



## Solving the Riddle of Yourself; not an easy task for any person

This was written while, "Sitting around one day thinking of draft picks that are a part of my life whether they want to be or don't want to be." They were drafted because they are smart, talented and they "had it all" as a high school or junior player. I do a lot of thinking about campers, potential draft picks and free agents that I care about. Build on what you have, keep reaching and climbing. Success is "right around the corner".

One person sees a player as a finesse player or numbers guy in his position and another sees him as a power forward, stay at home defenseman, grinder or support player. We have goalies with all different styles. The player ends up saying, "I don't know who I am." Bottom line; it's good when you can play multiple positions, multiple styles and fit in for the good of the team.

The search for "who you are" has a better chance of being solved when you have a backup game or "game within your game" that buys you time. This is usually a game that makes you hard to play against and mistake free, a game that will always support your "A" game during your development years. Training beyond imagination brings you closer to solving who you are because you gain that psychological edge against your opponent in life knowing you worked harder than they did to be who you are.

Some coaches/scouts/managers learn from their experiences as players. Triumphs, trials and tribulations as young players have given more than one coach/scout/manager a different, and very healthy, perspective in the way they approach and handle young players. The majority of those who faced more than their share of adversity and confusion lean toward the approach of no expectations, dry erase board with some guidelines, and the freedom to play and express their unique skills. They recognize the unique skills of a player; they develop a relationship, and reward them properly.

Some coaches have an open door and they hear you out, but they don't listen. The smart leaders develop leadership groups that meet regularly with management to improve communication and develop trust. Patience and problem solving are always possible in this type of environment. Teams get "back on track" quicker after going through bad stretches.

Most young people are naïve, some have too much too soon, and some develop relationships that take away from their game. The best relationships in life are when two people empower each other to be what they can be. Relationships should enhance

careers. Some players party often, and too hard, while success steers their subconscious mind toward sophistication and complacency. Some are misled as to what it takes to "be a pro; a professional person and player". Some go through a divorce setting with their parents. Some use the divorce setting as a crutch to cover mistakes and underachieving, while the divorce really has nothing to do with it. The stable ones look @ divorce as a situation where, even though a divorce can get ugly, they have a chance to have two sets of supporting parents down the road. "Old wounds rarely heal, but success helps you to forget."

Most players face very little adversity coming through the system. They move on to junior, college and pro where people make a living picking their personal makeup and game apart. Scrutiny becomes more intense during a player's draft year and the years after they are drafting. If a player feels tired, he is no doubt suffering from all the scrutiny and adversity. Players fail to solve the "riddle of themselves" when they fail to see the importance of "just being yourself, competing and playing hard with composure and confidence". My son, Dino, says it best in these situations. His best answer to a bad situation is "just play and everything will fall in place. Talk is cheap and worrying is a waste of energy, just play the game." You have a "free interview" every night you are performing on the ice. The hockey world is small and word gets around quickly.

Players are fortunate to have gone through some of this scrutiny during their early years to prepare them for what is coming @ some point in your career. Hopefully they go through enough during their early years to recognize that the scrutiny, adversity and confusion they went through will serve them well in future years. Most players have yet to experience what it is like to have their game and personal make up "picked apart". They would have to do something "out of the ordinary" first so there is a higher level of expectation and accountability.

One of the biggest mistakes players, mentors and managers make is not taking a risk to avoid making a mistake; however, learning the consequences of each risk is paramount. The bottom line is there are very few successful people in life who are not risk takers. You don't play/coach/manage/ mentor to not get second guessed, you don't play not to lose. You train, practice and play to win. Most players don't see the difference in their conditioning level until they get themselves in better shape than the year before or they are in a setting where they can readily see others doing a certain exercise far better than they do that same exercise. This can be on ice or in an off ice. Awareness and exposure are necessary components to development. Reaction levels to exposure and awareness are different for every player. The bottom line is "what are you doing about your deficiencies that will enhance your assets"?

Any athlete, coach or mentor is @ their best when they are like the joyous, carefree little guy playing on an outdoor rink who doesn't worry about making a mistake. Don't ever lose that vibrant "ninth grade personality" where everything was new, fun, vibrant and an adventure in to the unknown.

Put mistakes behind you and recognize where you are today in the game knowing that

your real game will come if you keep working hard while waiting for your physical growth to meet your coordination. Get in to goal setting, etiquette, communication skills and developing a support system that you can build on as your career and life evolves. I've learned through the years that one conversation, email or letter to a young person @ the right time can transform a life. This is why I keep writing and talking to young people. I do it with the sincere wish that young people buy in to what it takes to be a "real person".

Pro players who work with young kids, and develop charitable foundations before they are established, put themselves on the line to be even more accountable. Try to find some time to work with kids in the youth program. You will find that your sub conscious mind will copy most every thing you tell them and you will start performing @ a higher level. Working with young people teaches you to "give back" and you learn early on that there is more to life than hockey. This will enhance your game.

Once your life is on display everywhere (internet, media, TV) it's going to have its effects. You have to watch what you do, what you say, what you wear and you can't necessarily have the best time. There are situations when you want to let loose and have fun, but you can't. So you suppress it. Eventually it creates an alter ego and you'll have situations where guys end up doing something stupid or out of the ordinary. You have to guard against this.

It is great to have players who bring their own edge to the team. Do this and you will find that edge will start to appear on your teammates. You are @ your best when you play with an "edge"; a little "dirt" in your game. Players, who study the game, define their role and develop a game within their game, have more success in any team setting. The good ones learn to separate offense from defense knowing they have to be good @ both. They learn that when one is not going good the other can support their career.

In the end, it's the players who are "real people" who end up creating the fiber of the team; not just the player. The same goes for new buildings, locker rooms and uniforms. It's not the building, locker room or new jersey that makes the program; it's the people; the people that administrate, manage, coach, support staff and play the game. We were put on this earth to "anoint ourselves" by maximizing our unique skills and managing our liabilities. There is no room for mediocrity.

When you reach a level where you want to be the best you can be every single time you step on the ice, you have reached a level reserved for special players. This type of player wants the puck and they want it in critical moments.

Have a great year, and send me an update by text, email, call or all of the above. Keep working hard; stay intense and you will see a lot of good things happen in your life. The strong survive in this game.

I enjoyed typing this because I know deep down the good that can come out of communication. That gives me a special feeling inside; just knowing I took the time to do

something out of the ordinary for a young person I care for. It's an easy way for me to build my "net worth". -ole gringo- <http://www.mnhockeycamps.com> or [chuck@mnhockeycamps.com](mailto:chuck@mnhockeycamps.com)