Horst Wein:

THE KEY TO BETTER HOCKEY

An optimal coaching and learning model to unlock and develop the innate potential of young hockey players

Recommended by the International Hockey Federation (F.I.H.)
Acknowledgements have to go to many players, coaches and sport scientists of all levels and different sports who have inspired me to extend and deepen my hockey knowledge, thus providing me with the raw material for this book.

Throughout this book the words “he”, “him” and “his” have been used for ease of expression but are intended to apply to both male and female players.

Credit has to go especially to the Swiss photographer Alfred Wälti, the Spanish photographer Alfredo Ferrer as well as to the Federazione Italiana Hockey which has offered the photographs of their excellent professional Marco Massetti without any charges.
CONTENTS

Foreword .................................................................................................................................
Preface ........................................................................................................................................
Introduction .............................................................................................................................

Part 1: A NEW PHILOSOPHY OF COACHING HOCKEY ........

Chapter 1: The Natural Development of Young Players

Current Coaching Practices
Introducing Complex Activities too soon
Demanding too much of Young Players
Using Inefficient Coaching Methods

Time for a Change!
Promoting Active Participation
Meeting Young People’s Need
Eliminating Anxiety

Chapter 2: A Successful Approach to Coaching Hockey

The Hockey Development Model
Creating the Model
The Five Levels of Progression
Advantages of the Development Model

Coaching Philosophy
Philosophy During Competition
Coaching Characteristics
Maintaining a Positive Attitude
Winning matches versus developing players

Part 2: COACHING AGE-APPROPRIATE HOCKEY

Coaching Players aged 5 and 6
Coaching Players aged 7 to 9
Coaching Players aged 10 and 11
Special Consideration for Beginners
Coaching Players aged 12 to 14
Towards a Different Coaching Style
Tips for Stimulating the Talent of Young Players
How to structure a Coaching Session

Chapter 3: Games for Basic Abilities and Capacities (Level 1).
Dribbling Games
Games in the Maze
Passing, Receiving and Shooting Games
Tackling Games
Multilateral Games
Level 1-Competitions: Hockey Decathlon and 2-on-2 Triathlon
Chapter 4: Games for Mini-Hockey (Level 2)

The Development of Game Intelligence in Hockey – a need for achieving Top Performances
What does game intelligence mean?
How does a hockey player’s intelligence manifest itself on the field?
Toward a different style of training and coaching young players
Analytical versus Global Methods?
What are Simplified Games?
Effective Questioning
Simplified Games for 2 on 2
Coaching Simplified Games

Rules of Mini–Hockey
Why Mini-Hockey 3 vs3 with 4 goals and not Hockey 6-on-6?
Preparatory or Corrective Games for Mini-Hockey
Testing an Individual’s Playing Capacity
Mini-Hockey 3-on-3 Variations to Stimulate the Development of Creativity and Game Intelligence
Level 2 Competitions: Mini-Hockey Pentathlon and 3-on-3 Triathlon
Proposition for Structuring an Internal Mini-Hockey League with a Progression of Variations
Taking Mini-Hockey further Toward 6-on-6 Hockey

Chapter 5: Games for 5-on-5 and 6-on-6 Hockey (Level 3)

The Basic Three Game Situations
Organizing the Training Session
Simplified Games for 3 on 3
Level 3 Competitions: 4-on-4 Triathlon
Rules of 5-on-5 Hockey
Rules of 6-on-6 Hockey

Chapter 6: Developing Young Hockey Goalkeepers

Profile of a Goalkeeper
Qualities of a Successful Goalkeeper
Tips for Training Goalkeepers
Development Model for Goalkeepers
Basic Stance
Positional Play
Saves with one Leg, both Legs, Hands and Stick
The save-clear technique
Stopping the Ball with both Legs together
Stopping the Ball with one hand or stick
Some more Information about the Training of the different Saving Techniques
Clearances with a Kick or the Stick
Goalkeeper Decathlon

Chapter 7: Penalty Corners and Hitting the Ball

The art of Hitting the Ball
Simplified Games for the Penalty Corner Attack and Defense
Chapter 8: Hockey 8-on-8 (Level 4)
Simplified Games 4 on 4
Simplified Games 5 on 5
Level 4 Competitions: The complete Hockey Test
5-on-5 Triathlon
The rules of Hockey 8-on-8
Why Hockey 8-on-8 better matches the 12 and 13 years old players than the official 11-on-11 competition?
Understanding 8-on-8 Hockey

