



PRESENTED BY

Tim Hortons

BLUE JACKETS HOCKEY LEAGUE

COLUMBUS, OHIO

APRIL 7, 2026

JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDNESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

INTRODUCTIONS



Dave Caruso

Executive
Director
Senior Director,
Amateur Hockey
Programming



Bill McCall

Manager,
Amateur Hockey
Programming



Derek Read

Manager,
Education and
Player
Development

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CLUB BACKGROUND

COLUMBUS, OHIO

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Club Background



- Founded 2022 with 6U/8U
 - 10U added in 2023
 - 12U/14U added in 2024
- City-wide, local, hockey program for all youth
- Focus on delivering a world class experience helping players Play, Love, and Excel in hockey and beyond
- Guiding Beliefs
 - Hockey is for Everyone
 - Hockey should be Fun
 - Everyone deserves a great coach

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WHERE WE ARE



JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

WHERE WE ARE



JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

BIG CLUB SUPPORT



- Big club directive of doing what is best for the kids.
- Support comes in many forms:
 - Legitimacy
 - Resources
 - Incentives for coach education
 - Player engagement

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THE J.A.C.K.E.T.S. WAY: OUR CORE VALUES



Journey

All players have a unique path into and through the game of hockey.



Acceptance

Be a place for everyone to grow their love of their game and shine in who they are.



Character

Developing good citizens, not just good hockey players.



Kindness

We treat everyone with kindness and respect.



Enjoyment

A passion for the game and for learning.



Teamwork

Work together, treat each other well, and cheer each other on.



Sportsmanship

Respect is given to teammates, coaches, the opponents, the officials, and the game.

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ESCAPING THE CRAB BUCKET



- North American view on youth sports
 - Pay for entry and success
 - FOMO - Fear Of Missing Out
- Changing old philosophies
 - Repetition, repetition, repetition
 - Coach Centered

Oh No You Don't!
Where do you think
you're going ?!
Come back down here
where the
rest of us belong !!



"The difficulty lies not so much in developing new ideas, as in escaping from the old ones."

-John Maynard Keynes

JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDNESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

OFFICE STAFF

Executive Director

Manager, Amateur Hockey Programming Manager, Education and Player Development

League-wide communication; Administration; Team Management; Practice Planning; Scheduling; Discipline Committee

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ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



RINK DUBLIN

RINK COORDINATOR

Off-ice logistics; Communication;
6U/8U Head of Coaching; Family
Support

PRACTICE GROUP DEV. COACH/GOALIE COACH

2-4 Teams; 35-45 Players

TEAM

2-3 COACHES; TEAM STAFF

12-16 Players

RINK NORTH

RINK COORDINATOR

Off-ice logistics; Communication;
6U/8U Head of Coaching; Family
Support

PRACTICE GROUP DEV. COACH/GOALIE COACH

2-4 Teams; 35-45 Players

TEAM

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12-16 Players

RINK EASTON

RINK COORDINATOR

Off-ice logistics; Communication;
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2-4 Teams; 35-45 Players

TEAM

2-3 COACHES; TEAM STAFF

12-16 Players

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ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



ALL RINK STAFF

HEADS OF COACHING 10U | 12U | 14U

Coaching Assignments; Coach Development;
Player Assessments; Player Development;
Parent Education

GOALIE DIRECTOR ALL AGES

Goalie Coach Recruitment; Coach Development;
Goalie Tracking and Development;
Goalie Ice Sessions

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CLUB NUMBERS



3 main facilities
about 15 minutes apart

CHILLER NORTH

654 Players

146 Coaches

CHILLER DUBLIN

637 Players

128 Coaches

CHILLER EASTON

484 Players

114 Coaches

TOTAL

1775 Players

388 Coaches

JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDNESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

OUR SEASON



Full season – September-February

- Offered at all ages
- Includes assessments, regular season, midseason tournament, and “playoffs”

Fall only – September-December

- Offered at 6U, 8U, and 10U
- Allows kids to go and play other winter sports in the new year

Winter only – January-February

- Offered at 6U, 8U, and 10U
- Allows kids to go and play other winter sports in the Fall

Spring Season – April-May

- Offered for 6U-10U
- Recent Learn to Play graduates only

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BLUE JACKETS PROGRAMS



62,000 Players

The **Blue Jackets Power Play Challenge** is a free school-based wellness program that uses hockey-themed fitness activities to help elementary students stay active, learn healthy habits, and meet Ohio physical education standards.



4,000 Players

Learn to Play (LTP) is an introductory youth hockey program for boys and girls ages 4–10 that provides equipment, certified coaching, and age-appropriate instruction to help beginners safely learn the fundamentals of hockey in a fun and supportive environment.



