

# Bench Management

Game Day Coaches Clinic

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# Opening Task:

Please write down “your” top 5 items that you think about in terms of “Bench Management”.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

No right or wrong , just want you thinking about your list during the presentation.

# Sports Comparison:

- Baseball – Game happens at slow pace – time for Manager to think.
- Football – A “Huddle” and a chance for coach to call every play 1 at a time.
- Basketball – Multiple “Time Outs” and chance to make adjustments. Probably the closest to hockey and most off the bench coaching during plays.

# Bench Management:

- What is it ?
- Why is it important ?
- Understanding Bench Management.
- Coaching vs Speculation on bench.
- Learn to “See and Coach the Game”



# Bench Management cont'd:

For all the skills and hockey knowledge you have , understanding the key elements of bench management , analysis and scouting may mean the difference between “Winning” and “Losing”.



# Bench Management cont'd:

Bench Coaching has two significant elements:

1. Coach must have the right players on the ice at the right times ... and ..
2. The Coach is responsible , at least in part , for the emotional condition of the players.

# Resources of Coaches:

- Coaching Staff
- Physical Conditions of Arena  
(Bench Size , Doors and Layout)
- Game Card
- Coach Board
- Stop Watch

# Coaching Staff:

- Size of Staff – Variable
- Who is on the bench ?
- Roles of Coaches : Forward Coach
  - Defense Coach
  - “Fireman”
  - Eye in the Sky
  - Goaltender Coach

# Coach as a “Role Model” :

- Teams are generally a reflection of the coach’s personality and actions.
- Keys to a positive role model:
  - Calm / In Control
  - Organized
  - A “Leader”
- Effective delegation of authority is a true mark of Leadership.



# Coaching Styles:

- Everyone has their own personality
- Not possible to be an “Exact Copy” of another coach.
- No “Right” or “Wrong” style.
- Common Keys to Successful Styles:
  - Positive
  - Enthusiastic
  - Controlled

# Coaching Styles cont'd:

Marc Crawford once said about Coaches that they tend to coach 1 of 2 different ways :

1. “They will coach as they were coached themselves.”  
or
2. “They will coach the way that they wish they were coached.”



# Coach's Philosophy:

- How you behave in the “heat of the battle” will be dictated by your overall philosophy.
- A Coach's Philosophy is based on:
  - Overall Seasonal Plan
  - Individual Game/Matchup
  - Playoff/Special Event
  - Personal Morals and Beliefs



# Seasonal Plan Philosophy:

- What do you have for player personnel on your team?
- At what stage of “development” is your team at ?
- Where is your coaching focus ?  
(Ind Skills and/or Team Concepts)

Your staff's focus and approach will be the keys to success or failure.



## Seasonal Plan Philosophy cont'd:

- You must have an overall “Team Plan” in order to have the proper level of success.
- As Coaches , we should limit the amount of deviation from the original plan. Resist the panic urges!
- Remember: Coaching is not an exact science.



## Game Philosophy Considerations:

Topics to be covered are:

- Line Matchups vs Opposition
- Line Changes
- Game Ice Management
- “On the Fly” Game Adjustments
- Situational Management
- Coach to Player Feedback
- Stress Management



# Line Matchups:

As a Coaching Staff you must analyze both team's strengths and weaknesses. You will have to take into consideration the following:

- Match up vs “Star” players
- Line vs Line matchups
- “D” pair vs Players and/or Lines
- Sometimes “Let them Roll” - Build

# Match Ups contd.....

Home Team vs Visiting team mindset.

- Home Team – Be organized and have players know your matchups.
- Visiting Team – Tips:
  - Huddle Approach
  - Discourage by starting checker
  - Stretch change rules and the Referee's sense of humor.



# Key Points of Game:

Every game has some “key” moments for you to attempt to control with good bench management:

- First and Last Shifts of a Period
- 1 Min following goals
- Shift right after Penalty Kills and Power Plays (Watch matchups)
- Opportunities to get right matchups
- Coachable Moments

# Line Changes:

- Player Alignment – Doors vs Jump Boards options.
- Forward and Defense doors (Door Openers – Ensure organized)
- Ensure players go for positions
- Be aware of Long Change Issues (2<sup>nd</sup> Period)

# Line Changes (Cont'd)

- Encourage “D” to change one at a time
- Have “Fresh D” jump to far side to make 2<sup>nd</sup> D’s change easier
- Organize early on bench “Who for Who” – No Panic/ No Surprises
- Organize change of Player coming from Penalty Box – Avoid D/F Confusion

# Line Changes Cont'd:

- Work on set plays of DZ draws to create an opportunity.(ie. Box Stretch)
- Some “Simple Garth” Rules:
  - Dump puck on Bench Side
  - “F” control puck and allow time for change
  - Have a set play for “Quick Up”
  - No passes to bench during changes
  - Hustle to bench and need “Bench Awareness” of all players & coaches.

# Game Ice Management:

- Shift Length – 40 – 50 Seconds
- Bench Staff – Stopwatch / Track (Coach and Player Awareness Key)
- Faster changes and quicker pace to the game are the results
- Automatic Changes – Whistle after 30 Seconds



## Game Ice Management Cont'd.....

Coach's challenge to find roles/ice for "all" players on the team.

Make all players feel they are part of the team and provide them a chance to contribute. Utilize each player's strengths.