PART 3: TAKING HOCKEY INTO THE FUTURE

Requirements for developing more creative hockey players
Bringing the Game out of the Middle Ages
Ten Rules for Continuous Improvement
Summary of the Hockey Development Model

About the Author
Resume of Horst Wein

Bibliography

NOTE:
For the program of COACHING PLAYERS 16 YEARS AND UP (Level 5), please consult the books "Hockey", published in Spanish language by the National Olympic Committee of Spain in 1992, "Developing Game Intelligence in Soccer", published in English language by Reedswain (USA) in 2004 or Horst Wein’s first ever Multimedia Coaching Book about Counterattacking (118 pages) in German Language (2011).
Foreword

Many years ago there was a superb book called “The Science of Hockey” by Horst Wein, which after its first edition in 1973 became with 81 000 copies the most sold hockey text book ever. Sadly since 30 years it is out of print, although most of the thoughts which were refreshing and different in those days are still as relevant today as it was then.

When my son started to play hockey we looked around for a club that offered good youth coaching. We were pointed to the best in our area and while the coach was good at motivating the kids, the same old line up and wait your turn routines were used and the kids quickly became bored and did not pay attention to what was being said by the coach, which on the whole was very good advice. There had to be a way of doing exercises that kept the kids interest up for the entire session and I thought that I could use some of the very considerable contacts I had through my website www.fieldhockey.com

By good fortune I met FIH Master Coach Horst Wein and mentioned the project to him. I was told by the author of 34 text books - who is actually stimulating football coaches of world-known clubs as Inter Milan, Club Atlético Peñarol Montevideo, FC Barcelona, UNAM “Pumas” de México, Villareal, Schalke 04, Bayer 04 Leverkusen, Cruz Azul, Club America (México) and Arsenal London - that in the early 80’s he had introduced in Spain a Hockey Development Model which helped to produce hundreds of fine talents who, to the surprise of the rest of the hockey world, a decade later won Olympic gold and silver medals. What you have now in front is his successful coaching program or model which hopefully will become also for you – The Key to Better Hockey.

I don’t know very much about coaching, but I have used these exercises with the kids of our club when the coach was not available. Their reaction has been very positive and saying they have learnt more in one evening than a whole month and thoroughly enjoyed the practice. My son has taken some of the exercises and practised the skills involved on his own and his hockey has improved in leaps and bounds. I have passed on some exercises to clubs that were struggling to win games and the turn around has been truly remarkable. One particular club only just failed to gain promotion to the next league, but that was only due to their early season failure before using some of the exercises contained in here.

I have absolutely no doubt that after his first contribution to the development of modern hockey through “The Science of Hockey” and “The Advanced Science of Hockey”, the contents of this digital coaching tool will again revolutionise club and school hockey throughout the world. As proved in Spain, teams using Horst’s methods will become so much more successful than their opposition that they will wonder what the secret is. Although his exercises and simplified games are primarily designed for children, adults can use them to master particular skills too, since there is a logical build up from the very beginning of learning a skill through to its successful use in a game.

I know you will learn how to play better hockey through using this CD and I hope it will increase your enjoyment of the sport that I have loved for many years.

George Brink Webmaster of www.fieldhockey.com
PREFACE

All too often, children are introduced to complex sports activities for which they are not yet physically and mentally ready. Expecting a child to comprehend and respond to the complex situations in the full 11-on-11 hockey game format will only beget frustration and feelings of failure.

The Key to Better introduces coaches to a training program that takes into account each young player’s current physical and mental development. The program promotes the gradual development of correct technical, tactical, and physical capacities of hockey players ages 7 to 14. This publication features The Key to Better Hockey, an innovative system of coaching which is tailored to each age group’s cognitive capacities and physical abilities. Most of the books for youth coaching present general instruction and drills to be applied to all children who participate, regardless of their age. But in this publication, however, instruction is substituted by stimulation which is fitted to the specific characteristics of children.

