

THE HOCKEY MOM | By Christie Casciano Burns

Hard Work Is Not One Tap Away

I COULD EASILY FILL THIS COLUMN with tired adages about the importance of hard work. It's a well-covered topic filling our favorite stories. Our beloved protagonist takes on an arduous journey and is rewarded with everything they wanted in the end! Regardless, human nature compels us to try to look for shortcuts in life. We have a funny habit of seeing success in others and calling it "overnight success." The reality is, there is no overnight success. We just may not have seen the work that went into it.

The long and hard way is tried and true. These days, though, it continues to seem that everything is one click or tap away. It can be a struggle to make the case that the old-fashioned way wins in the end. Fast is the new normal. Our kids have been raised in a world of instant gratification fueled by high-speed internet and cell phones.

Moving the puck quickly is often the goal out on the ice, but my daughter, Sophia, pointed out there are plenty of times where patience pays dividends on the ice. Waiting for the goalie to bite on a move can lead to some daylight for a shot to sneak in. Waiting for a defender to crossover while skating backwards can show a player which way to accelerate around them.

"I feel young players (any player actually) will always benefit from the fundamentals of the game for long-term success," said Mike Bonelli, a youth hockey coach in New York. "Having the ability to "Michigan" and toe drag are fun skills to work on, but nothing replaces the need for players to show consistency in the game. A good first pass, accurate shooting and good skating skills

to help get in the right position will all help players be versatile and dependable."

Versatility and dependability are good skills to have on and off the ice, and they don't develop overnight, added Lee Elias, a fellow coach and author in Philadelphia.

"You must allow yourself patience with the process," said Elias.

That's the quote Elias will share with players, coaches and parents regarding their hockey journey.

"The truth is, if you want to build your game, you will dedicate the hours it takes to work on your craft," Elias said. "Too often we are searching for shortcuts to stand out that aren't there. When in fact the true tactics—hard work, perseverance, overcoming obstacles, having determination, being coachable, being humble and/or being consistent—all will never go out of style.

Yet what about the "fun"amentals of hockey everyone is always preaching?

Bonelli says having fun is a huge part of a successful youth hockey playbook.

"Set aside time to work on the fun and unique stuff to (help prevent) training from getting too stale. But players also have to remember that good, positive repetitions reinforce the skills that will keep them in the game and be an active player on their team. (That) is what counts in the end."

Bonelli emphasized that proper technique, balance, and form have to be a center of attention for all players.

"If you practice shooting with really bad technique for 20 weeks, you're going

to be really good at having a bad shot in the end," Bonelli said.

So how do we get our kids on the right path? We could recite the countless quotes about the importance of hard work or we could communicate and demonstrate its importance in real time.

Let's encourage our kids to do things the hard way—the "right way." Talk to them about those who were successful behind closed doors doing the work that nobody saw instead of only talking about it on social media. ☆

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