1,775 Players

The Blue Jackets Hockey League is a city-wide youth development league for players ages 5–14 that uses USA Hockey's American Development Model to provide age-appropriate coaching, structured competition, and a positive environment focused on skill development, enjoyment, and long-term participation in the sport.

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TRAINING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

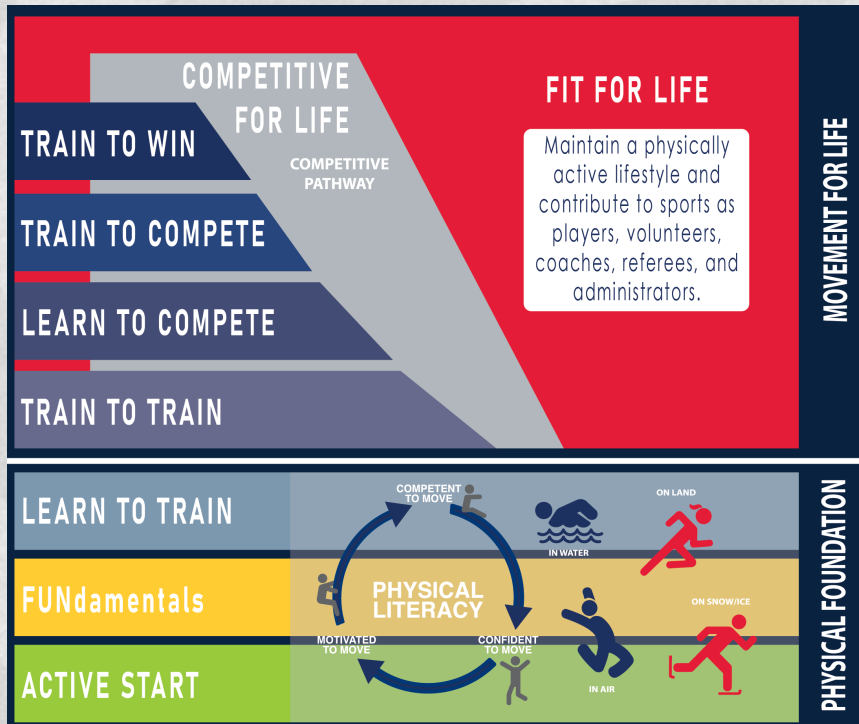
EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES AND GAMES

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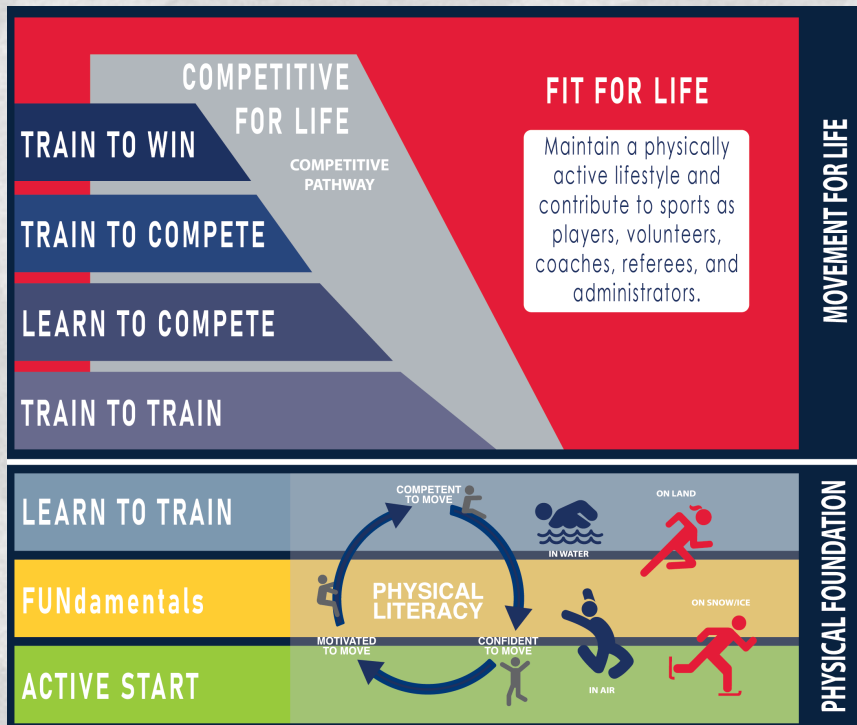
LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT



UNITED STATES
OLYMPIC & PARALYMPIC
COMMITTEE

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LONG TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT



