

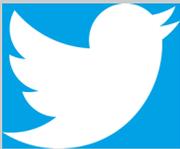
Voyager Hockey News

Volume 1, Issue 8

August 2020

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Back to Basics: The COVID Affect

COVID-19 and the subsequent social distancing protocols that prompted shut-downs across the nation, has caused a large amount of uncertainty in our day-to-day life and month-to-month planning. This effect looms large over youth sports. Seasons have been canceled. There are new safety protocols requiring physical distancing. The ability to compete in team sports, the way we knew it before, is no longer the same.

Is it a bad thing that sports have shut down and changed so much for our youth? There are arguments across the board that discuss the negatives about youth sports being sidelined. Arguments include the impact of social and mental health for young athletes not having an emotional and stress release, not having social time with other



peers, and being limited in the options for physical exercise in a modern era of rising childhood obesity. Those are significant arguments for adults to consider amid a pandemic and the longitudinal health of the young people they oversee.

What if there was some good that comes from this? There most certainly can be some positive. The physical distancing protocols and youth sport sideline has led to some potentially positive changes. Let us examine. First, the

amount of structured play has increased. The only “play” kids have been getting is structured and organized. There becomes no room for creativity for young kids to develop their own games, learn new tricks, or police themselves the way “free range” children once did when locked out of the house and not told to come home until the streetlights came on! Second, with structured and organized play came the decrease in practice and increase in games. Obviously, games are more fun, but the quality of games have dwindled because skill level has dropped. The drop is a result of less practice. The sideline of sports will lead to increased costs, which could, in turn, lead to less games and more practice. Not a bad thing! Better skilled players and athletes lead to higher quality and more competitive games. (Continues on Page 2)

Thank you for the Support!

Voyager Hockey would like to extend a thank you and gratitude to the following programs for their support of the summer youth skills clinics! Brewins Youth Hockey, SWS Youth Hockey, and Tri-County Youth Hockey each graciously offered up their efforts to promote the programs via social media and with their program participants!

In all, we saw 132 total participants in the Southeast Massachusetts area! We were able to provide these programs at affordable rates to coincide with the collaborative efforts of youth hockey and Voyager Sports to keep costs down for players and parents! We look forward to having a positive partnership in years to come!





**“Fun is our
main
commitment to
help players
enjoy their
developmental
experience”**



Importance of Footwork

An often-overlooked skill in hockey is footwork. Footwork is an accumulation of techniques including using inside and outside edges, balance, leg strength, quickness, and leg mobility. Proper and quality footwork can be the difference between good and great players. Quality footwork enables confidence in skating, confidence in small spaces, and confidence with the puck that requires small area movements.

How can we improve footwork? There are drills such as inside and outside edge

skating drills, both forward and backward, that can teach players to use their entire skate blade. Balance can be worked by using one foot or practicing single-leg movements. Stickhandling with one foot or working on one-foot inside-outside edge skating can see a benefit. Leg strength, quickness, and leg mobility are all tied together through anticipation. Jumps, squats, up/downs, one leg work, and pivot skating drills can all help strength and mobility through building athleticism.

Once skills see a progression adding a puck can create opportunities for the brain to develop multitasking, an underrated skill that hockey requires. Simply put, there are so many decisions that are made by the body when playing sports, especially hockey.

Always improve footwork! Great footwork establishes greater confidence in players, and greater confidence is an asset for individual player success.

Back to Basics: The COVID Affect (Continued from Page 1)

Third, the focus shifts from the coach being held accountable for improvement of the child, to the child (and parent) being accountable for the development of the child. Kids now must decide how much they want to do on their own to improve! This will help develop personal interest and ownership for their own decisions, a tremendous life skill. Fourth, this is for coaches. Coaches, myself included, had to shift focus. The pattern of consistency now changed, and

coaches had to adapt to new guidelines. This taught coaches to get back to basics of skill development; skating, puck skills, athleticism, passing, shooting, the list goes on. The focus became improving each player on their own timeline to be prepared later for impending decisions on games. The uncertainty of life over the last five months, and more than likely the next 6 months, is what is causing most people to develop anxiety. There is no doubt that

the situation is frustrating; we are creatures of habit, consistency, and routine. We cannot always dwell on the negative, as we must look to improve the positive and embrace what we can control. This will better improve situations moving forward and make us stronger when the consistency we crave once again returns. Until then, let us get back to the basics, and enjoy the day-to-day of what we can do, and stray away from thinking about what we cannot do!

Be an Athlete and Always Train the Body!

A huge pet peeve for coaches are players who play one sport, or do not cross-train the body to improve in their sport. There is a simple recipe to be great hockey player; be a skilled athlete. It is no secret that the best players on each team are typically good athletes. Being athletic is not always genetic. Athletes must practice and develop. All athletes had to work on it, a lot! The cornerstones of athleticism are strength, power/

explosiveness, agility, endurance, and body control. These can all be improved no matter where the starting point or what the level is. Young athletes need to take part in drills that require body weight strength movements, jumps and up-downs, direction-change, and body control. The practice of such drills will increase endurance, or the length of time an athlete can compete. **Advice:** Play multiple sports! Every sport requires different

muscle groups and body movements. The best athletes can play multiple sports well. Stay active! Go for hikes, runs, set up obstacle courses, do body weight workouts, play pickup games. Anything that requires the body to move and improve, the better!

