

Hockey-Vision : Supporting Youth Field Hockey

Attention to social behaviour is important when developing young players

Coaching young people means leading a development process: from dependence to independence. Where U10's are still highly dependent on the parents the U18 youth must be reasonably capable of acting independently. This development process expresses itself in mainly in the social behaviour of the youth. How do they deal with teammates, opponents, the trainer / coach, the referee and everyone else around the field? As a trainer it is important to pay specific attention to social behaviour. After all, this has a major impact on the fun of the game and team performance. This attention applies to all youth categories. We can divide young athletes into two broad age groups. The young person in primary school age and the student of secondary education. This split is rather arbitrary. Girls are roughly two years ahead of boys in terms of physical and psychosocial development. In addition, the developmental progress of young people of the same age varies greatly. It is nevertheless useful to state the various focus areas.



Youth from 7 to 12 years

The general classification of the young person between 7 to 12 years as "dependent" only covers part of the behaviour of primary school youth. "quickly distracted", "need for justice", "want to belong" and "need for clarity." are not uncommon terms either.

Dependent

The young child is dependent on adults for his or her primary needs (food, shelter, but also affection). The hockey team must be a safe place for the primary school child. In particular the atmosphere can be positively influenced by the trainer / coach / supervisor.

- By being friendly, the children will also be more inclined to behave in a friendly way towards the trainer and their teammates. For example, "Hello **everyone**, it's nice to see you again" as a welcome is always better than to hear "What are you late again."
- By clearly showing that you think positively about them (Example : "You are enthusiastic" to a busy boy) every child will feel at home. The children will behave accordingly in a positive way.

"Children understand more than you think."

Easily distracted

The interest of young children flies from one to the other. They can only concentrate if what they do is successful. Logical conclusion: make sure that the players experience success.

- A child considers itself successful if it has been able to complete an assignment. So take care of assignments that are feasible for all children.
-
- A child must know exactly when it has completed an assignment. So make it clear what the assignment or game form entails. In this way the child can determine that it has been doing well.

"Provide assignments that are feasible for all children."

Need for justice

Children have an extremely sensitive antenna for justice ("That's not fair!"). The supervisor who - in the eyes of the child - makes unjust decisions, can therefore count on fierce protest.

- The coach usually has clear arguments for his decision. For example with regards to the line-up. The simplest advice is to communicate these arguments to the children; they understand more than you think. And things they understand are more easy to accept. Even if they think the decision is a pity for themselves or for someone else. The chance of underestimating the comprehension capacity is greater than the chance of overestimating.

To want to be part of

As children get older, the group of peers plays an increasingly important role. The influence of what boyfriends and girlfriends do and don't do on their own actions increases year by year. (In a positive and negative sense.)

- The (pre game) team discussion can play a major role in learning from each other. Children often take on something from their peers more easily than from an adult. Therefore encourage children to talk to each other and listen to each other. Be a good example yourself!



Let children speak, respond to what they say and also ask others for their opinion. This gives all children the opportunity to be "heard", to experience success.

- Give children the opportunity to work with different teammates during the training; change the triplets and quarters very regularly in composition. Always explain this procedure! Also consider the "need for justice".

Need for clarity

We have already mentioned it before: clarity is of great importance for children.

- Make clear agreements about training attendance, being present on time, rotation / subbing.

Take consistent and logical measures with regard to not showing up, not canceling, unsportsmanlike conduct towards fellow players, opponents, referees.

Youth from 13 to 17 years

The classification of this age category as "independent" is not always correct. 13 to 15-year-olds in particular often have problems with this. Other characteristics of this age group are: "need for structure," contact seeking "and" conflicting ". For this age category, we also list the characterizations, with a number of tips.

Independent

The child has an increasing need to "deal with thing him/herself". This is not a motion of no confidence at the address of the trainer / coach / supervisor, but a necessary phase on the road to adulthood.

- Treat these athletes in the first instance as people who can work independently. So don't show? an exercise entirely, but rely on their own ability to improvise. The effects will often be surprising, and sometimes in other ways than you expect. If that happens make sure to tell the children then there??? is a different outcome. Please note: as a statement, not as a reproach! People don't learn much from blame; It only provides a lot of resistance.
- Show that you have positive expectations of their performance. This increases the motivation of the young people.

