of ...

3 days of strength training

1-2 days of endurance training

1-2 days of speed and agility training

1-2 days of rest

Monday-Strength training

Chest, arms, and upper back

3 sets as many reps as possible

Tuesday-Endurance training

30 minutes to 1 hr.

Wednesday-Strength training

Trunk (abs, and lower back) 3 sets as many reps as possible

Thursday-Speed training

Flat land training

Friday-Strength training

Quads, Hamstring calves, and gluteus maximus

3 sets as many reps as possible

Saturday-Agility training

5 drills of 4 square

Sunday-Rest

Off-ice Shooting and Passing Training- Shooting and passing drills should be done everyday for best performance results.

Shooting circuit- Practice proper form and technique with follow through on each and every shot.

50 wrist/ backhand shots

50 weighted puck wrist shots

50 accuracy shots (aim for crossbar and posts or open holes on the shooter tutor)

Passing training- Practice giving and receiving passes with Mr. Assist, a friend, or a family member. Make certain that all passes are hard and accurate when giving them, and when receiving a pass be certain to cradle the puck or ball and control it with soft hands.

100 forehand passes

100 backhand passes

Final Note:

During your weekly trainings you need to listen to your body. You must push yourself to achieve great results but you must know when you need to rest and when to push yourself even harder. Make certain that you vary the trainings so that you do not over-do one type of training and lack in other types of trainings. Most importantly remember to warm-up and stretch before each training and also stretch after training for flexibility.

This basic training program is a program that will prepare you physically to be in the top condition for when you take to the ice. It does not take the place of on ice practices, but supplements them and prepares you to be able to give 110% every time you step on the ice.

A DISCUSSION BETWEEN JEFF SEROWIK AND SPORTS PSYCHOLOGIST, DR. FRED NEFF

Renowned for his work with the BOSTON BRUINS as well as student athletes

Firstly, I would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year. I have been meaning to write this article for years as I feel strongly about the success I had from seeking council with my two sports psychologists during my pro career. Dr. Fred Neff and Max Offenberger are the sports psychologists that helped me during my own hockey career as well as many other professional athletes. They have been, and will continue to come, to my Pro Ambitions boarding camps to speak to my campers. I have also referred them to many parents and campers who have come to me through the years interested in a sports psychologist for their young athletes.

Email contact for Dr. Fred Neff as he is local FNeff@ProFormance-Inc.com. Max Offenberger is affiliated with many NHL teams and is traveling around the country helping mostly professional athletes (he possesses two Stanley Cup rings as an integral player helping both the Tampa Bay Lightning and Calgary Flames to victory). Obviously a sports psychologist is not necessary for most student athletes, but for those who are playing in sports arenas of higher stakes - such as competitive club, high school, college or professional sports, a sports psychologist can be an integral tool in achieving a higher level of success. Most athletes hone their physical skills, while neglecting sharpening their mental toughness. I learned that is a skill as well. The mantra that Dr. Fred Neff created for me during my pro years was "**Move Mountain.**" I repeated this during my games over and over - especially after being burned and having to recover from a bad shift. Both Fred and Max will be attending my boarding camps again this summer. Read the Q&A exchange between Fred and me below - I based my questions on kid's sports:

Jeff: What is the best way for a young player to prepare for an important game, practice/tryout to get rid of nerves and negative thoughts?

Fred: With most of these questions, the issue boils down to **PREPARATION**. How well a player is prepared to play in various situations, against "better" competition or against "lesser" competition, makes all the difference. I didn't use to believe this, but I do now - you play like you practice. You need to practice being in the important game, behind by a goal with seconds left and the play is designed for you to take the shot, trying out for a team, or with your parents in the stands. All of these scenarios and many more, if confronted directly will prepare you by knowing you have overcome them in the past. With this increase in confidence you will play with less apprehension and "nerves". There is a reason Tiger takes a bucket of balls in the woods or the rough and practices hitting them out of the worst conditions - to prepare him in case he ends up in that situation!

An "important" game is given that description when the outcome is given more weight, or there are special circumstances ascribed to a win/loss. If you didn't know it was the "finals" would you play differently? You shouldn't. All games should be approached in the same manner - with the same preparation. Not only is preparation at the foundation of peak performance, but that consistent preparation also serves to put you in the same "headset" associated with playing at your best.

You really don't want to get rid of "nerves". Rather, you want your nerves to work for you - not against you. I once asked a professional basketball player how he manages his "nerves". His response was, "I don't feel nervousness, and I have butterflies". His reply speaks volumes about how the way you interpret an event is how your body will react. Nerves are related to thoughts - how you think is how you will feel. Control the thoughts and you have a better chance of feeling the way you want and need to feel in order to be at your best. This can only be accomplished by good preparation/practice.

Jeff: When a young player makes a mistake how best to rebound?

