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What to consider when coaching children in the age of 7 to 17 – a practical guidebook.

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Around the world people of all ages participate in different type of leisure sport, single sport, events or team sport. Usually children start in the age of four to six to get interested in sport. Once interested, they join a sports team, club or organization, where they learn the chosen sport from the very beginning.

Very often parents or former athletes, who just quit their active career, but still want to stay with the sport, work as coaches, especially in lower level clubs. Most of the time, both types of coaches have two things in common: They love the sport and have more or less an idea on training the needed skills. What all of them usually miss, is the understanding on how to coach, handle and guide young people.

I have been coaching for twelve years and wherever I worked I recognized the same problems over and over again. The board mostly complains', that they can't recruit enough children for their youth teams or the children quit playing after a few years or at a certain age. Coaches on the other hand complain that players don't show up for practice or that it gets more and more difficult to deal with the behavior of the kids. So the purpose of the guidebook is to give youth coaches a guideline on how to coach children in team sports and to open up their mind. Then it takes more to be a coach than just putting drills on a board or yelling at someone for a mistake or having kids run lines if they don't behave in a certain way. The guidebook I created is no training guide! Even if I am from the field of ice hockey, the booklet I created is to provide help to youth coaches, no matter what team sport they are coaching.

Key words

Youth coaching; Coaching philosophy; Learning theories; Teaching styles; Skill teaching; Motivation & goal setting; Coaching kids in games; Communication;

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1 Introduction

The idea to the thesis topic was born on a nice Finnish spring night when a friend of mine, a former study mate, and I sat down in an apartment at Vierumäki to discuss my actual topic. I told her, that I see no way how to link the single parts of my former topic to one big thing together and that I have the feeling that my thesis doesn't tell what I really want to provide to the field of sport.

Then she asked me the question: "What is it, you want to pass on to other people, who work in the same field that you do?" So I started to explain to her my different ideas what I am interested to do in ice hockey and what I think should be done different as it is now. I also mentioned the problems and the incidents that passed my way during my work placement time in Switzerland. I told her about my club and that they had less and less children every year and as I came there, only 30 junior players were left and they complained that they have no attitude and don't like to come to practice and so on. I also told her that it took me some time to understand how this could happen, as I couldn't comprehend that negative development. After eight months of work at that club, we had 70 junior players again – after two years we counted 110 registered players – and we never had less than 85% of participants at each practice. Of course it was not just my reward that we could attract so many young players, but I learned to see the differences why players regularly attended practices, and what simple reasons there could occur to make them quit. Suddenly I got the idea that this would be a good topic to write my thesis about. I got the feeling that by choosing my actual topic, I could bring some hints and ideas to other coaches who work with children of different age groups. The following hours a golden thread occurred within the topic and my idea became an entire structure, which I hoped to find for my thesis – finally it turned out to be a practical coaching guidebook for youth coaches to coach kids.

1.1   The goal of the guidebook

The goal of the practical guidebook is to provide other coaches with basic information on coaching.

It covers their personality as a coach, teaching methods and some guideline everyone should think of when going in to a season as a head coach of a junior team.

My thesis should help coaches, who take over a junior team for the first time, to understand, that children are no small adults. They should get some basic ideas on the different development stages of children and what they should be aware of if they coach a 10 year old or a 15 year old boy or girl.

The guidebook provides the reader with some teaching technique and with some ideas on how to build and run practices. In this case practical drills will be based on experiences from ice hockey practices and set ups, but I am sure that the basic ideas behind can be used in every team sport.

In the booklet I also want to confront the reader with some questions which should help him or her to prepare in an adequate way for the tasks he or she will have to face during a season.

The decision why it only covers certain age groups is very simple to explain. Children younger than seven – who are usually the absolute beginners – are in many ways a lot more different to handle and it would take another thesis to describe how to guide those kids and what to be aware of. On the other hand teenagers older than 17 are again a different topic, not so much by their age and behaviour, but much more how they are seen and dealt with in clubs. In high level clubs the U20 (usually age 17 to 19) is for most kids the last stage before going to "the pros" and so they are absolutely in the "train to win stage", where they are seen and drilled according to each clubs philosophy. In lower level clubs U20 teams most of the time just don't exist and so players in the age of 17 very often become a part of their first or second men's and women's team.

