



PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM CURRICULUM

I HOCKEY

A) Physical Training

Players will be physically tested 3 times during the year, in September, in late December, and in June. The testing will include the energy systems, aerobic and anaerobic (lactic and alactic), muscle strength in hockey specific muscles, and more importantly, power (such as jump height) which gives a better understanding of a player's potential for speed because strength testing doesn't take into account the player's size and weight.

Every player will be involved in resistance training for strength and power, which will be very hockey specific. For the younger players in the program, the emphasis will be more on improving flexibility, quickness, balance and reaction time rather than strength and power. Based on their testing, a specific program will be prepared and they will set realistic goals, which will be monitored. Aside from the first priority being leg quickness, there will be a particular emphasis on those muscles predominately used in shooting and protecting the puck such as the triceps.

Plyometrics and simulated skating will be a regular component of the off-ice training, as well a variety of techniques used to overload and underload the quad muscles. With the luxury of players doing simulated skating each week, over a 10 month period, we expect to see significant changes in a player's knee bend, arm swing, forward and backward stride and upper body position both in forward skating and in cornering. For variety, we will incorporate many Finnish, Swedish and Russian training methods.

Over \$70,000 was spent in 2004 on 3 pieces of specialized explosive weight training equipment which allows athletes to train for strength and power, explosively, at ten times the speed they would train with free weights. Traditionally, because of the effects of inertia and gravity, players had to do their strength training slowly and methodically. This equipment, the first of its kind anywhere in Canada, is able, through computerization, to make 16,000 changes through each range of motion, which varies the resistance but most importantly, enables even 12 year olds to recruit all their muscle strength rapidly without fear of injury. In hockey, for a split second race for the puck, it is not necessarily the strongest legs that get a player their first, but the player who can recruit his maximum muscle strength the quickest.

Lenny Krayzelburg, who won three gold medals in the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney, said this about VERT equipment, "It gives me a distinct edge I never had before. It is the toughest thing I've done". Comparing VERT to the use of free weights, he said, "You just never are able to start and stop (free) weights quickly enough to really work the fast twitch muscles so necessary in explosive strength sports. My improvements since the Olympics have been far beyond what I expected, and I'm using VERT to help me stay as far in front as I can."

Each player in the program will be using this explosive weight training equipment on a weekly basis.

B) Individual and Team Skills

Each player's hockey skills will be tested 3 times during the year. The tests will include determining the player's speed and acceleration, videotaping and video printing the player's skating in all areas. It will include videotaping and timing the player's agility and hands through designated obstacle courses. The player's shooting accuracy, speed and quickness of release will be tested as well on 3 occasions.

The main purpose of the testing will be so players have a base line to work from and so they can set specific goals in all areas. They will then have clear objectives to work toward and focus on. These tests will not be used to compare players against each other but rather to have the players concentrate on reaching their ultimate potential given their unique abilities.

It will be important to understand that BOTH individual skills and team concepts will be taught. The players will play a minimum of 50 games (including some spring tournaments) over the 10 months. Teams are made up from the groups in the program and they play games against each other. The level of play is extremely high because almost every player in the program is at a AAA level. These games are very high tempo and very competitive. However, there will be many differences.

1) Every game is video taped and reviewed with the players in detail each week. We use state of the art software and hardware used by the NHL teams during the game, so we can mark all important aspects of the game. For example, we can mark power play, penalty kill, neutral zone forecheck, face offs, etc, so when we review the game, we can quickly bring up every teaching point we need.

2) Players and goaltenders can easily come in and look at their shifts or the shots against them etc.

3) Every game is fiercely competitive because we can adjust the teams as we need to. Therefore, no game is a blowout, which often may occur when playing organized hockey.

4) The coaches can control the game and the teams by using certain types of forecheck or systems and require the other team to respond to it. This makes it a much better teaching environment for the players.

5) Because a) the players know the games are videotaped and reviewed, b) the players spend so much time together as a group, and c) because we incorporate an off-ice boxing program, we find the games get very competitive.