Fred: Again, how prepared are you to manage your mistakes? When was the last time you practiced recovering (mentally) from a mistake or a bad shot, or a blown play? I encourage athletes to develop and then make use of their own Mental Recovery Device (MRD). This consists of learning how to calm the body and re-focus the mind in order to return to your optimal level of performance. These techniques make use of learning how to calm the body through breathing and letting-go and making use of restructuring thoughts in order to re-focus on current events; not what has happened or what may happen but what is happening now.

A DISCUSSION BETWEEN JEFF SEROWIK AND SPORTS PSYCHOLOGIST, DR. FRED NEFF (continued)

Renowned for his work with the BOSTON BRUINS as well as student athletes

Jeff: Are there mental training exercises or deep breathing exercises kids can do at home prior to a big event?

Fred: From what has been described so far the obvious answer is yes. These exercises have to be practiced prior to competition. Practicing these however can be somewhat tedious unless you are convinced they will help you in the same way you are convinced weight training or riding the bike helps you get physically stronger. As mentioned previously, these exercises should be practiced on an on-going basis not just before the "big game". In fact doing these just for the "big event" would only heighten the magnitude of the event and probably won't be successful and thereby creating even additional anxiety. Practicing these techniques (MRD) on a regular basis, using a step by step format will not only ensure the successful learning of these skills but will also raise the level of expectation of success (confidence) in competition because the athlete will "know" he/she is prepared for anything that might occur during competition.

Jeff: What is the best way for players to be consistent? I see so much inconsistency at youth sports?

Fred: At the risk of being redundant the best way for an athlete to be more consistent in their play is to learn how to focus and maintain that focus - no matter what! Even though external conditions, events, or situations change, maintaining a consistent internal environment is the key to performing consistently. Not getting rattled, not getting to excited or to low during competition, preparing to come to competition the same way everyday. Inconsistency in youth sports is somewhat age-related, but if an athlete is wanting to best-at-their-best, there are ways to ensure this and that take... you guessed it... preparation.

Jeff: In your opinion does mental toughness separate the good players from the great ones?

Fred: I have said many times over the years of working with professional and elite athletes that once you arrive at the competitive venue...the field, rink, court, track, whatever...your physical state is a constant. This means you are as physically strong as you will be for that game. No more work outs or strength training. In fact over the course of the match or game you may even experience fatigue, thereby having even less physical resources available to you than when you began. Mental skills however do not have to follow the same progression. Yes there is mental fatigue as there is physical fatigue but mental fatigue unlike physical fatigue can be overcome during competition whereas physical fatigue requires much more time for the muscles to recover. Therefore, mental toughness is something that can be altered during competition. The athletes that know this and learn to control what they can control, i.e. their mental processes, are indeed better prepared to endure what is needed to achieve consistently higher levels of performance. The physical attributes get you to the "dance". The mental skills have you "dancing" better and longer.

Jeff: How important is nutrition, sleep, mood, etc. in a players performance level?

Fred: It goes without saying, what you fuel your body with and how well you maintain good sleep habits will affect your performance. The types of fuel, the amounts of fuel, the regularity at which you fuel are all important factors to peak performance. Good luck convincing a kid of this!!

Jeff: If a kid is getting much pressured at home by parents or on the car ride of does that affect his game?

Fred: Most certainly. This is an area that needs much more attention these days. Parents generally want to do the right thing but unless a parent understands how their behavior effects their child they continue to do what they believe is good for Johnny but in fact leaves lasting emotional obstacles for Johnny to have to overcome in order to be successful on or off the field.

Jeff: What are some easy things kids can do to build up self esteem and feel good about them? My key word was "Move Mountain" and I wrote it on my glove. I also used to visualize scoring a big goal or a big hit. Many kids can't play well with family, friends or scouts in the stands.

Fred: Whew! There is no easy way to build up self-esteem if it has been deeply trashed over a long period of time. Minor dips in self-confidence or the occasional "lows" experienced by young athletes can often be overcome by talking with a trusted advisor, usually not parents, who they trust to be a straight shooter. Replenishing the ego is a more complicated process than this forum can offer but as you mention, key phrases, thoughts or sayings, visualizations can evoke a calmer mental state or return one to their optimal level of performance. Again, this takes practice and preparation in order for it to be effective during competition.

KEEPING YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME

This is a message on mental toughness. When you reach a particular level in hockey, you will realize that mental toughness will set you apart from your competition. Two players can have about the same skills and speed, but it is their mental state, which enables one player to be great, -while the other is ordinary.

Hockey is truly a game of mistakes. Even the superstars make them. The key is learning to overcome those mistakes quickly to succeed. Successful players know how to get their head right back into the game, - and I mean immediately in the very next shift! Young players need to develop this aspect of their game just as much as developing skating, shooting, checking, and team building skills. Learn this now! I started honing in on this part of my game during my 4th year pro playing for the Providence Bruins. If only I had realized the importance of this skill, and it is a skill, at an earlier age, - it would have truly benefited me as a player.