Instead of obliging the children to adapt to the game of hockey, the game has been adapted by the author to their mental and physical development stage, thus resulting in better and more enjoyable learning of the complicated hockey game.

This model is essentially a recipe for coaching hockey. It gives you the necessary ingredients of the game—and the proportions in which these ingredients have to be mixed to achieve enjoyable and effective training sessions. Most importantly, it explains what skills are best taught during each stage of the evolution of young hockey players. All of the research has been done; you can simply apply it to your coaching program.

The Key to Better Hockey is divided into ten chapters. Part 1 explains in chapter 1 and 2 the developmental characteristics of children and describes how most current coaching practices actually work against players’ developing minds and bodies. According to these practices, children are coached the same ways as adults, even though the adult game is much too complex for a child’s mental and motor abilities. The solution to this problem is provided in the Hockey Development Model which orientates the coaches about an age-orientated coaching in different levels of the complex and difficult game of hockey.

Making use of the Hockey Development Model in schools and clubs will reduce the acquisition of incorrect habits that limit the performance of young players at the senior level. These incorrect habits result directly from the way players have been taught and have competed at lower levels.
Chapter 3 in part 2 of this publication contains basic games and exercises that make up the first level of the Hockey Development Model. You’ll learn games and exercises to teach your young players the fundamentals, such as dribbling; passing, receiving, tackling and shooting. Level 1 also contains simplified competitions—the hockey decathlon and 2-on-2 Triathlon—for players ages 7 and up.

Chapter 4 introduces you to the second level in the Hockey Development Model where the children not only play to learn something like on level 1 but now learn to play like the best players in the world. Using a number of simplified game situations, players learn to respond to the cognitive and physical demands of the game. The simplified game preserves the contextual nature of the full game without placing too great a technical demand on players in these early stages.

Learning to understand the complex game of hockey can be best achieved through the practice of a logical progression of simplified games, with a gradual increase in the numbers of players on the team. Mini-Hockey is introduced in which players learn to read the game correctly and learn to play hockey first in their head before using their sticks. Systematically game intelligence is developed, instilling the young player first to perceive and analyse the game situation, then take correct decisions and finally carry out with the stick what the brain demanded some seconds before.

Chapter 5 progresses from Mini Hockey through Hockey 5-on-5 for 10 years old players to Hockey 6-on-6 for 11 years old ones. An age orientated training program is presented—the program of Simplified Games for teams formed by 3 players only—in order to approach kids at that age to the difficulty and complexity of the new competitions.

The development of young hockey goalkeepers is the theme of the chapter 6 and important hints about training Penalty Corners in Attack and in Defence are given in chapter 7 together with detailed information for hitting the ball.

Chapter 8 focuses on Hockey 8-on-8 game for players 12 and 13 years old, explaining the many advantages instead of playing the full game. 8-on-8 Hockey is considered an ideal bridge for leading young athletes to the full hockey game.

Part 3 looks into the future and emphasizes that the only way to develop healthy, happy, and talented hockey players is to follow their natural development. To rush this development is to hinder their healthy formation and future performance.

It is time for all coaches, whether novices or experienced, to revise their ways of coaching and tailor their training sessions and competitions to the children they are entrusted with.

“The Key to Better Hockey” is the tool you need to develop a successful hockey program with satisfied young players.
A new philosophy of coaching hockey

Copyrights with the Japan Hockey Association
A NEW PHILOSOPHY OF COACHING HOCKEY

It is widely known that the contents of the training program, the expertise and experience of the coaches with children, the social life in the club or school, as well as the structure of the formative competitions determine to a high degree whether young players choose hockey as their lifetime sport.

The art of developing effective training and competitive programs for children lies in knowing which kind of practice and competition the player is ready for at any given stage of his or her physical and mental development. **Children will only learn quickly, effectively and thoroughly when the demands of the training sessions or the competitions match their intellectual, psychological, and motor skills.**

The concept of readiness (the disposition of a certain degree of maturity) is a prerequisite for any activity and should therefore be applied in all aspects of teaching and learning. Before a child is admitted to school, teachers ask themselves whether that child is ready or mature enough to attend school or whether he or she is prepared to benefit from the teaching process. Teachers determine if the child can successfully meet the challenge of the first school year or if it would be better to let that child mature for one more year with activities that are better suited to his or her mental and physical condition.

