



Ultimate “Guaranteed to Work” Off Ice Training

Off ice training has become more and more common with hockey players of all ages as facilities are made available and trainers for hire flourish. As with all on and off ice training the effectiveness is dependent on the athlete and the training environment.

Most agree that the long term outcome for athlete performance depends primarily on the make up of the individual athlete. Training regimes can certainly help an athlete do better but not that much better. An individual athlete can train to increase speed, quickness, and strength. Game understanding seems to be more difficult to learn for some regardless of what they do on or off the ice. Perception and the ability to see the ice well do not seem to be able to be easily learned especially as players get into their teen years and beyond.

Most coaches who have been at this more than few years have worked with kids who have spent an incredible amount of time and money on training programs and camps with very little to show for it. This is not necessarily bad as there are many lessons they learn in the process even though they do not reach the higher levels of the game. Maybe the time could be better spent in other areas.

There is one area of off ice training that each and every player can and should pay close attention to in order to insure they have an abundant number of choices and opportunities as they get older. This particular training is available to every single player in the country and it is free. The program is called an education and it only requires time and effort.

The NCAA reports that there are eleven dollars of academic scholarships available for every dollar of athletic scholarships and there are so many more academic opportunities for kids at all schools. Putting ones eggs into one basket is foolhardy at best.

Many parents are of the belief that the goal is to get a college scholarship to pay for school. Even if your son or daughter were offered the opportunity to play in college, is it the right school academically? It makes more sense to identify the right schools in advance and work towards achieving the academic background necessary to attend the colleges of choice. I know many athletes from Minnesota who accepted athletic scholarships at schools they had never heard of a couple years earlier and then returned home after one year.

Very few college athletes have the opportunity to earn a paycheck in the pros. When their college careers are over they leave to begin their next phase in life. I have met many who have not prepared themselves for the adult stage of life by getting the education they need to be successful. A few years ago I interviewed a former collegiate and European league player for a job at our company and his salary requirements were \$100,000 a year minimum which was way above our starting levels. He explained that is what he was getting paid to play hockey and therefore believed that we should pay him the same. I politely explained to him that we do not play hockey at our company and he needed to start at the same level as everybody else. Essentially he had limited skills to offer and his education was thin.

Our world is becoming increasingly competitive and our kids will need to be well prepared to succeed. As good as the public schools are in Minnesota, many students have trouble passing the state math requirements which are actually pretty low to start with. Reading and critical thinking skills are also on the decline. Math, science, reading, writing and foreign languages (Canadian is not a foreign language) are all important for the future of this generation.

The admissions requirements at major universities like Minnesota have gone up over the past decade. Yes, top athletes at Division 1 schools can be admitted with lower than average test scores, but it is important to remember that essentially a scholarship means the player is an employee of the school athletic department. Sports come first, academics second. Division 3 hockey schools do not offer scholarships and correctly put academics ahead of athletics. The long term goal should be a high quality education in order to be able to compete after hockey.

In order to get into a good college that fits the academic interests of a student it will require more than a little attention to school work. I have spent many years around the private and public schools in the state and know first hand that many kids cannot qualify academically for the top private high schools even with a public school GPA over 3.25. If a student athlete cannot get into a good private high school due to academic deficiencies in 9th or 10th grade it is a very safe bet that the college choices available to that athlete are significantly reduced. What a shame because academic achievement is available to all of our kids. It takes time and effort but every young person that tackles the challenge will be a winner. There are no tryouts, no cuts, no politics and no barriers other than deciding to accept the challenge of excellence and applying one self to the task at hand. It likely means extra work outside of the classroom. It means dryland training for the brain.

When I talk to college coaches and junior coaches across the country about players the first question they ask is "How are his or her grades?" You see, average grades and average ACT and SAT scores eliminates nearly half of the schools that an athlete can possibly attend. All of those hours of extra training off and on ice for so little opportunity when a world of opportunity exists for those who accept the academic challenge. On the other hand academic excellence combined with athletic ability opens the doors to so many more schools and the low numbers of qualified candidates means less competition

for spots. Think of the tremendous lifetime opportunities available to athletes who attend Ivy League colleges and other top academic institutions.

Finally, it is important to remember that for 95% or more of young athletes the athletic training will benefit them for only a few years, but a high quality education will benefit an athlete for a lifetime. Balance is the key. Train the body for sports and the brain for life.

Hit the weights and the books!

Prepare for the game of your life and more importantly the game of life.

Hal Tearse

Coach in Chief

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