

Motivating Your Players

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A coach has two primary responsibilities to his or her players. One responsibility is to provide the guidance and leadership necessary to help each individual player develop into a champion on and off the ice. The other is to orchestrate this group of individuals into a cohesive, successful unit.

To achieve these goals, a coach must be able to motivate players and encourage them to strive for levels they may not believe they are capable of reaching. For this to happen, the players must know that the coach cares about them. The coach's character and the actions and words the coach lives by are what builds players' trust and provides them with the confidence to follow and grow.

As a relationship with each of the players develops and the players become more willing to give, the coach can demand more and expect more of them. The coach can challenge and motivate his or her players to reach higher than their current level. Every player is unique and may need to be motivated in a different way. A coach must find out what motivates a specific individual and assist that player in drawing out this energy. The more personal attention and individual time spent with each player, the greater the opportunity for the coach to recognize how to develop that person's passion. Here are a few ways a coach can learn more about his or her players:

- Conduct one-on-one interviews with each player
- Observe and interact with the players away from the arena (ie. bowling, ball hockey, mini golf)
- Organize social gatherings (eg. a barbecue) and invite players' parents and other family members
- Ask players to complete personal questionnaires outlining their hockey background and favourite outside activities

There are many ways a coach can challenge the players and the team to give an extra effort. There may be a reward or recognition given for certain accomplishments. A few examples are listed below:

- 212 Degrees Award – presented immediately following each game by the previous recipient to the player showing willingness to give an extra effort at all times. The significance of the award is as follows:
When you have a pot of water on the stove and it reaches a temperature of 211 degrees Fahrenheit, you have only a pot of hot water. By adding only one degree, you increase the temperature to 212 degrees Fahrenheit, the boiling point of water, and now you have steam power – a force that can move mountains. By simply elevating your effort one degree, there is no telling what you may accomplish, and by everyone on our team elevating their game one degree, we can move mountains.
- Hard Hat Award – presented to the hardest working player
- Game Puck – presented to the player most deserving (MVP of game, great play, etc)
- Team reward of shinny hockey next practice for achieving a certain goal (ie. penalty free game, generating a certain number of scoring chances or shots)

The willingness of a coach to challenge the players and deliver continuous encouragement enhances the opportunity for individual growth and team development. It is a tremendous honour to be called 'Coach'. To know that we, as coaches, have the opportunity to influence and touch the lives of others is truly a special feeling. It is our duty to do our utmost to motivate our players and help give them an outstanding experience each day we are with them.