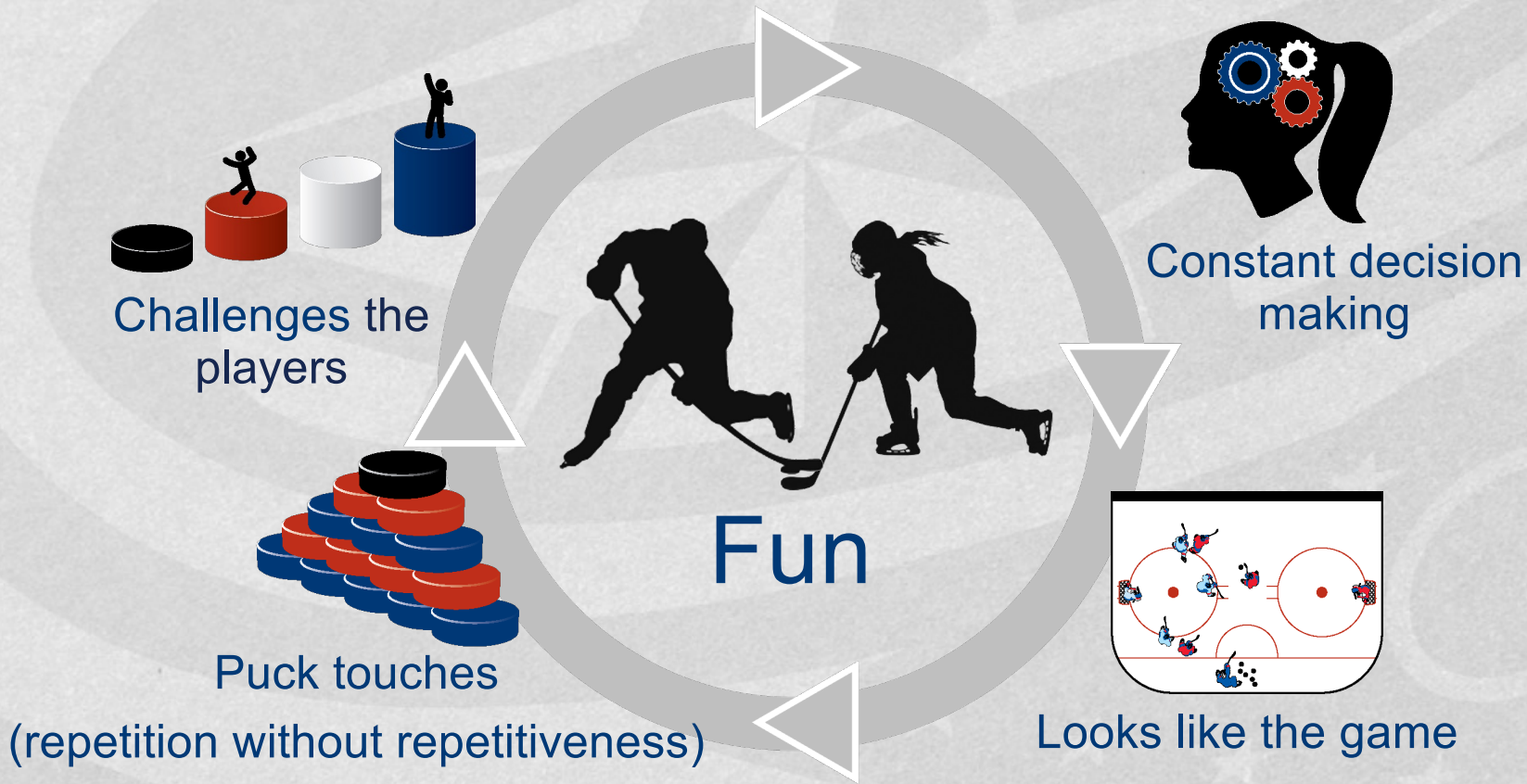
- Provide a **foundation** for all players in physical literacy
 - Allow for a schedule to play multiple sports
 - Give the players the tools to **climb the ladder** they want to climb
 - Develop **love of movement**
- A place for **all players** to play, not just the best
 - Traditional models prioritize the best and push out the worst
 - We **NEVER** tell a kid their dream cannot be achieved



Find out more here!