2 The Coach

Nowadays so many different types of coaches exist – e.g.: life coach, business coach, career coach, personal coach, health coach, sport coach and so on. The goal of the thesis is to focus on sport coaching and the sport coach. The first and maybe most important part is, to understand what is coaching and what differentiates a coach from a trainer or an instructor.

John Lyle shows us in his article on "what is a coach, and what is coaching?" that the boundaries and definition for being a coach are not very well drawn and that most people don't even bother, even nowadays in a time where for almost everything in this world standards are being set. (Lyle in Stafford, 2011, 6)

When I look at my home country (Austria) and its sports coach education in none of the three coaching levels we can achieve the word coach exists. They call it "Übungsleiter" (exercise instructor), "Lehrwart" (teaching supervisor) and "A-Lizenz-Trainer" (A-License-Trainer) – and it really is what it says. We learn everything scientifically what it takes to set up, explain and run drills, but pretty much nothing what it takes to be a coach, basically because people don't know the difference.

In his work 2002 Lyle tried to identify "a number of boundary criteria" which describe the coaching process itself and which can be applied to an individual's practice. Those boundary criteria include stability, frequency of contact, the intensity of engagement, goal orientation and planned progression in the coaching process. (Lyle in Stafford, 2011, 7)
Jones (2006: 3) gets it more to the point when he states that "at the heart of coaching lies the teaching and learning interface".

So to define what is a coach we have first to define what is coaching and what a coach actually does when he or she runs a practice. In the coaching framework, sports coach UK (2010, UKCC Level 4) describes in a list of competences the abilities and the duties of a high-performing coach in situations of intensive, high-quality coaching as

followed:

- Reflect continuously on coaching practice and challenge personal assumptions and beliefs to improve future performance.
- Seek out, synthesis and apply relevant concepts, theories and principles
- Make and critically reflect on decisions in complex and unpredictable situations
- Recognize and resolve problematic and atypical coaching issues through the generation of innovative strategies and solutions
- Build and maintain effective coach-athlete relationships
- Design and implement an optimal learning environment to impact on athletes" performance needs
- Adapt interpersonal, teaching and instructing behaviors to the needs of the athlete(s)
- Develop athletes to be autonomous decision makers
- Design, implement, monitor, evaluate and regulate advanced training and competition programs
- Design and implement a planned and strategic approach to performance improvement
- Develop and manage an appropriate support structures to facilitate improved performance
- Manage change in the context of the wider sporting, legal, political and socio-economic landscape.

Lyle says in his article that it is necessary to understand that sport coaching has a big social meaning, and states that the core meaning of coaching is "to improve sport performance." (Lyle in Stafford, 2011, 12)

He defines coaching as:

> "1. A field of activity with a multiplicity of possible roles. We can conceptualize this as a family term for roles. Yes, there is a complex matrix of levels of expertise, levels of athlete and team performance, role responsibilities, social status, personal characteristics, career pathways and coaching domains. ....
> 2. An aggregation of behavior and practice intended to result in improved sport performance. It is marked by the design and delivery of a comprehensive intervention program (preparation and competition), which is monitored and regulated. ... The association of intensity, athlete commitment and motives with the 'quality' of coaching means that coaching is most often associated with performance athletes."

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In addition to that Lyle defines a coach in two ways:

> "1. By his or her relationship to the sporting intentions of particular athlete, squad or team. The coach occupies a technical leadership role in a context in which an improvement in performance is intended, and that sporting performance is to be expressed in organized sport competition. ...
> 2. By a demonstrable capacity – that is, a level of development expertise. This is likely to be evidenced by certification or prior experience. This does not imply any specific behavior or practice, and is not related to a current or specific attachment, but merely means that the individual has a capacity to exercise the coaching role." (Lyle in Stafford, 2011, 13, 14)

To sum up the whole ideas given by different authors, when talking about coaching or a coach, we don't basically look on what is done but how things are done to improve sport performance. Sport coaching has a wide range far beneath the basic instruction of drills and goes deep into a social space (Lyle in Stafford, 2011, 9) and covers an interaction between a coach and a player, a coach and the local society or even a more global audience when thinking on great coaches from major sports, as Tom Peters and Nancy Austin wrote in "A Passion for Excellence" (1985):

> "Coaching is face-to-face leadership that pulls together people with diverse backgrounds, talents experiences and interests, encourages them to step up to responsibility and continued achievement, and treats them as full-scale partners and contributors. Coaching is not about memorizing techniques or devising the perfect game plan. It is about really paying attention to people – really believing them, really caring about them, really involving them." (Peters & Austin, 1985, 326)