Here are some of the individual skills and team strategies/systems, which will be taught. Keep in mind that; 1) the program will certainly not be limited to what is outlined below, 2) most players, in the past, will have had the opportunity to practice some, if not all of these skills. The objective of this program will be to master these skills at high speed in game-like situations.

- **Skating** - In this program skating will be considered to be the cornerstone to all the other skills. All possible skating movements will be covered. Of course, with 10 months to work on skating I will have the opportunity to go well beyond what I am able to cover with the players at the summer skating schools. Although there will be a tremendous amount of variety in the on-ice drills, players will have to understand that, particularly in the area of skating, there will be a lot of repetition, as well, in order to ingrain changes in their skating technique. Once the technique is well established, the focus will be on doing all skating movements at top speed in game-like situations.

- **Passing** - including flip pass, saucer pass, forehand, backhand, not telegraphing when or where the pass is going, quick release of pass, accuracy, speed of pass, leading passes, one touch passes, stretch passes, timing of pass, passing while moving in all directions and on cornering, receiving hard passes, receiving passes in skates and gloves, off the body, off the boards, avoiding suicide passes, taking passes from behind, while in stride, picking passes up around the boards as a winger, open area passing, give and go pass, drop pass, camouflaging the pass, communication between passer and receiver, eye contact on passing, receiver getting in position for pass, creating open ice to receive pass, taking passes at top speed without breaking stride etc.

- **Shooting** - stationary, moving, off either foot, shooting while both feet moving when driving the net, forehand, backhand, one timers, snap shot, wrist shot, slap shot, shooting while moving laterally and moving back, tip-ins, redirects, shooting off glass to clear the zone, angles for shooting off boards on dump ins, shooting on the power play, when not to shoot, breakaways, bad angle shots, getting in position to shoot, analysis of goal scoring, in tight under the cross bar, fake shot etc. Scoring strategies would be included here, wrap arounds, scoring under pressure etc.

With a limit of 26 players per group I will be able to, not only videotape the player's shooting but also, use video print technology I use with the professional

players in skating analysis to breakdown each player's shooting technique. These video prints along with slow motion video will be reviewed with each player.

- **Puckhandling** - developing soft quick hands, stickhandling narrow, wide, separating puck from body, in front, on the side, diagonal, protecting the puck, split vision, seeing the ice, all skating movements forward, backward, laterally while handling the puck, puck in and out of skates, spin-o-rama, deception with the puck, giving and taking back the puck, dekes. We will also experiment with different lengths of sticks, curves and lies.

- **Checking** - poke check, stick check, stick press, stick lift, sweep check, angling, body contact, body checking, hip check, learning how to receive a check, how to use forearm to fend off opponent's stick as well as their body, and to take checks along the boards, strategies regarding forechecking and ackchecking, tracking, checking and screens in front of the net, picks, when not to park in front of the oppositions net, self-defence in contact situations etc. This area would also include strategies when battling for the puck, checking with a purpose so pucks don't get through you, keeping your stick on the puck when making contact.

- **Team Systems and Team Strategies** - defensive team play including defensive zone coverage, backchecking and tracking through the neutral zone, forechecking in the offensive zone; offensive team play including breakout, moving through the neutral zone, attacking the offensive zone; entries; special team play including powerplay, penalty killing, face-offs; other strategies such as gap control, on-ice patience, creating open ice, situations in which to delay, on ice discipline, use of speed and quickness, use of the neutral zone trap, stretching etc.

Part of the program would include the players and I watching some pro games as a group. Players would be asked to analyze the game in terms of team systems and team strategies. We would discuss some of these games in the class sessions addressing what was and wasn't effective.

C) Nutrition

A nutritionist will work with the players and lead some classroom sessions on this subject. Sessions will discuss the importance of eating properly, the specific types of meals needed for high performance athletes. We will test each player's body composition and work with the player so he develops a healthy, sensible diet, which will also maximize the player's performance on the ice. Part of the player's daily training record will include monitoring his diet. Parents will be kept apprised of this so they have complete confidence that their child is not dwelling on the issue of food or diet but rather just establishing good eating habits for high performance.

Sports ergogenics (sports enhancing drugs) will be discussed. The negative aspects of these types of drugs will be emphasized.

