



## Pay Attention to the “Deetels”

At an IIHF coaching seminar two years ago one of the speakers from the Czech Republic was making the point that the “deetels” were very important. Of course the correct translation is “details” but the point was well taken.

Too often we overlook the important details that can make the difference between success and failure, winning or losing. Sometimes we say it is a game of inches but we could say it is a game of details.

There are so many details to look after if only we as coaches would recognize them and then address them. Here are six examples:

- 1) Youth coaches should make sure that every player is using a stick that is correct in length and that the lie of the stick is correct to allow the blade to lay flat on the ice. Watch your players as they skate up the ice with a puck on their stick. If you see daylight under most of the blade and only an inch or two of the blade is contacting the ice then the lie is wrong. The incorrect lie makes stick handling and shooting very difficult.
- 2) Skates sharpened correctly? This is important. Many youth players do not get their skates sharpened often enough. For younger players they should request a 3/8<sup>th</sup> radius grind. Older/heavier (140 lbs plus) players should move to a 1/2 inch radius to maximize speed and still preserve edge control. Each player should try both grinds and use the one that best suits them. Additionally the edges must be level.
- 3) Left shot right shot combinations. Talk to your players about proper puck support and the concept of support. This is observed on a zone entry with a trailer who maybe in the wrong position. If the puck carrier is a right-handed shot entering the zone on the right side and a left shot trailer is supporting he should follow directly behind the puck. A right-handed trailer can shift a stride to the inside and still be able to support the play for a drop pass. If the puck carrier is left handed and entering on the right side the supporting player should trail to the inside position in order to receive a drop pass on the forehand.
- 4) Left shot right shot considerations for the goaltenders. Help your goalies understand the differences of facing each type of shooter from different points in the zone. Have one goalie in the net and the other stand behind the puck when it is being shot. By watching from behind the shooter the goalie can see what angles are available to the shooter. This will help them understand how best to cover the

net. If you use a left shot and right shot to shoot, the difference will be very clear to the goalie that is observing. The “deetels” are critical for goaltending.

- 5) Shoot or pass? Many times while observing youth games I see pass attempts for that picture perfect play that rarely connects. When you analyze the geometry and physics involved (who says hockey is for dummies?) you will quickly see that the chance for success on these plays is very limited. It is then much easier to coach your players to make better decisions based on their experience and your experience shared with them. Be sure to explain the geometry and physics as it relates to time and space issues and skill issues. My favorite play killer is the player in front of the opposition net that moves across the slot TOWARDS the puck carrier in the corner expecting a pass. The opportunity for success is so limited and so remote that the play should not be attempted. Yet, if you observe, it is attempted regularly.
- 6) Shooting incorrectly. In recent years it seems as more and more players are shooting with their weight on the inside leg and raising their outside leg. This does work for Mark Messier and his massive fore arms and strong wrists. For the youth player they need to learn to shoot with a weight transfer from the outside leg into their arms and stick. This method allows them to continue towards the net, play the rebound and not get bumped down in traffic. The shots are stronger, more accurate and lower. I have been told that the first method is being taught in some programs as the preferred method. That is just plain wrong. Players need to be able to shoot off of either leg and with both feet on the ice. Watch your team warm up the goalies before games and you will see instantly which method they are using. Be sure to teach the proper method and insist that they do it over and over again.

These are just a few of the many details that an observant coaching staff can help their players learn. Many of the detail items arise from a few basic concepts of puck support, getting open, and playing smart. As you help players learn some of these basic detail items they will grasp the concepts and apply them in the ever-changing situations of the game.

So remember, “It is all in the deetels”

See you around the rink.

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