So in order to simplify it, excellent coaches become "students of people", as coaching is a people business. To become an excellent coach you must develop – besides knowledge – interpersonal skills that move people. Especially communication skills are essential – talking, listening, encouraging and giving feedback – and the main pillars of a successful coach. (Martens, 2004, 36)

2.1   Why people become coaches

Almost for everything in life different reasons exist, also for the instant why people become coaches. Reasons for becoming a coach range from a clubs need to an inner personal call. Many coaches were former players who at the end of their career decide or sometimes even get pushed to become a coach. Others are just sport enthusiasts, who maybe if even played at some amateur level, and decide to stick with the sport after they quit playing either by age or through injuries. Some coaches are parents, who in the beginning just want help the child's team and, as a need occurs within the club, suddenly find themselves in the position of the teams coach. Especially in smaller clubs with little financial and human resources things like this happen quite often.

Each of the named type of coaches has different motivations why they become a coach. So for example some do it because they want to shine in the public through success, others just want to help their son or daughter to develop in sport the best possible way. Some do it to earn money or because they have never done anything else than sport and some do it because it's mission.

The results of two surveys among UK coaches Lyle (2002, 213) mentions show the different motivations for coaching in the UK – the first one was called the Four-Country Study for sports coaches in Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and Japan and processed in 1993. The second one was done by the English Sports Council in 1997:

Four-Country Study results – five most popular reasons for coaching (ranked top-down):

1. Fun and enjoyment
2. Continue in sport
3. Pride, achievement, success
4. Skill in teaching
5. Fitness and health

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English Sports Council survey - four most popular reasons for coaching (ranked top-down):

1. Natural progression from competition
2. General interest in sport
3. As an interested parent or relative
4. Came from teaching

Both surveys underline the ideas brought up in the paragraphs before and pretty much show the different reasons why people tend to become coaches.

Another study (TOYA-Study = Training of Young Athletes, 1994) by the English Sports Council specialised on coaches coaching children showed that continue participation in sport, the parental route and the need to teach and educate children are the main reasons why people coach youth sport. (Lyle, 2002, 214)

This study shows the reasons why people become coaches on junior level even better and also reflects the main problem we face when looking at youth coaches. When the main motive to coach is to continue participation, many former players and new coaches don't understand the transformation from being a player to being a coach. Very often you can see drills which might work with adults put into children practices, where kids are helplessly overstrained. The parental route on the other hand very often doesn't help the kids to develop. Parents take over the position as a coach for the love of the children, but mostly they don't have the knowledge and/or the skill which is needed to improve the young players.

The main motive for a youth coach should be number three, to educate and to teach the young people. In this case most people are willing to improve their skill and knowledge and their main goal most of the time is to do the best for the child's development.

Daniel and Gould point out in their book "Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology" the importance of leaders in coaching who understand children and their needs and know how to structure programs that provide positive learning experiences

and fun. They also take Martens idea (Martens, 1978), that participation in organized sport is not automatically beneficial for the child. "Character development, leadership, good sporting behaviour and achievement orientation" doesn't automatically occur through participation in sport, but has to be passed on to the child through competent adult supervision by a coach. (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 514) This again underlines the necessity of the educated coach, whose main interest should be to educate and to teach children in sport skills and as a person.

The last survey Lyle (2002, 213) talks about, which has also been a part of the 1997 English Sports Council survey, shows the reasons which people motivate to continue. The need to help other to improve is ranked first, followed by the enjoyment of coaching and teaching. Some more reasons were to make a contribution to the sport and of course the inner need to have success and to achieve something extraordinary.

As the helping motive is ranked in first place it shows us, that people who become real coaches and stay with it, need to have a drive for education and teaching.
For the coach in general it is important to know to which group he belongs and what his or her deeper motivation are, why he or she wants to become a coach.

2.2   The coach's personality and his coaching style

"The successful man is himself. To be successful you have got to be honest with yourself."

<div align="right">Vince Lombardi</div>

Before looking at the different coaching styles, we got to identify the different types of human personalities which influence the behaviour in many life situations of each of us. Each coach is an individual person with his or her good and bad trait, which again defines what coaching style he or she might prefer.