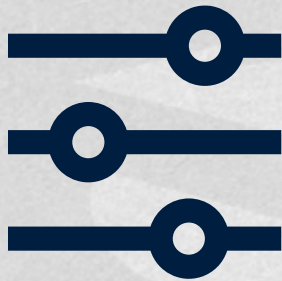
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5 ELEMENTS



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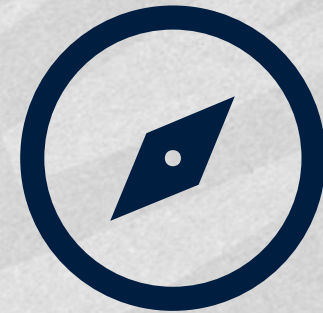
LEARNER CENTERED



Activities designed for
the level of the
participants



Coaches ask questions
and value player input



Coaches guide
learning through
progressions and
regressions

JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



- Specifies the ADM into our context.
- Provides guidance to our practice planning and coaches on the specific focus areas of each age group including technical and tactical focuses.

Age Group	6U	8U	10U	12U	14U
Expected Training Age	0-2 years	2-4 years	4-6 years	6-8 years	8-10 years
Realistic Training Age	0-2 years	0-4 years	0-6 years	2-8 years	4-10 years
Objective	Create a motivation to continue to play. Get kids comfortable on the ice	Create a motivation and build comfort on the ice, with the puck, and against an opponent	Create a love for playing, improve skating, improve awareness with puck, and build comfort playing with teammates	Continue to hone skills to improve skating, confidence with puck, and tactical awareness as well as foster motivation to play	Continue to foster motivation and advance skating skills, large group tactical awareness, and manipulate the environment with and without puck

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PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



Technical

Age Group	6U	8U	10U	12U	14U
Skating	Comfort skating around the ice in a variety of ways	Comfort on the ice, moving around forwards and backwards.	Improved skating and introduction to specific skating practice	Improved skating through more technical practice and using skating to create/deny time and space.	Advanced skating through more technical practice and using skating to create/deny time and space.
How to train	Skate through games (tag, races, chasing, regular game play)	Skate through games focusing on specific skills	Skate through games focusing on specific skills with occasional blocked training	Skate through games focusing on specific skills with more regular blocked training	Skate through games focusing on specific skills with regular blocked training
Training Examples	Focus on forwards and backwards skating	tag, races, chasing, regular game play	tag, races, chasing, against the grain	tag, races, chasing, against the grain	tag, races, chasing, against the grain

Tactical

Age Group	6U	8U	10U	12U	14U
Offense with the Puck	Wants to score with the puck.	Wants to score with the puck.	Wants to score with the puck and keep it with the team.	Wants the puck, can protect the puck, carries to advance play	Wants the puck, can advance play through carrying the puck or passing the puck
How to train	Practice playing a game, encourage players to try to score when they get the puck.	Practice through the game	Practice through the game	Practice through the game	Practice through the game
Training Examples		SAGs, game day	SAGs, game day	SAGs, game day	SAGs, game day

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PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK – TRAINING FOCUS



Technical

6U	8U	10U	12U	14U
Stops and Starts	Stops and Starts	<i>Stops and Starts</i>	<i>Stops and Starts</i>	<i>Stops and Starts</i>
	Tight Turns	<i>Tight Turns</i>	<i>Tight Turns</i>	<i>Tight Turns</i>
	Mohawks	<i>Mohawks</i>	<i>Mohawks</i>	<i>Mohawks</i>
		Crossovers	<i>Crossovers</i>	<i>Crossovers</i>
			Edge control	<i>Edge control</i>
				Explosive Skating

Tactical

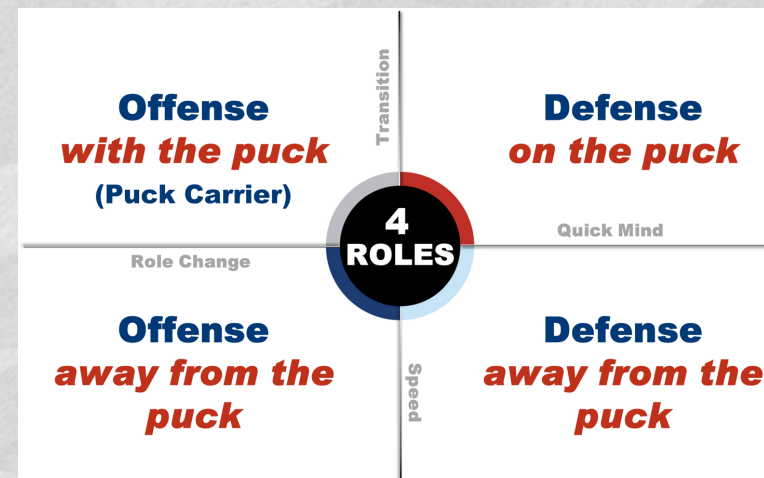
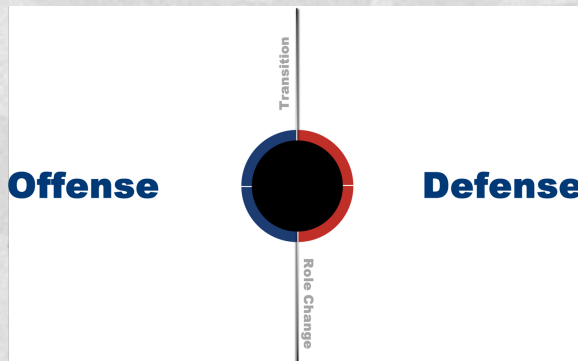
6U	8U	10U	12U	14U
	Try to score with the puck	<i>Try to score with the puck</i>	<i>Try to score with the puck</i>	<i>Try to score with the puck</i>
		Using teammates to keep the puck in the team	<i>Using teammates to keep the puck in the team</i>	<i>Using teammates to keep the puck in the team</i>
			Want the puck	<i>Want the puck</i>
				Create time and space with the puck

JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

PRACTICE STRUCTURE



- 6U-8U – One practice per week
 - Individual skills focus
 - Skating, shooting, passing, stickhandling, and competitive contact
 - Introductions to the four roles with a focus on roles 1 & 3
 - 1v1 play and 2v2 play
 - Our puck vs their puck



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PRACTICE STRUCTURE



- 6U-8U – One practice per week
 - Individual skills focus
 - Skating, shooting, passing, stickhandling, and competitive contact
 - Introductions to the four roles with a focus on roles 1 & 3
 - 1v1 play and 2v2 play
 - Our puck vs their puck
- 10U, 12U, and 14U – Two practices per week
 - First practice – Individual skills focus with fishbowl
 - Second Practice – Individual tactical focus (playing roles)
 - 30-40 minutes of club planned activities; 10-20 minutes of coach planned activities

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FISHBOWL – A PLAYGROUND ON ICE



- The Problem: Free play is becoming more difficult to come by for kids with routines becoming more scheduled.
- Importance: Free play benefits physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative skills.
- The Solution: The Fishbowl!
 - A station during practice (10U+) or games (6U&8U) where the players have complete control over the materials, what they work on, and the plot.

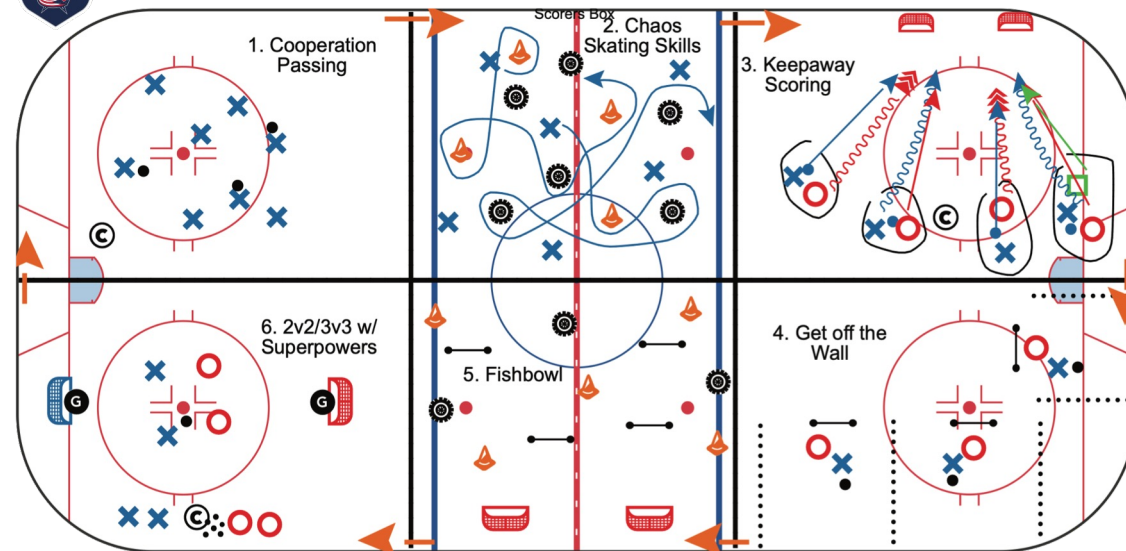


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INDIVIDUAL SKILLS PRACTICE EXAMPLE



BLUE JACKETS HOCKEY LEAGUE PRACTICE PLAN | WEEK: 01&02 | IOU PLAN 1-A



EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

- Ice Marker
- 6 Medium/Big Nets
- Junk for Chaos Skating
- Junk for Fishbowl
- 3 Puck Bridges for Get off the Wall
- Pucks
- Barriers

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL AS A COACH FOR THIS PRACTICE?