"Special Challenge" – 22 Man Bench

# Game Ice Management Cont'd..

- Power Play Units: 2 Units / Mix and Match as team talent dictates
  - Ensure systems and roles are well practiced and known by whole team
- Penalty Kill Units : 3 – 4 Pairs
  - Similar to PP / Team approach
- Try to find Ice for all players in roles that allow them to use talents

# Game Ice Management Cont'd..

- Common Pitfalls:
  - Event related – “Loss of Focus”
  - Overplaying “Star” players
  - Flow of Lines disrupted  
(# of special team shifts)
  - Dictated Matchups by opposition
  - Over focus on “Matchups”

# “On the Fly” Game Adjustments:

## Topics to be covered:

- Game Card usage.
- What to watch for ? Big Picture vs Little Picture.
- Who to watch ?
- How to communicate and exchange information and observations.
- Pace of the game control. Attempt to “Dictate vs React.”
- Effective use of Timeouts.

# Game Card Usage:

- Important information to track:
  1. Our Lineup
  2. Opposition's Lineup
  3. Power Play and Penalty Kill Units
  4. Plus/Minus Chart
  5. 6 vs 5 or 5 vs 6 late game lineups
  6. Notes section and blank rinks for explanations.
  7. "Garth's Other Purpose" !!



# What to watch ?

To be an effective Coach you have to be able to recognize what is actually happening on the ice.

You must learn to recognize the difference between “Big Picture” items and “Little Picture” items.

Early in all coach’s careers we truly don’t understand what to look for.



# Big Picture vs Little Picture:

Big Picture items are to me the following “5” items:

1. How hard is your team working?
2. How well are your players executing?
3. Who is playing well for you tonight?
4. What is the opposition doing to create difficulty for us?
5. What matchups does the opposition coach want?



## Big Picture vs Little Picture cont'd:

From the “Big” picture analysis many of the following “Little” picture items will be clearer and easy to prioritize.

1. Forechecking Patterns
2. Power Play alignments
3. Breakouts
4. Face off plays

# Who/What to watch ?:

- Coaching Staff should be organized and know what areas of the team they are responsible for.
- Each coach should automatically know his/her watch list
- My thoughts are “Own Team First”
- Watch for critical breakdowns
- Head Coach–“Ultimate Responsibility”

# Communication:

- On bench communication important and must be done on a regular basis – Share your observations
- Period Breaks – Set up a standard set of Topics – DZ , B/Outs etc.
- “Eye in the Sky” report , stats examination and video if available
- Communication with Officials



## Communication cont'd:

- On bench communication should be ongoing during the game.
- Midway point of 1<sup>st</sup> Period good time to exchange observations of “Your Team” plus “Opposition.”
- Communication can be – “Coach to Coach” as well as “Coach to Players”
- Make all coaches feel comfortable

# Pace of the Game Control:

Coaches have limited control of the “Pace” of the game except for:

- Line Change Frequency
- Rule/Interpretation “Visits” with Referee
- Goaltender Change(s)
- “Unfortunate” Goaltender Equipment delays
- Timeouts

# Timeouts:

- When and Why to call them?
  1. Early – Stop the bleeding
  2. Early – Slow the pace/Nerves
  3. Anytime – Discipline or Loss of Focus
  4. Anytime – Rest key player(s)
  5. Late – Set up Offensive Play

# Timeouts cont'd:

## Special Situation Timeouts:

- Goalie out – End of game.
- Set Faceoff Plays

A member of the coaching staff and should be prepared to diagram out play and personnel.

- Whiteboard
- Pre-drawn plays ( Fill Player #'s)



# Coach Feedback:

Your during the game feedback is key for many reasons.

Two of the most important reasons are:

1. Tactical adjustments
2. Player Motivation and/or Deflation

Feedback can come in both Verbal and Non-Verbal forms.



# Coach Feedback cont'd:

Some simple Rules:

- Stay calm and in control
- Be intense and focused but not too emotional
- Check your language
- Try for some positive feedback
- Make sure all coaches on same page for a consistent message

# Coach Feedback cont'd:

- Think before you speak!
- Do not “Argue” with players on bench
- Yelling at Players – More harm than good – Don't lose your team! How you say something is as important as what you say
- Value of bench yelled instructions ?
- Body Language – 80% of your message goes to your players Non-verbally

# Coach Feedback cont'd:

## Verbal Feedback Keys:

- Use “Cue” words
- Be concise and to the point
- Limit comments to 1 or 2 points
- Be as positive as possible
- Positively challenge players
- Know your players personalities and their current state of mind.

# Coach Feedback cont'd:

## Verbal Feedback Keys cont'd:

- Don't "Over Coach" the game
- Do not just give "Puck" related feedback as 98% of the players time is without the puck
- Be consistent but not always predictable
- Never stop coaching – Regardless of the score!



# Stress Management:

Individual mental prep of the Coach and his ability to keep his mind on the game along with his intuition and following of gut feelings are quite often the difference.

As mentioned earlier – a team is generally a reflection of a coach's personality and demeanor. Hectic Coach = Hectic Team !

# Stress Management cont'd:

Some “Negative” stressors:

- Reaction to the importance of the game
- Reaction to your team's poor play
- Reaction to other coach's or other team's actions
- The Ref's calls or non-calls!

# Stress Management cont'd:


## Some Positive Tips:

- Keep perspective at all times
- Never let things bother you
- Focus on what you can control (Do your job and not the refs)
- Be prepared for all situations
- Never show panic or confusion – “Contagious” – Remember the Duck!



# Final Comment:

- Bench Management is all about “Common Sense”
- If you are prepared , relaxed and can view the “Big Picture” clearly – Common Sense is your friend
- Bench Management is a skill in itself and you can work at it and improve
- I hope I have provoked some thought about Bench Management



Thanks for your attention and  
“Have a great season”!

# References

- Andy Murray (HP Presentations)
- Terry Bangen – Coaches Club
- Red Gendron – Book – “Coaching Hockey Successfully”
- Perry Pearn – 2000 ICC
- Marc Crawford – 2006 ICC