Personality researchers, such as Fiske (1949), Norman (1967), Smith (1967), Goldberg (1981, 1993), McCrae & Costa (1987) and Digman (1990) established through different

studies the big five basic dimensions of human personalities also referred as the "Big 5" personality traits. McCrae and his colleagues proved in their studies on people from more than 50 cultures, that the "Big 5" can be seen as global traits, as they could be used to describe human personalities around the world.

According to Digman (1990, 417 – 440) The Big Five factors (OCEAN) and their constituent traits can be summarized as:

- **Openness to experience** – (inventive/curious vs. consistent/cautious). Appreciation for art, emotion, adventure, unusual ideas, curiosity, and variety of experience.
- **Conscientiousness** – (efficient/organized vs. easy-going/careless). A tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement; planned rather than spontaneous behavior.
- **Extraversion** – (outgoing/energetic vs. solitary/reserved). Energy, positive emotions, and the tendency to seek stimulation in the company of others.
- **Agreeableness** – (friendly/compassionate vs. cold/unkind). A tendency to be compassionate and cooperative rather than suspicious and antagonistic towards others.
- **Neuroticism** – (sensitive/nervous vs. secure/confident). A tendency to experience unpleasant emotions easily, such as anger, anxiety, depression, or vulnerability."

Scouting the literature on coaching styles you'll find many writers who name three major coaching styles: the "command or autocratic style" (the dictator or authoritarian), the "cooperative or democratic style" (the teacher) and the "submissive style" (the easy going).

On the submissive style Martens writes in his book, that this is a type of coach who provides little instructions and only a minimal guidance in organizing activities. The coach who adopts' to this style either lack the competence to provide instructions and guidance to the players, or is too lazy to meet demands of his/her coaching responsibilities. One more reason which has to be considered when talking about this type of coach is that he or she is very misinformed about what coaching is and the responsibilities they should cover which come with this position. So Martens calls them a baby-sitter as they only "throw out the ball to play", watch what the group does and don't actually coach the players at all. (Martens, 2004, 30)

So we basically can cut it down to two major coaching styles, which also can be re-

ferred to as the "old school" and "new school" coaching style according to the article by W. Glenn Resse and Dr. Sally J. Ford, Chair of Sports Coaching, USSA.

They defined the characteristics of both styles as follows:

The command or autocratic style in this article also named the "old school style" characterizes itself through:

- punish first, converse later
- atmosphere of fear of failure for the athlete
- immediate short-term respect
- knowledge of technical skills, but not tactical
- undivided attention when speaking
- intimidation of those who speak against the coach's decisions
- demeaning motivation
- nonexistent relationship with the athletes and assistant coaches
- loss of athlete's attention due to negativity
- athletes quit due to poor treatment

Old school coaches are disciplinarians first and teachers second. This type of coach believes that his/her way is the only way and that their experience gives the answer to all playing and coaching situations they face – so they think that they are always right and that their way is the only way to go. To call this style old fashioned and out of time might be obvious, as today's kids are a different type of people and raised in a very less strict way than generations in the past. Nevertheless there might be situations when it becomes necessary to handle players or teams that way. Using the command style of coaching is not all negative, but in every case the coach however must recognize of what is acceptable and what is not; what is determined as abusive and what is still on the acceptable side of the line.

The more appropriate style today is the cooperative or democratic style, as well known as the "new school style". "A coach who implements this style is one who allows athletes to have a voice, while holding steadfast to the leadership position", so W. J. Resse and Dr. S. J. Ford. This style executed to its best provides an optimal mix of learning and being successful, especially in youth coaching.

The cooperative or democratic style in this article also named the "new school style" characterizes itself through:

- positive relationship with athletes and other coaches
- stern but not offensive
- fresh ideas through open lines of communication
- increased participation due to coaching style
- increased tactical knowledge of athletes
- appreciation shown from athletes/community
- gives and receives advice
- leads by example
- encourages of team leaders
- shows continued knowledge of the sport
- has opportunities for advancement into administration

A coach using the cooperative or democratic style will always be willing to improve his or her knowledge of the sport, and is teaching the athletes with the intent that they would develop their own understanding of the sport, its skills and its concepts. (Resse & Ford, 2006) The coach usually is open minded to new ideas and willing to talk and cooperate with the players about it and still holds his leadership position. (Martens, 2004, 31)

According to Jaclyn Smith, a member of the Australian Sports Council and recalling Anthony de Carvalho, our "discipline of coaching" tutor words, at least two more styles exist – the "business-like coach" and the "intense coach".