HOW TO EXPLAIN

- Plan what to say in advance
- Gain attention before starting
- Keep it short and simple
- Invite questions and check for understanding

PEER-REVIEW PROCESS

- What was your goal?
- What did you do well?
- What could be better next time?
- What are you going to do to make that happen?



Activities designed for the level of the participants



Ability to change the focus of the activities based on the players



Coaches guide learning through progressions and regressions

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INDIVIDUAL SKILLS PRACTICE EXAMPLE



BLUE JACKETS HOCKEY LEAGUE PRACTICE PLAN | WEEK: 01&02 | IOU PLAN 1-A

WEEKLY COACH FOCUS

Start the season off strong by getting to know your athletes! Ask them about their favorite players, teams, ice cream, etc!



Activities designed for the level of the participants



Ability to change the focus of the activities based on the players



Coaches guide learning through progressions and regressions

1. COOPERATION PASSING

LEARNING POINTS: Passing skills.

DESCRIPTION:

- Give 3 players pucks.
- Players cannot stop moving and cannot hold on to the puck.
- Players can pass the puck to any player without a puck that is presenting a target!

PROGRESSIONS: Have the players practice different types of passes.

COACH INVOLVEMENT: Pull kids to the side that seem to be struggling with their passing and pass with them stationary a few times before sending them back into the activity.

LIFE SKILL - COMMUNICATION: Players work on verbal and nonverbal communication including being ready for the puck, eye contact, and calling for a pass!

4. GET OFF THE WALL

LEARNING POINTS: Competitive contact.

DESCRIPTION:

- X starts with the puck a couple feet off the wall, O a couple feet behind them.
- When ready, X dumps the puck to the wall, collects it, and tries to get past O and put the puck through the bridge.
- O tries to keep them on the wall.
- Switch every 30 seconds

PROGRESSIONS: Have the players compete in a best of 7, switching ever other rep.

COACH INVOLVEMENT: Help the players with contact on the wall, initiating contact before they get to the puck. Looking to use stick pressure and mirroring to keep them on the wall.

LIFE SKILL - PROBLEM SOLVING: Encourage the players to be creative in trying to beat their opponent and finding ways off the wall!

2. CHAOS SKATING SKILLS

LEARNING POINTS: Skating fundamentals.

DESCRIPTION:

- All players go at once, skating through the obstacles.
- On "Go" players perform the designated skating skill around the nearest obstacle.

PROGRESSIONS: Change the skating skill every 60-90 seconds.

COACH INVOLVEMENT: Embrace the chaos of this activity. Encourage players to challenge each other. Work with those struggling 1v1 in some open space.

LIFE SKILL - WORK ETHIC: Players should work hard throughout the activity, drawing on their internal motivation to get better!

5. FISHBOWL

LEARNING POINTS: Various

DESCRIPTION:

- This is a player led station with individuals deciding what skills to practice.
- Coaches support each player with suggestions and tips on how to work on the skills.
- This is not a free for all. Players should work with a specific goal in mind.

PROGRESSIONS: None. Up to the players.

COACH INVOLVEMENT: Ask the players what they are working on and be ready to help with suggestions for activities.

LIFE SKILL - LEADERSHIP: Players should be able to lead themselves in this station. They should have a clear goal and set an example to others on how to work hard.

3. KEEP AWAY SCORING

LEARNING POINTS: Puck possession, competitive contact, stick pressure, and scoring.

DESCRIPTION:

- Split group into pairs and each pair into a circle.
- Players play keep away in their circle.
- On "Go" players with the puck try to score while their partner plays defense.
- Return to the circle and continue playing keep away.

PROGRESSIONS: Add time pressure such as players have only 5 seconds to score after coach says "go."

COACH INVOLVEMENT: Keep the players moving the full time and use small feedback points as breaks for the individual pairs.

LIFE SKILL - EMOTIONAL CONTROL: Work with the players that losing isn't the end. We can channel those emotions to work hard and win the next time!

6. 2v2/3v3 w/ SUPERPOWERS

LEARNING POINTS: Playing Skills

DESCRIPTION:

- Play normal 2v2/3v3 for this station.
- Add superpowers for players, marking them with helmet hats. See app for ideas!
- If you have players resting, rotate every 60 seconds!

PROGRESSIONS: None! Just change up the super powers so that every kid has the chance to have a super power!

COACH INVOLVEMENT: Ask questions while the players are out resting such as, "tell me about that shift" or, "what is something you are doing really well?"

