

Section 2: Rationale for Intro to Hockey Programming

Benefits of Half Ice Games

"You have to be able to make plays in pretty small areas. The more you practice in small spaces the better off you are."

Sidney Crosby, Canadian National Men's Team



Hockey Canada – Long Term Player Development Model

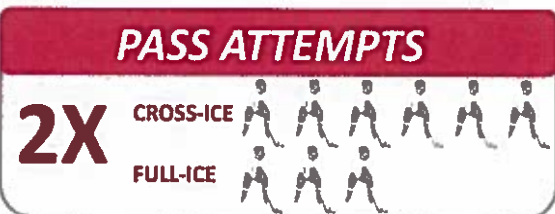
Parents and coaches need to think long term and not worry too much about children being the best player on the ice in Initiation and Novice hockey. Putting young players in a competitive environment to early will compromise the child's development. Children should only be placed in to competitive situations that suit their skill level and abilities. Parents and coaches must be realistic about what children should be able to do all age levels. The Hockey Canada's Long Term Player Development strategy is very important.

It is important to understand and appreciate the benefits of cross ice and half ice hockey and why Hockey Canada has a national policy ensuring all Initiation and Novice level hockey is played in smaller, modified spaces.

- Increased emphasis on skating skills including agility, balance, coordination and quickness.
- The number of puck battles increases significantly.
- Puck control and puck protection skills are enhanced resulting in more confidence.
- The fundamentals of skating, puck control, passing, and shooting are reinforced.
- Less time and space increase the frequency and speed of making hockey decisions.
- A more challenging environment offered to improve ice awareness and elevate hockey sense.
- Increased intensity of competition results through the progressive skill improvement of players.
- The increase in incidental body contact requires players to play with their heads up and acquire spatial awareness.
- Players improve in the areas of contact confidence and body contact.

INTRO TO HOCKEY RESOURCE GUIDE

A quick statistical summary illustrates the advantages of the smaller-surface games model.



Small spaces equate to more engaged in the play:

- All players are close to the play at all times and have much more opportunity for puck touches.
- Regardless of the skill level or the ability of each player, their opportunities to be engaged in the play increase by double when the playing areas is smaller.

A very large difference between full ice and small areas:

- There are 6 times as many shots on goal or at goal in a cross-ice or half ice game.
- Players are closer to the puck at all times and the puck finds its way to the net much more often.
- Goalies are more engaged and feel a bigger part of the game.

Shrinking the playing surface increases offense:

- Players are much closer to the nets, skate shorter distance from goal to goal, and have increased opportunities for offensive play.
- Goalies are forced to make more saves thus increasing their development.

More of a team game is apparent:

- In the smaller area games, players are observed passing and attempting to pass the puck more often. This results for two reasons:
 - All players are close enough to pressure the puck more frequently.
 - Teammates are in close support of the puck carry at all times.

Short quick passes find their mark:

- In smaller spaces, more passes are attempted and most of these passes are 5 to 10 feet in length.
- When passes are shorter, accuracy improves, and players tend to have more success receiving the pass.
- Players also start to understand the importance of puck possession.

Hockey Alberta Skating Study

Acceleration

- Skating acceleration speeds increased as the ice surface size was reduced.

Top Speed

- Average distance players needed to reach top speed was 65 feet.
- Advanced skaters reached top speed in 60 feet or less.

What does it mean?

- Effective skating is a combination of turns, pivots, stops, starts and transitions.
- NHL's No. 1 skill isn't top speed; it's the ability to change speeds and accelerate quickly.
- Cross Ice / Half Ice trains players to skate the game, rather than simply skating fast in straight lines.



"The flat out use of maximum speed in hockey simply doesn't happen very often. What does happen is that you have to be adjusting, changing, going forward, backward, lateral, always turning and moving toward the puck: that's agility skating... smaller areas generate more stops, starts and turns."

Dr. George Kingston
Former NHL and Team Canada Head Coach