The business-like coach is not very people orientated and likes to see a 100% effort al at times.

The intense coach focuses on the quality of the player performance. He or she is in some ways similar to the authoritarian coach but doesn't punish players but still can easily transmit anxiety through his or her uptight attitude and highly emotional behavior. Each coach has one main style he or she prefers, but usually it's influenced by one or two of the other styles which overlap each other as you can find some of the same characteristics within the different styles. (compare Anthony de Carvalho, 2010, & Jaclyn Smith, Australian Government /Australian Sports Commission, 2008)

Concluding I would like to point out that whatever style you choose to be as a coach it should correspond with your personality. So a person whose personality is agreeableness in the way of friendly and compassionate should rather tend to the cooperative style, as it fits his or her character better than for e.g. the intense or even command style. On the other hand a coach whose personality is more conscientiousness in the way of efficient and organized will usually prefer the business-like or even intense coaching style. Your coaching style you use will also indicate how your way of teaching and your practices and even your games will look like. More information to that you will find in the chapter "teaching – coaching guidelines".

It doesn't matter what coaching style you prefer to use as long as you stick to who you are as Vince Lombardi said in the quotation I used to start this chapter.

2.3 The coaching philosophy

In his book Rainer Martens (2004) points out the importance of a sound coaching philosophy and states that a well-developed philosophy will help you make difficult decisions more successful. "Having a philosophy will remove uncertainty about training rules, style of play, discipline, codes of conduct, competitive outlook, short- and long-term objectives and many other facets of coaching." (Martens, 2004, 5)

Without a well-developed philosophy you will find yourself guided by external pressure and lacking direction, which will end up in trying to please everyone but not being able to do so and finally you will "lose your ass" in the end. The key idea behind developing and having a coaching philosophy – and also a philosophy of life – is to getting to know yourself better, and to be prepared on what comes your way. (Martens, 2004, 4-5)

2.3.1 What is a coaching philosophy and its purpose?

"The believes, values and truths that define a person or an organisation constitute a philosophy. A philosophy distinguishes right from wrong and good from bad and defines success." (Robinson, 2010, 3)

Your coaching philosophy doesn't provide you with specific answers to each problem that occurs, but it gives you a set of principles to guide your decision making as Burton and Raedeke explain in their book on "Sport Psychology for Coaches". A found coaching philosophy reduces uncertainty in handling problems related to training rules, team discipline, short- and long-term objectives and many other facets of competition. (Burton & Raedeke, 2008, 5)

2.3.2 What should be a part of your coaching philosophy?

Looking at different authors you will find different ideas what should be a part of your coaching philosophy. Simply said your coaching philosophy should be based on your "foundational beliefs, values, principles, concepts and priorities" (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011, 35)

Martens (2004, 6) splits it into two main group – the first he describes as your major objectives (the things you value and want to achieve) and the second should cover your believes and principles – your principles should help you to cope with numberless life's situations – that help you achieve your objectives.

Kidman and Hanrahan (2011, 16) give another main input what has to be considered: the athlete. As the sport always belongs to the athlete, and a coach's purpose is basically to develop the athlete, the philosophical approach should always be athlete-centred. It's still based on a coach's values system, principles and beliefs, but the more the coach's philosophy is athlete-centred the more the athletes will be able to take out of the season in the end.

In his book "Coaching Hockey Successfully" Dennis Gendron (2003) gives us a more practical view on what he bases his coaching philosophy which has to guide him in the day-to-day operations with his team. According to his believes a "total philosophy for coaching has three main areas:

1. The framework or philosophy of the overall organization.

2. Your philosophy about the game itself.
3. The philosophy of how to deal with players and how players deal with each other."

(Gendron, 2003, 10)

Reviewing the whole chapter, everyone's coaching philosophy is based on very simple guidelines such as beliefs, values, principles and concepts of the game. A well-developed philosophy of life and coaching will be among your best friends in your coaching career says Martens. Your philosophy shouldn't be carved in stone as things may change during the years by challenges you face and experiences you gain. (Martens, 2004, 6)

No matter what the core of your philosophy might be – and it will be different than from any other coach as every coach is a different person – you might want to keep the following phrase in mind and use it at the bottom line to build your coaching philosophy on:

 "Do to others as you would have them do to you." (Martens 2004, 8)

3 The children

Before I will start to focus on different aspects of coaching children in detail, I want to mention a few general thoughts on coaching young people which can be seen as the bottom line of many different authors:

> They are not adults, so don't treat them that way.