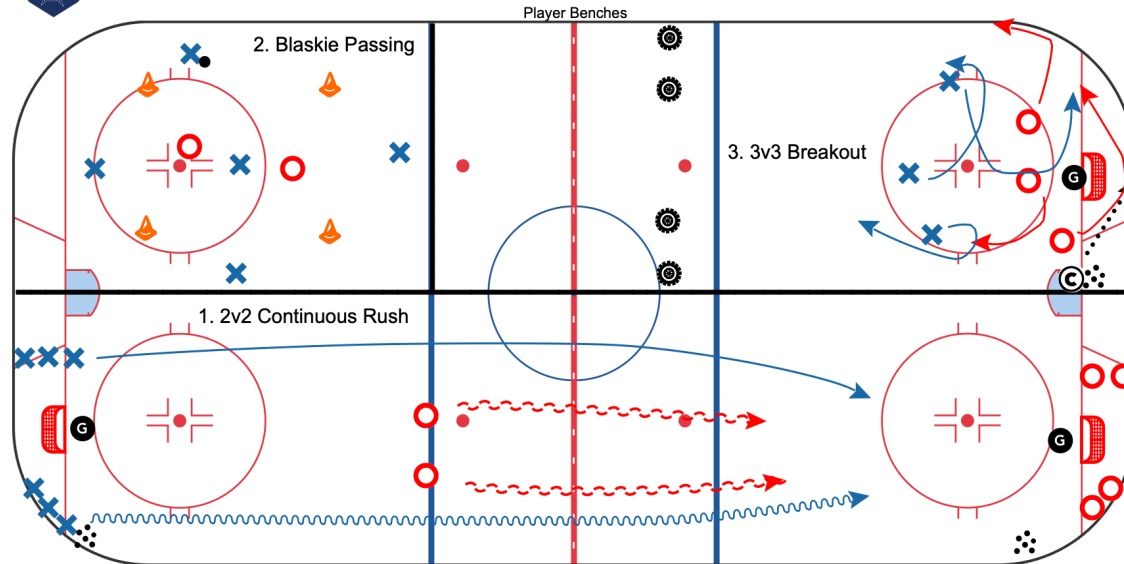
LIFE SKILL - GOAL SETTING: When a player gets a super power, ask them what their goal is for playing with the power!

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INDIVIDUAL TACTICS PRACTICE EXAMPLE



BLUE JACKETS HOCKEY LEAGUE PRACTICE PLAN | WEEK: 09&10 | 12U/14U PLAN 5-B



EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCES

- Ice Marker
- 3 Goals
- 4 Cones for Blaskie Passing
- 4 Tires for 3v3 Breakout
- Pucks
- Barriers

WHAT IS YOUR GOAL AS A COACH FOR THIS PRACTICE?



Offense with the puck (Puck Carrier)

Defense on the puck

Offense away from the puck

Defense away from the puck

4 ROLES

PEER-REVIEW PROCESS

- What was your goal?
- What did you do well?
- What could be better next time?
- What are you going to do to make that happen?



Activities designed for the level of the participants



Ability to change the focus of the activities based on the players



Coaches guide learning through progressions and regressions

JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDNESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

GAME STRUCTURE



6U	8U	10U+
2v2	3v3	5v5
1/6 Ice	1/4 ice	Full Ice
2-minute shifts	2-minute shifts	Free changes
Fishbowl in middle zone	Fishbowl in middle zone	10U – 14 games (4 - ½ Ice)
14 games	14 games	12U – 16 games
		14U – 18 games

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COACH DEVELOPMENT

COACH DEVELOPMENT IS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

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VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT



- Player registration interest indicator
- Mass emails to parents and guardians
- In person recruitment at the first few days of player check-ins.
- Strategies used to motivate parents to volunteer include:
 - The enjoyment and sense of fulfilment of volunteering
 - Ability to make a difference in a young person's life
 - Chance to gain experience to further their careers
 - Joining a community
 - Special programs for coaches and their kids

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COACH PREPARATION



USA HOCKEY	BLUE JACKETS HOCKEY LEAGUE
Required	Optional
Background Check	Tuition Discount
Live, Zoom Clinic	4 hours minimum
Online Module	Includes in-person, virtual, and asynchronous options

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OPTIONAL EDUCATION



We want to provide the **best experience** for as **many players** as we can, for **as long as we can**.

We know that **trained coaches do this better**.
Trained coaches retain 95% of their players year after year, untrained coaches retain only 74%¹

We also know that training needs to be **continuous**
and put into practice to have an effect²

¹The Aspen Institute, 2019; ²ICCE, 2024

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ON-ICE COACHING PRACTICES



- Sample Agenda:
 - 11:15-11:30am - Check-in
 - 11:30-12:30pm - Classroom Session
 - 12:45-1:30pm - On-Ice Practice
 - 1:35-2:00pm - Wrap Up and Closing
- Classroom Session
 - Coaching in Youth Sports
 - Supporting Players
 - Coaching in the Blue Jackets Hockey League
- On-Ice
 - Run a full practice with coaches taking turns running activities.



