

## Chemistry on the Ice

Oxford's Dictionary defines the word chemistry in the following way: "The science of the elements and compounds and their laws of combination and change resulting from interactions between substances in contact".

Chemistry can create some very special moments and memories. We witness chemistry throughout our day to day living from personal relationships, dance partners and unique friendships, etc. On occasion a person will have the rare and unique experience of meeting someone for the first time but feel like he or she has known this individual most of his or her life. It's a very special and comfortable feeling.

When relating chemistry to hockey, championship teams have special chemistry on and off the ice. The Montreal Canadiens, New York Islanders, and Edmonton Oilers dynasties besides having incredible talent had exceptional chemistry on the ice. It's a necessary and paramount ingredient in building a winner.

Chemistry on the ice between players is a special thing to watch! Players pass the puck around, make incredible plays and score highlight reel goals. From a viewer's perspective, it appears players who showcase great chemistry on the ice know exactly where their teammates are going to be on the ice! Players make behind the back passes, blind passes, anticipate their teammate's tendencies on the ice and work incredibly well together!

Individual as well as team success depends on the degree of chemistry on the ice. When thinking about hockey chemistry on the ice... the following players come to mind over the years. Gretzky & Kurri, Trottier & Bossy, Kariya & Selanne, and Iginla & Conroy i.e. last season... just to name a few. I am sure you can think of many, many more. Jarome Iginla had an outstanding season last year. However, Iginla would be the first to admit without the special chemistry and play from Craig Conroy last year's exceptional season would not have been possible.

After the first two periods of the Flames vs. Bruins game this week, Glen Murray had scored 3 goals. During the second intermission, the television interviewer complimented Murray on his great play. Murray stated "It sure helps to be playing with a player like Joe Thornton... we have great chemistry on the ice!!" When watching the Rangers play last week, I observed the lack of chemistry between Pavel Bure and Eric Lindros who were playing on the same forward line. They could not get anything going on the ice! Even when sitting on the player's bench, these two players did not communicate i.e. discuss their play, strategies or tactics on the ice. I really question the coaching staff's motivation for keeping these two players together! Each may be a star but there's very little, if any chemistry... and little or no scoring production!

For anyone who has played the game, I am sure he or she has experienced a situation where there's great chemistry among line mates / teammates... playing the game is fun... where there's no chemistry... playing becomes a chore and a very frustrating experience!

It's important for coaches to recognize the presence or absence of chemistry... coaches and their players need to communicate so as to make necessary adjustments throughout a game or season to enhance overall performance. Chemistry on the ice, between two players, a forward line or a 5 man unit is critical for good team play. The old Soviet National teams were legendary for playing with a great deal of on ice chemistry. Their 5 man units played so well together! Team Canada '72 found this out real quick during the opening game of the 1972 Summit series in Montreal. Team Canada gradually developed exceptional team chemistry throughout the 8 game series and it ultimately paved the way for a thrilling come back series victory! The Henderson - Clarke - Ellis forward line was Team Canada's best and most consistent line game in and game out throughout the series but definitely not the most talented line!

Food for Thought: A talented team will win games even series but not championships... unless the team displays great chemistry on and off the ice!

Yours in Hockey,  
Coach Rex