> Treat them with respect, fair and openly.

Keep those basic statements in mind because the kids deserve it to be treated correctly.

3.1 Why do children participate in sport?

Numerous surveys and investigations among children participating in sports have been made to find out their motives to do sport and become a member of a team. The following answers were the most common reasons kids named why they do sports:

1. To have fun and to enjoy sport
2. To learn new skills and to improve on existing sport skills
3. To become physically fit and to enjoy good health
4. To enjoy the challenge and excitement of sports participation and competition
5. To enjoy a team atmosphere and to be with friends

<div align="right">(Cox, 2002, 108)</div>

As this survey shows 'to have fun' is still the most important motive for kids to participate in sport. It is essential that we coaches keep it in mind when we are coaching kids, why they join a team and what the children expect to get out of it.

A larger survey published by Weinberg and Gould in their book "Foundations of Sport and Exercise Psychology" gives us an even deeper view on what makes children participate in sports.

Reasons for Participating in Nonschool Sports	
Boys	**Girls**
To have fun	To have fun
To do something I'm good at	To stay in shape
To improve my skills	To get exercise
For excitement of competition	To improve my skills
To stay in shape	To do something I'm good at
For the challenge of competition	To learn new skills
To get exercise	For excitement of competition
To learn new skills	To play as part of a team
To play as part of a team	To make new friends
To go to higher level of competition	For the challenge of competition
Reasons for Participating in School Sports	
Boys	**Girls**
To have fun	To have fun
To improve my skills	To stay in shape
For excitement of competition	To get exercise
To do something I'm good at	To improve my skills
To stay in shape	To do something I'm good at
For the challenge of competition	To be a part of a team
To be a part of a team	For excitement of competition
To win	To learn new skills
To go to higher level of competition	For team spirit
To get exercise	For the challenge of competition

Motives for Participation in Youth Sport (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 515)

Again the main reason for a child, no matter if it's a boy or girl, to participate in sport is "to have fun", so we really have to keep this in mind at all our games and practices we do. Looking on from point number two, you can see gender differences in this survey, as boys usually participate in sport to have the challenge of a competition, while girls more often use sport to do exercise and stay in shape.

For us coaches it is also important to know that for most children, sport participation changes near the age of 12 years and that it consistently declines, through different reasons during the puberty, till the age of 18. Only a relatively small percentage of youths remain involved in organized sport during their puberty and later on. (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 514)

When you look at reasons for kids to participate in sport you will see that most of them have to do with intrinsic motivation. The older the children get usually the more extrinsic rewards will be given and used to motivate. The first extrinsic motivation even named in the surveys is "to be part of a team" or "team spirit". There are very rare kids who don't care to be accepted by their peers and who don't strive for recognition through friends, schoolmates and parent. Besides recognition by people in their surrounding, extrinsic motivation starts with very simple things such as awards, medals, or trophies and lead up to scholarships and financial rewards, which are paid to our young sports men and women to motivate and to achieve better performances. (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 139) More on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will be covered in chapter 4.4, set goals – create motivation.

3.2   Why do children quit sports?

The answer to this question is basically the reverse of the reasons why children participate in sports. Cox (2002, 112) identifies two major groups of reasons we would have to think about – surface reasons for withdrawal from sport and underlying psychological reasons for withdrawal from sports.

Surface reasons are as follows:
- Participating in sport not being fun anymore.
- Failure to learn new skills or to improve on existing skills.
- Lack of physical activity.
- Lack of thrills, challenges and excitement.
- Poor team atmosphere, not making friends.

Another surface reason for dropping out is simply the change of interest – so children

change to another sport, too much school duties and too little time left for the sport, or they just have other things to do.

Withdrawal from sport for surface reason, are less serious than withdrawals from sport underlying psychological reasons, such as

- Too much emphasis on competition and outcome.
- Distress and worry upon winning.
- Experience or combination of experiences that caused to lose self-confidence.
- Too much pressure, stress and anxiety.

3.3   The development of children in the age of 7 to 17

Child development between the years of 7 and 17 is a period of transformation. Children undergo many changes including physical, intellectual (resp. mental growth), as well as steps in social developments & behaviorism.