During that season with the Providence Bruins, I was sent to see the Bruins sports psychologist, Dr. Fred Neff, - who has worked with many players (including many franchise players) in the organization over the years. Week after week visiting with Dr. Neff, I began to learn how to strengthen my mind and shrug off mistakes. I was rebounding quickly from negative thoughts and errors in my game. That season became a turning point in my career; and put me on my way to making it full time in the NHL. I broke the Bruins and AHL scoring record for a defenseman and was awarded the Eddie Shore Award for best defenseman. Unfortunately, I was only called up to Boston for one game because back then Boston had six solid defenseman with no injuries. I must say it was a thrill for me to be paired up in a power play with Captain Ray (Ray Bourque), my favorite player, on Boston Garden ice! Anyway, in short, I attribute much of my success that year to having strengthened my mental game.

Here are a few concepts to work on to develop your mental game:

1. Take note of your favorite NHL Players: They will make mistakes during the course of a game; but they go by practically unnoticed because they don't go into a shell, get down, feel sorry for themselves, throw temper tantrums, bang their stick, or take frustrations out on a fellow teammate. Never show your opponent you're frustrated or weak!

2. Tune out negative situations around you and turn them into positive ones: Example: If you get beat 1 on 1 or have a bad give-away, don't get down on yourself. It's now history; - focus on the present. Quickly get yourself and your head back into the game with a good hit, a shot on goal, or just beat your opponent down the ice and work hard. Do anything positive - no matter how small. You will regain confidence. Charlie Corey, my Prep School coach used to say, "Serowik, do you think people in China care you made a mistake?" It's done and forgotten, - move on!

3. Make a list of your responsibilities as a hockey player: Think about them before every game. During the game don't think, - **REACT!** Example: If you are a defenseman, write down your duties in all three zones, power play and penalty kill. Move the puck quickly, stick between the legs, play the man, box your opponent out, hit the net every shot, head on a swivel, communication, control gap, how to play a 1v1, 2v1, 3v2 etc. ... And so on. I had a 2-page list that I carried in my wallet for my entire 10 year pro career. I pulled out that list before each and every game and went over everything, so that it was all in fresh mental storage. If it's in mental storage and you've already thought it through before game time, then it will come to you naturally during the game. Once the game begins you don't want to think, - just **REACT!**

4. Take 10-15 minutes before each game for "Alone Time": Go over your responsibilities, almost like saying your prayers. Go tape your stick by yourself, -visualize all positive thoughts. Example: Picture yourself scoring the winning goal, having a big hit, a great assist, hugging your teammates in victory. These are all positive thoughts that will put you in the frame of mind to be a winner.

5. Create your own catch phrase: Something to say to yourself in times of trouble. Example: "Keep it Simple" - and my favorite, "Move Mountain".

6. Be Ready at Game time: When game time comes, you should come out for warm-ups hard and ready to compete. This is NOT the time to be social or screw around with teammates. Get a good handle on the puck, make some hard passes, stretch out, and get your legs going with some hard sprints.

7. Don't waste time! Make an impact on your first shift: Do something, anything to get yourself into the game quickly. I'd make a crisp hard pass, give a big hit, or even get hit by my opponent to wake me up and motivate me. The first couple of shifts usually dictate the rest of the game.

I hope these points are helpful. Getting mentally tough is a lot easier said than done. Work on it everyday. As you progress into the higher levels of hockey, everyone will be skilled because the weak and inept players will have already dropped out. Only the mentally strong will make it. Hockey separates the men from the boys, and your tough mindset will place you with the men. We will be touching on these skills during the off-ice segments of our summer camps.

THE PRO AMBITIONS HOCKEY QUESTION & ANSWER (FOR THOUGHT)



HOCKEY IS A GAME OF BATTLES- What are some of the key terms to battling in dangerous areas of the ice? Where do you rate your 1v1 Battle skills?

AREAS WE INSTILL INTO EACH OF OUR CAMPS- What are some good physical and mental ways to stay focused and remain positive during the season and off season? How do you get and stay focused during a game?

GROWING UP HOCKEY- What are some key habits and characteristics necessary to develop a positive attitude in young athletes.

FINDING THE RIGHT YOUTH HOCKEY ORGANIZATION- What are some key areas that parents and players should be looking into when looking for a youth hockey organization?

HOCKEY TIPS FROM JEFF- What are some new tips to you... skating, body contact, puck control and protection, passing shooting, offense, defense? Which do you feel are the most important tips?

THE IMPORTANCE OF GAP CONTROL- What are some of the key points of gap control ?

THE IMPORTANCE OF DRYLAND TRAINING- Give some reasons why is it important for hockey players to train off ice as well as on ice? What do you currently do off ice to develop your hockey skills?

DISCUSSION BETWEEN JEFF AND SPORTS PSYCHOLOGIST FRED NEFF- Why is preparation such an import role in a players routine? How do you prepare for a game?

KEEPING YOUR HEAD IN THE GAME- What are some positive ways to keep your head in the game? What are some of the things that you do to keep yourself from getting angry, frustrated or even scared during a game?

*** Players and parents can use the back of this page or a separate page to continue answers, if needed...**