D) Vision Training

Some statistics indicate that 80% of physical actions are initiated with the eyes. I have repeatedly told hockey players that half of quickness is in their head ie their focus and immediate reaction to the loose puck or to a turn over. Visual skills and response time are as important as developing quick feet or raw speed. Aside from some eye testing to provide us with a base line, we will have many "visual workouts". Through various drills and the use of special equipment, players will work on improving such skills as:

- tracking - the ability to follow the puck or a player's movement on the ice smoothly and accurately with both eyes
- fixation - the ability to quickly locate and focus on the puck, a player, or the options available based on the positioning of all players on the ice
- depth perception and assessment of speed - the ability to judge relative distances of other players and their speed on the ice for accurate passing, angling, checking and shooting. We will also look here at the ability to deceive other players watching us, for example, by the positioning of our stick and by quick alterations in our speed.
- peripheral vision - the ability for a player to monitor and interpret what is happening in his/her side vision at the same time as the player attends to tasks specific to his central vision.
- maintaining focus - developing the ability to retain a focus on the puck and reading options around the player while receiving a hit or being pursued by a checker
- eye/hand coordination
- eye/foot coordination
- foot/hand coordination
- reaction time
- balance and timing
- visualization - the ability to form mental images while practicing and in preparation for games to improve performance. This will overlap with the area of sports psychology and mental training.

E) Mental Training

This area of training for high performance athletes is critical. As the difference in physical abilities of top athletes becomes less and less, the mental abilities of the player often becomes the deciding factor in his or her success. As the number of games played continues to increase, the more important it becomes for a player to learn how to be mentally prepared for each game so he or she consistently performs at their highest level.

Also, as players train harder and longer and the skill level continues to increase, the ability of a player in practice and training to be able to set goals, to achieve

goals, to be mentally tough, to be confident, to have a positive self image, to love the game and to learn to minimize the pressure when playing, will all be critical attributes that a player must acquire in order to put in the hours and effort required to be a top athlete.

The training in this area will be divided into 3 components even though they are all interrelated. The first component will focus on motivational issues, understanding motivation, how to enhance motivation, and applying it specifically to the player's own game. The second component will cover many areas such as mental preparation for games, the achievement of excellence through overcoming obstacles, developing mental toughness both in terms of training and their game play in a very physical and aggressive sport. The third component will involve more team building issues not only in terms of the group of 29 players working together for the school year but also issues such as becoming a team leader, the player's attitude toward team members, the coaching staff, the opposing team, referees etc.

II ACADEMICS

Players arrive at the arena at 7:30 am and leave at 6:00 pm. Our passenger vans transport the players to school. This schedule occurs Monday through Friday, for 10 months. Consequently, a player should not enter this program if he or she has a lot of difficulties academically. Nor should any other player enter this program, if he or she is not prepared to be disciplined in keeping up with homework and school projects. Each player will have to make their first priority academics and strive to achieve marks at his or her highest academic potential. It will not be sufficient just to get by. We will monitor academic success with the player and parents and this objective will be part of his or her goal setting for the year.

III LIFE SKILLS AND VALUES

I work with almost two thousand players each year. I can say, without hesitation, that the biggest stumbling block I see to players succeeding in hockey and life is a poor attitude and lack of values. The players who rapidly progress are those individuals who possess a strong work ethic, who are always open to learn, and who have humility and a respect for others. I feel I would be remiss in working with players for this length of time without making these issues a high priority.

Parents will be kept informed of the specific matters being discussed but some of these issues will include honesty, love and respect for family and others, attitude, self-discipline, goal setting, organizational skills, a belief in God, a look at the Christian faith, qualities of leadership, the importance of humour, dealing with stress, a healthy perspective on competitiveness, humility, serving others etc. As a group we will do some service projects in the community, which won't involve large amounts of time but will impact the community in a positive way and will help the players experience the value of taking the focus off of themselves and on serving others.

IV OTHER EVENTS/ ACTIVITIES

Kelowna and the Okanagan Valley is rich in beauty and recreational activities. One of my goals is for your son/daughter to enjoy the lifestyle here as a member of our team, so that in June they truly can say, the past ten months has been one of the greatest experiences in their life.

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