The graph used by Thomas W. Rowland in his Book "Development Exercise Physiology" (1996) which he adopted from Scammon (1930), illustrates us very well the different stages of human development within the first 20 years of life.
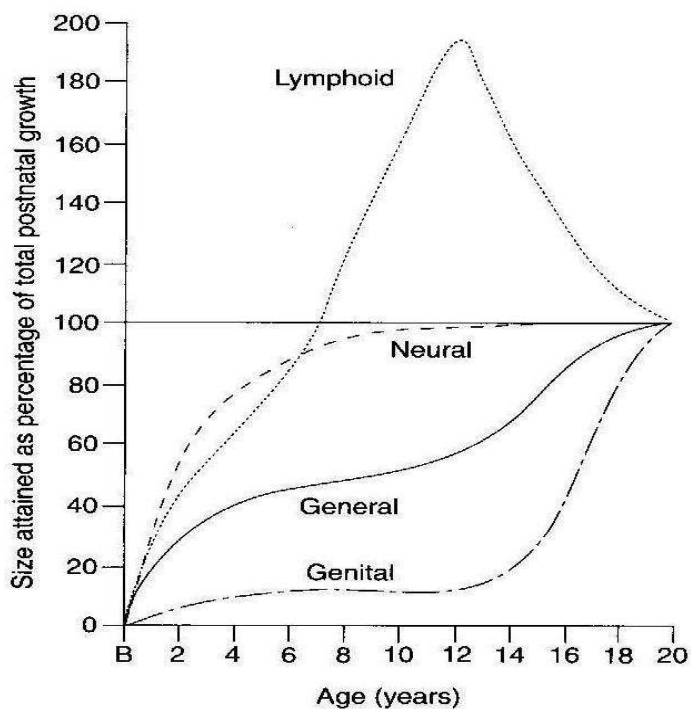

Figure 1: Different pattern of system growth during childhood (Rowland, 1996, 4)

For a better understanding of the graphic Rowland describes it as follows:

> "The curve of general growth reflects the pattern of change typical of body dimension, such as height and weight. ... Growth of brain and nervous system follows the neural curve, characterized by rapid early development in preschool years and little change throughout childhood. Reproductive function and mechanism for secondary sexual characteristics (genital curve) are dormant during childhood until the time of puberty. Function of lymphoid tissue (tonsils, thymus gland, lymph nodes) actually declines during late childhood." (Rowland, 1996, 4)

It has to be mentioned, that inter-individual variability – even significant up- and downturns in the development curves – is also observed within exercise physiology variables. (Rowland, 1996, 4) So all the mentioned age groups can only be seen as average guidance level as physical, mental and also social development may vary from individual to individual by one to three years. Looking at this in detail, following development stages should be mentioned:

3.3.1   Age 7 to 10

Till the age of seven we are talking about the early childhood phase, in which the children learn the difference between reality and fantasy and the ability to distinguish between thoughts and actions. Boys and girls start to form separate groups while playing games or sports. Children begin to enjoy their growing sense of independence and increased responsibility. During this stage, the children learn to read and write in school, as well as to form organized memories.

The ages seven, eight and nine are known as the middle childhood years. It is a period when children are developing skills for use in different activities, such as sports or hobbies, as well as for every day school life.
Physically, children are gaining more muscles and using both large and fine motor skills, although coordination may still be lacking. So in practice a main focus should be put on coordinative drills and games. Both boys and girls develop physically, growing taller around the age of ten.

They may have friendships with those close to their age. They can show support for others and help when needed, but they still need plenty of guidance from parents and coaches to determine the difference between right and wrong. They talk and interact in conversation, but their general outlook is still one of self-centeredness. (E-HOW.com health. 1999-2012.)

Taking this knowledge into practice concludes that the main focus in all drills and games got to be 'the puck and I' – when talking about ice hockey.

3.3.2 Age 11 to 14

The years eleven, twelve and thirteen are known as the late childhood or the preteen years. Children make dramatic developmental changes as their puberty starts. For girls, puberty begins around the age of ten or eleven and ends around age of 16. Boys enter puberty later than girls – usually around the age of twelve and it lasts approximately until the age of sixteen or seventeen. (Livestrong.com. 2012)

Following physical changes occur during puberty:

Girls

- body fat increases
- breasts begin to enlarge
- pubic hair grows
- height and weight increase
- first menstrual period occurs
- hips widen
- underarm hair grows
- skin and hair become more oily
- pimples may appear