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ON THE ICE SUPPORT



- **Coaches are supported on the ice by three roles:**
 - Development Coach – Consistent support as practice manager. Focused on running practice.
 - Rink Coordinator – Facility specific management support (station assignments, communication, etc.)
 - Head of Coaching – Coach Developer for each age group, rotating between the rinks. Focused on supporting coach learning.

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ON THE ICE SUPPORT



- **Heads of Coaching:**

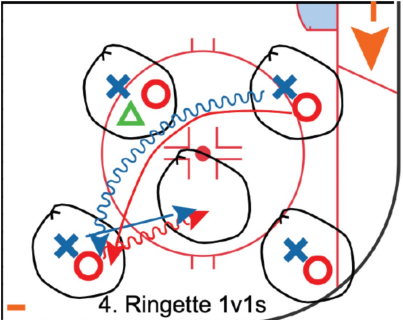
- Observe practices
 - Generate feedback with coaches
 - Help coaches reflect on their coaching
 - Mentor coaching on best practices
 - Help coaches problem solve and apply their learning into the field.
- All roles have a focus of making it easier for coaches to apply what they learn in the classroom to the ice.

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PRACTICE PLAN SUPPORT



< Ringette 1v1s




4. Ringette 1v1s

Description

- Draw one more circle than you have pairs in the group. Move a pair to each circle (leaving one circle empty).
- Each player flips their stick to knob down. Players battle for the ring.
- When a player steals the ring, they must skate to the empty circle with their partner.

Video



A video thumbnail showing the Blue Jackets Hockey League logo.

< Ringette 1v1s

What to Look For

- Players should keep the body between the opponent and the puck
 - Encourage the players to make it hard for the opponent to take the puck from them and making them go around or through your body is a good way to do that.
- When they do not have the ring players may try to steal the ring from going down on the other players stick.
 - This can quickly become a penalty. Encourage the players to lift the opponents stick.

Progressions

Create some groups of 3 to make it 1v2 for the ring holder making it more difficult. Make the circles smaller to encourage more competitive contact.

Learning Points

1v1 skills, competitive contact, puck protection.

Coach Involvement

Help with providing feedback on a strong bottom hand and good competitive contact.

Life Skill - Problem Solving

Encourage players to be creative in keeping and taking the ring!

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OTHER RESOURCES



League App

Practice plans, walkthrough videos, and more shared through the app.



Podcast

League created podcast with 15-minute episodes for the ride to the rink.



Courses

Virtual, and asynchronous courses offered monthly and throughout the season.



Email

Resources, blogs, and videos shared with coaches via email.

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BUILDING BLOCKS

JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDNESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

CONNECTIONS



USA Hockey

- Support from USA Hockey Staff Members throughout the season
- Participate in USA Hockey Coach Education Opportunities

West Virginia University

- Research opportunities
- Evidence based best practices

"The" Ohio State University

- Trainings and resources for our coaches
- Research opportunities

United States Center for Coaching Excellence (USCCE)

- Training for our coach developers
- Opportunities to connect with top academics and practitioners

International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF)

- Sharing ideas, practice plans, and coaching education
- Opportunities to connect with other programs across the globe

JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDNESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

WHERE WE ARE TODAY



Current Strength of Our Program

- 350+ volunteer coaches actively engaged
- Ongoing coach education integrated into real environments
- Strong alignment across staff, coaches, and families
- Clear focus on player-first development



JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

HOW WE OPERATE



Development-First Model

- Development over short-term outcomes
- Age-appropriate, confidence-building environments
- High-touch coaching support and resources
- Practice plans and structure provided to coaches



JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

WHAT MAKES IT WORK



Community and Expertise

- Strong volunteer culture (coaches + team managers)
- Buy-in from families and staff
- Connection to USA Hockey and top-level resources
- Bringing best practices into everyday delivery



JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

POSITIONED TO GROW



Momentum is Building

- Growth in participation and interest locally
- Visibility and success of the Blue Jackets
- Expanding pipeline of new players and families
- Olympic exposure driving new interest in hockey



JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

WHAT'S NEXT



Our Opportunity Moving Forward

- Strong foundation already in place
- Scalable model for continued growth
- Opportunity to expand access and participation
- Continued focus on development and experience



JOURNEY - ACCEPTANCE - CHARACTER - KINDESS - ENJOYMENT - TEAMWORK - SPORTSMANSHIP

THANK YOU!



Be in Touch!



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