

American Development Model: More than just Mite Cross-Ice Hockey



As the fall hockey season fast approaches we hopefully remind ourselves that every time the kids touch the ice we need to do our part to make it a fun and worthwhile experience. All coaches need to insure that we create an environment to which the kids want to return every week. Coaches, YOU need to have fun too regardless of age. So what is a good starting point, for any level, for an organization implementing the principles of the ADM? From my experiences within my own club and having traveled to many others both here in Illinois and throughout the country, I would start with making your practices more active. This is a key component of the ADM. If a coach or hockey director were to honestly evaluate how "active" their team practices are they may be surprised. I spend a lot of hours in the rink watching teams practice and what I see more often than not is a lot of empty ice not being used and kids standing in lines. A key piece of having an active practice is the saying, "No Lines, No Laps, and No Lectures". With the price of ice, why would we want to waste it standing around or talking? One suggestion, at the younger levels particularly, if it takes more than 30 seconds to explain a drill, it's probably too complicated for them anyway. Get them moving quickly and correct them as they are doing the drill. Statistics tell us that in any typical 60-minute youth practice, players are moving for no more than 12-15 minutes.

Think about that, the parent just paid for 60 minutes of ice and their skater used it for less than 25% of the hour. Mites and squirts need a very low work to rest ratio, they should be moving 40-50 minutes of the hour. As they get older, the work to rest ratio will grow. If we improve our practices using the principles of the ADM, then we have a more active practice. A more active practice leads to many more repetitions of the most important hockey skills. If this is done consistently with the players not just for a day or a week, but throughout the season and their career, how much better would they become and how much more fun would the game be for them? At the youngest ages, we focus on the ABC's, Agility, Balance, and Coordination. Using station-based practices, each skater can gain 3 or 4 times the amount of reps than previously. These principles do not just apply the 8U mites. From squirts to the NHL, station-based and/or small area games can and are used to improve the skills of the player.

Click [HERE](#) for a list of practice plans for mites and squirts; you will also find a link to download the Mobile Coach, an app that allows you to bring the plans to the ice with you. If a skater is having an issue with a drill, you can show them a video of how it's done. The material is there, the help is available, and most importantly the kids are there waiting for the instruction, the fun, and the development. As a coach, make them look forward to the next practice, not dread it.