

Tucker Tips

Simon Says Drill

In the Spring / Summer 2014 Hockey Zones issue of Tucker Hockey Tips, I offered some pointers on Timbit and Novice instruction. First and foremost, what I have learned is that on ice instruction for this age group requires a great deal of patience and the ability to be repetitive. Keep reinforcing the key teaching points in a positive manner over and over again! Some days the kids are awesome - they are eating out of the palm of your instructional hand - paying attention i.e. watching and listening. However, there are other days when they are indeed a handful - lacking attention, focus and commitment to skill development. But we must always keep in mind - they are young kids!

The best drill I have used on the ice for helping young players pay attention i.e. watching and listening is the Simon Says drill. The instructor calls out commands preceded with "Simon Says" or not (commands could relate to material covered in the practice or fresh material). Players can move only if the command has preceded by the words, "Simon Says". Players moving without the proper command are given some sort of penalty.

Usually, I will have one of my younger instructors run the drill and we call it "Liam Says", "Alannah Says" or "Sheila Says" etc. The instructor will stand on one of the blue lines and will have the players spread out in the neutral zone looking towards the instructor in charge. It's important to ensure the players have room to do the drill properly - a full stick length of distant (360 degrees) from other players. The players must really watch and listen to do the exercises properly. For example...if Alannah says "Alannah says

balance on one skate"...and the players do the same ... there's aren't any penalties. If Alannah says "Balance on one skate"...and some of the players do what was said... there's a penalty...an example is 2 pushups.

This drill offers a great opportunity for instructors to enhance individual players' attention skills while also working on their hockey skill development which can include: Forward and backward hockey stances, forward and backward edges, balancing exercises, falling down and getting up properly, lateral movement and lateral crossovers, 360 degree turns, jumps, hops, dance moves and best goal celebration etc. You can think of a variety of different exercises and become quite creative and animated. It's fun for the kids!

Have your assistant instructors monitor the players and offer individual encouragement as well. Kids do not want to be embarrassed / singled out by not doing the drill properly and the consequence of doing a few push ups, so they will pay attention i.e. watching and listening very closely. By improving their attention spans it will help build on other drills and skills throughout the practice and throughout the season. It's a fun drill to do during the middle of an on ice session / practice to break things up from the more serious skill development drills.

In summary, Simon Says will improve young player's attention i.e. watching and listening; enhance individual skill development and overall enjoyment. Give it a try and see improved results throughout the season! Coach Rex says "Simon Says"!

Shortening the Bench (Cont'd from 6)

Is this not what we as parents spend the money, not to mention the time commitment, on? To see our kids there, dedicated to the team, & love for the game? They work hard preparing for tryouts and get placed on teams based on evaluations – now they look to the coach to lead them as one through the season. Does this not equal the right to be on the ice each in their due turn?

Is it not part of a coach's job is to ensure each & every player wants to be there, is valued, is equal & that the role they play is crucial to make a team complete? Won't the team only get

stronger & improve if they continue to develop and play as a team?

It would be like bookends - with the coach's gift of developing his players as a team on one end, the gracious parents on the other, & the team in the middle - full support to a collection of happy kids, & fair play.

That in itself is the win.

Warm Regards,
'Hockey Mom'