"Spend 90 percent of your time listening and at most 10 percent speaking."

Need for structure

Due to rapid physical and mental changes, the 13 to 17 year old often feels insecure. That is why he needs clarity and structure in all areas. To achieve optimum performance, the young person wants to know a lot.

- What is the purpose of this assignment? In other words: what do I learn from it?
- Why are we doing this now? Does this assignment make sense in the short term (the upcoming competition) or in the long term?
- How does the trainer show that I am doing well? (People learn more through confirmation than through denial.)
- What is the probability that I will do well? Is the assignment feasible? (See the previous about success experience.)
- How does this assignment work exactly? With whom? How long? What are the speed requirements?

This requires a clear explanation and motivation of every exercise. Always ask if each player has sufficient information. Take a break after asking this question; this way you actually give players the chance to answer.

Looking for contact

Young people of this age have a strong need to be taken seriously. The purpose of many actions is that they are considered to be full - no matter how little these actions appear at first sight. For many young people, negative attention seems to be far from preferable to no attention at all in this regard.

- These young people have an opinion on many issues. Take an interest in it, respond to it, discuss their own vision and incorporate suggestions. Spend 90 percent of your time listening and at most 10 percent speaking. In this way they experience equality and feel taken seriously. It will increase their motivation - and probably also their athletic performance.
- For the young athlete the trainer / coach is an important person within the club (identification). He therefore needs a personal relationship. Older youth (18-20 years) has less need for this; these young people are also more independent in this regard. Do not hesitate to have individual conversations; they will not affect group cohesion - on the contrary!

Conflicting

These kids are often seen as people with whom adults have to get on with it from time to time. Quarrels don't seem to be avoided. This observation is absolutely correct if the young person does not get the chance to perform "independently". If he is not given a structure and if the supervisor is unable to build up a personal relationship with him or her.



“Young people need a lot of clarity and structure.”

Important elements

If we summarize the foregoing, we see that in the process of dependence to??? independence, the following elements always recur:

- Be friendly. Children hardly take anything from someone they don't like.
- Be clear, Children want to know where they stand, what is expected of them.
- Be optimistic, Children like to be called to account for their independence. Show that you expect a lot from them.
- Be rewarding, Children work even harder when they notice they are doing something right.

Conversation skills

Finally we will discuss some "conversation skills". You can use this as a trainer / coach / supervisor in individual discussions and team discussions.

Give attention

Pay attention to the following:

- Be silent.
- Look at the athlete.
- Sit or stand relaxed and inviting.
- Reduce the distance.

Listen

You give targeted signals to the athlete based on what he tells and how he tells it. You have an ear and an eye for the verbal and non-verbal signals. You thereby show acceptance, understanding, equality and interest. Your reactions can be divided into non-verbal and verbal expressions.

"Show acceptance, understanding, equality and interest."

- Non-verbal: your "hums", "nods", "laughs", "makes gestures" and "uses your voice" (tone, volume) in accordance with the athlete's message.
- Verbal: you briefly summarize the message (content and feeling and meaning!), Ask a question for encouragement, complete a sentence.

A relationship between verbal and non-verbal signals is of course a prerequisite for effective communication.

Feedback

You are actively showing the player that you have understood:

- What the player says (the verbal expression).
- How the player says it (the non-verbal expression).

You do this by repeating in your own words what you have heard this player say or do. In this way you check your interpretation of the player's message. This will improve your relationship with the player and thereby also increase his ability to learn.

Continue asking

You want to encourage the player to more clearly formulate the facts or feelings he was talking about. After all, the learning process is stimulated if the player formulates what he or she gains in knowledge and insight. To do this, you take an element from the words or the behaviour of the player. Then ask for this. Please note: these questions do not contain a value judgment about what the player says.

For all communication situations in which you use the above mentioned skills, the following applies: non-verbal signals determine the quality of the players' answers!

HAVE FUN !