

Coaches Corner:

I would like to take the opportunity to welcome all the student athletes and parents to the 2011 Louis St. Laurent Barons High School Hockey Academy. As a staff we fully understand that our dedication is critical in determining the type of experience our student athletes will have during the hockey academy year.

Since last year's academy we have all committed ourselves towards gaining personal growth to pass on to the student athletes. Dave RATHJEN and Jamie MCCAIG have involved themselves with the Drumheller Dragons and the Grande Prairie Storm of the Alberta Junior Hockey League in addition to instructing and working with Hockey Alberta's Under 15, Under 16 and Under 17 Programs of Excellence as well as the Specialty Skills Development Certification program. Larry DRAPER and I had the privilege of attending the Alberta Development Model seminar hosted by Hockey Alberta where Tom RENNEY and Paul CARSON (Hockey Canada) spoke on the importance of ensuring that the primary focus of a coach at the minor hockey level was to establish a way for everyone (players, parents and coaches) to contribute to the "TEAM" together. Their message was about ensuring that every organization and coach was clearly focused on the 'process' towards providing every player with a positive growth experience and it was incredibly powerful to the minor hockey associations in attendance which included coaches, presidents and managers from the W.H.L., A.J.H.L., A.M.H.L., A.M.M.H.L. and the A.B.H.L. We also have been Level 1 and 2 Specialty Skills certified and have had the pleasure of working with and being mentored by Billy MOORES of the Edmonton Oilers throughout 2010 and 2011. Larry has also worked with the Spruce Grove Saints of the Alberta Junior Hockey League.

As coaches we know that we have a tremendous opportunity to be strong role models along with being aware that our impact will be remembered for a lifetime by the players we work with. Our coaching approach is athlete-centered with an expectation for player development using an 'artful balance of the 'thirst for competition' while providing all of the athletes we coach with meaningful developmental opportunities. Our focus remains to educate, nurture, and empower our student athletes to enhance their personal growth and development.

As we prepare for the 2011 hockey academy year as coaches we need to always keep in mind the following key points:

- Ø Kids are involved because they love the game;
- Ø We need to grow everyday (it's all about positive growth and development as well as focusing on the process of improving everyday);
- Ø It is about coaching individual youth athletes and recognizing their self-worth at all times by keeping the "Big Picture Perspective" in mind relating to what kind of impact we want to leave;
- Ø Hockey is the greatest game ever played and the experiences and lessons learned from it will last our athletes a life time;
- Ø As coaches we have to always fully embrace the concept that we are the 'developers of young champions' on and off the ice. Every one of us has to be committed to making a difference in the lives of our players! It is not about us - it is always about the kids we coach;

- Ø As coaches we will always take on a positive approach and strive to be “Artists of Encouragement“ in order to inspire our athletes to do their very best. Being negative and ‘old school’ will never work with kids today;
- Ø We have to understand that there is an “I” in Team - it is the place that no other player can fill (understanding that utilizing a player’s value, whatever that might be, is what makes them valuable);
- Ø Remembering that ‘no one cares about how much you know until they know just how much you care;’
- Ø The ‘Self-Esteem and Image’ of the athlete is always # 1. Our goal as coaches is to leave every individual with a “successful image” of themselves by helping them remember that “no one is better than they are and no one is worse than they are;”
- Ø Remembering to be patient with ‘the process.’ The only certain thing with coaching is the start and the end of the academy. Always remember that ‘the middle’ is the most important because that is where the journey is;
- Ø The four most important words to any player from their coach is “I believe in you;”
- Ø Remember to be ‘painfully positive and painfully patient’ through the ‘process of development’ - it will always ‘pay off in the end;’
- Ø Always being ‘fair’ by ‘coaching the group’ and excluding no one! As coaches we are completely obligated to make sure every student athlete is treated fair and coached equally;
- Ø Everyone of our student athletes should always feel valued for their contributions - they need to know that we are proud of them and that we appreciate their efforts no matter how small or how big - ‘we always have to let them know’ that they make a difference.;
- Ø Our goal as coaches this year is to walk away from this year’s hockey academy season knowing that we were fair to all of our student athletes and that we created a ‘winning culture’ for them to develop both physically and mentally to serve them well beyond the hockey arena.

If there is anything that myself, Larry, Dave or Jamie can help out with please feel free to contact us at anytime (*coaching advice, materials, career information and planning, on-ice assistance, camp... - you name it*).

Looking forward to a great year as well as to seeing you around the rink.

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