The question of maturity is also important in the matter of motor learning. Regardless of the action, adults must determine the age at which there are certain guarantees that the child can achieve that objective. Before teaching a child to ride a bike, for example, you must first ask when children generally acquire the capacity to maintain equilibrium on only two wheels. Experience has shown us that any attempt to do so before the child is ready (before about four years of age) will fail because nature has not yet provided the means of coordination and balance.

The concept of readiness must also be applied to children's sports activities. The question coaches should ask is: At what age is a child ready to successfully face the demands of an adult-competition? If one sport or federation had been aware of the concept of readiness, children under 14 in our hockey, handball, rugby, or hockey clubs would never have been subjected, at such an early stage, to test themselves in competitions for which they are not yet qualified, prepared, or simply ready. Children need to be exposed to a gradual stimulation in training and to a series of progressive competitions that, over the years, allow them to grow step by step without any hurry into the adult game.

"There is little to be gained, and much to be lost, by attempting to force young players into the full game before they are physiologically, “biomechanically” and cognitively ready for the activity. One of the fundamental goals of teaching is to ensure that every player has a high level of success. Therefore we need to assess the development readiness of the players in each age group”

DAVID HEMERY in "The pursuit of sporting excellence"
The art of teaching lies in knowing for what activity (a technical move, a tactical behaviour or a complex competition) the player is prepared for at a particular stage of physical and mental development.

Unfortunately, it is the force of habit that constitutes the greatest obstacle to progress in youth hockey. Traditional methods are often followed blindly without giving sufficient thought of the consequences, both in training as well as in the structuring of the youth competitions.

In order to move past these obstacles and achieve better results in the future, coaches, administrations, and federations must first review the structure and organization of their youth hockey programs. The complicated adult game has to be simplified until a logical progression of competitions with gradual increasing demands is designed that adapts perfectly to the actual mental and physical abilities and capacities of the child. A child should be presented with only those exercises, games, and challenges that suit their current abilities, interests, and expectations. The training program as well as the competitions for children should be like their shoes. They should fit perfectly in order to feel comfortable.

If we are to improve the development of young players, it is crucial that we recognize the mistakes made in the past. Awareness of these errors is the first step towards more effective training and learning methods.

"When you don't know where to go, it doesn't matter which road you choose"
Chapter 1:

All things in nature have a gestation period and must go through their proper stages to be formed. Each human being has to pass through different stages of development before finally reaching maturity. Nature does not take shortcuts; there is a natural, unhurried order to it all.

Coaches, players, parents, and administrators should copy the wisdom of nature. Being impatient and hurrying the development of a young hockey player in the teaching and learning processes frequently results in poor performances among older players who had shown promise when they were younger. What coaches need is a training plan or model they can perfectly tailor to fit their players’ varying cognitive and motor abilities.

To work with, not against, the developing mind and body of individuals, all youth hockey competitions and training programs must respect the laws of nature and take into account the actual mental and physical condition of their young participants. As children mature, the games in which they compete should gradually become more difficult and complex. In a well-structured scheme, young hockey players grow at the same rate as their competitions grow in complexity and difficulty (see the photo: on the right half of the full field 2 Mini-Hockey games and one 5-on-5 game is played whilst the left half is reserved for 6-on-6 Hockey, resulting that 28 players plus reserves play at the same time).

The Natural development of young players

“One mayor difficulty for the progress of Hockey is not that we generally don’t accept new ideas, but we resist too long to get rid of the older obsolete ones.”
CURRENT COACHING PRACTICES

Most players, no matter their nationality, don’t know how to tap into or make use of their potential, which remains unused and dormant. Sadly, the best coaches do not work at the grass roots level because coaching young players rarely reaps them any economic gain. Coaches with greater knowledge and experience are attracted instead to senior teams that can afford to provide them higher salaries.

This failure to attract well-qualified coaches means that young players in schools and clubs are exposed to poor quality and tedious instruction. In most cases, children are coached in the same way that adults are instructed, without taking into account the natural order or progressive development of the young player through time. The makeshift or haphazard schemes that most coaches adopt do not solve the delicate problem of assuring young players quality coaching. Moreover, coaching youth at the initial stages is too important for the future development of the players to allow coaches to hastily assemble idiosyncratic methods of training.

"Nature decrees that children should be children before they become adults. If we try to alter this natural order, we will reach adulthood prematurely but with neither substance nor strength".

Jean J. Rousseau
INTRODUCING COMPLEX ACTIVITIES TOO SOON

One problem with most methods of training and competition is that they employ complex games and playing situations before children are ready for them. Even hockey players competing at the club level generally fail one out of three plays, so we must admit that hockey is a complicated game. Research has shown, generally speaking, that the younger the player, the higher the percentage of failure in competition. A low success rate (fewer than 50 percent of successful actions) is observed when beginners between eight and nine years of age compete with only six players on a team (6 on 6). Players face countless difficulties and complex problems even in a game played with this pared-down team. In competition with 11 players on a team, as still happens in many parts of the world, it was noticed that one team lost the possession of the ball four to six times in just one minute's play (i.e., effectively 40 seconds' playing time)!

Young players should not be blamed for incurring this high percentage of unsuccessful actions. We must realize that all children fail frequently, not only in hockey but also in other physical and mental activities, if they are not brought gradually and progressively to the task.

In today’s training and competition, children are asked to face game situations that are simply beyond their limits or scope at that particular stage of their psychomotor development.

Subjecting children to too complex activities before they’re ready only reinforces failure and frustration. When individuals experience frequent failure, they not only lose interest and self-esteem but may also come to feel incapable of facing situations that, in fact, are far too difficult and complex for them at the time. Stress and dropping out may result.

DEMANDING TOO MUCH OF YOUNG PLAYERS

Young players struggle not only to overcome the complexity of the game but also the increasing demands placed on them within a limited amount of practice time and personal attention. It challenges both the coaches and players that ever more children are becoming involved in hockey—but with less time and space available to them. Teaching or learning hockey, as well as competing in it, the traditional way does not sufficiently stimulate the bodies and minds of young players, and much of their talent is left undiscovered.

Playing the ball for a maximum of 70 seconds in a full match or being active for fewer than 15 minutes of a 90-minute training session doesn’t allow players to develop their full potential. Yet players are still expected and pressured to perform at a high level. This puts an ever-increasing demand on the youngsters’ physical and mental abilities and capacities.

"Tomorrow’s success is founded on today’s preparation"

Ossler
USING INEFFICIENT COACHING METHODS

Consider this: many children study a foreign language over the course of eight years in school. If the youth then travel to a country where their mother language is not spoken, however, they are frequently unable to apply the knowledge they have acquired in almost a thousand hours of teaching and learning. Likewise, I believe, most recently graduated physical education teachers, after studying four years of different sport sciences in a physical education department of a university, still cannot resolve the majority of the innumerable problems they encounter during their first physical education lessons. I think this is due to having had insufficient practical applications of their studies and insufficient experience—and then having applied methods that are already out of date. The knowledge gained at universities or in national training centres has helped few coaches to confront the challenges of their profession with success.

To be up to date and make use of the new information (most of which tends to repeat itself about every two decades), physical education teachers (and especially those who coach future teachers) should actualize and constantly augment their knowledge and capacities to help their students learn the latest innovations of their specialization. The major obstacle for the progress of coaching in hockey is the strength of ease and comfort. Because of their own inertia or sluggishness, coaches tend to continue with old habits rather than continually rethinking what has to be done and how. All too often information is used and exercises and formative programs are applied that have already lost their validity. Many have not even noticed that the information they obtained years before has already diminished in value.

Few coaches look beyond their specialty and combine, mix, or synthesize the knowledge from diverse but related sports sciences with the teaching and learning process. Consequently, the majority of players and coaches must continue learning from accidents, mistakes, and trials rather than from the instruction received.

Before teaching a specific sport like hockey, coaches should fully understand how a child, adolescent, or adult learns best and analyze the mechanisms that intervene and influence learning in each of the evolutionary stages of the student. As the young hockey player grows and develops, a great variety of physiological, cognitive, and social-emotional changes occur that directly affect the acquisition of coordination and conditional, as well as mental, capacities.

"The tragedy of coaching young players focuses on the fact that many coaches know a lot about the game, but they don't know their young pupils."