Boys

- scrotum becomes darker
- testicles grow larger

- penis grows longer and fuller
- pubic hair grows
- breasts can get "lumps" and become tender
- height and weight increase
- muscles develop
- voice cracks and gets deeper
- skin and hair become more oily
- pimples may appear
- underarm and facial hair grow

(Palo Alto Medical Foundation – A Sutter health affiliate, 2012, growth 11 – 14)

During the age of ten to thirteen also the child's activity levels increases, and she or he spends more and more time with friends and at school functions than with their parents. Preteens start to notice the opposite sex, but still prefer friendships with their own gender. Intellectually, school work changes from basic skills to higher levels of math and science activities. (Livestrong.com, 2012)

3.3.3   Age 15 to 17

The period from fifteen to sixteen is called middle adolescence. During this time teens continue to show independence in their intellectual and relational skills. Both boys and girls are aware of the opposite sex and start dating each other. They have the capacity to develop close relationships with friends and dating partners.
They can take on more responsibility at school, at home, begin driving or hold a job. By this stage, most teens have undergone puberty, although boys may still be developing more muscle and increasing in height. By the time puberty comes to an end, it is the right moment to start physical training with weights. To do this beneficial and with the least risk possible, it is important that the teen-athlete is educated to work with his own bodyweight first, that she or he learns the right technique of how to use additional weight and that the athlete as well as coach is patient enough to use small steps for progress.
Usually, fifteen-year-olds and up show increased emotional stability, with less frequent outbursts and arguments with parents. Instead they start to challenge teachers, coaches

and other authority figures. Their school subjects become more advanced, and they are making decisions that will affect their future. (Livestrong.com. 2012)

Not physical changes nor puberty features are put in front in the years 15 to 17. In this age most changes appear within social developments & behaviorism as well as on the intellectual level of each preadolescent.

Here some of the main characteristics named in an article by the American Medical Association according intellectual, social and emotional changes:

Intellectual characteristics

- Teens are better able to solve problems, think about their future, appreciate opinions of others and understand the long-term effects of their decisions. However, teens tend to use these skills inconsistently; as a result, they sometimes do things without thinking first.
- Teens' organizational skills improve. Many successfully juggle school, outside activities, and work.
- In an attempt to answer the questions "Who am I?" and "What should I be?" teens listen to new music, try out clothing fashions, and begin to explore jobs, religion, political issues and social causes.
- Teens frequently question and challenge school and parental rules.

Social and emotional characteristics

- Older teens are more self-assured and better able to resist peer pressure than younger teens.
- Teens spend less time than they used to with their families. They prefer to spend more time with friends or alone.
- Teens try to make close friends and may become part of a group based on interests or attributes (sports, arts, etc.).
- Teens are excited and at the same time overwhelmed by the possibilities for their future (college, work, or military).
- Like adults, teens get depressed – sadness lasting more than 2 weeks, however, is not normal.
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs is more common now than before.
- Teens begin to have strong sexual urges, and many become sexually active.
- Teens become more aware of their sexual orientation (homo-, hetero-, bi-sexual).

(Palo Alto Medical Foundation – A Sutter health affiliate, 2012, growth 11 – 14).

4   Pedagogical approach to teach and to coach children

After providing some basic information on the coach's character and coaching itself in the first chapter and some more basic information on children development and their reasons why they participate in or quit sport in the second chapter it is now the point reached to focus on the third and important aspect when talking about coaching kids – the coaching respectively teaching itself.

When thinking about teaching and coaching there is one general statement which our tutor Tomi Paalanen tought us and which you should always keep in the back of your mind no matter if you are coaching pre-adolescent, adolescent or professionals: "Don't assume anything!"

As the definition of coaching has already been given in the first chapter of this work, I will now focus on the learning and teaching. At first we should get aware of what is learning and what is teaching, how to define it and what it means for us coaches in a broader concept of coaching children.
In their book "Introduction to Teaching – helping students to learn" J. Johnson and D. Musial name several different definitions how teachers may define learning when asked. "So learning maybe viewed as a 'change in behavior' an 'interpretation of reality', 'processing of information' et cetera. And learning is based on 'observation', 'interaction with people or things' and so on." (Johnson & Musial & Johnson, 2009, 191)

Although there is no entire accepted definition of learning, a generally accepted definition of learning says, that "learning is any relatively permanent change in behavior that occurs as a result of experience" (Robbins, 1998). Also Terry di Paolo's work describes learning quite fitting, as he defines learning as "…the processing of information we encounter, which leads to changes or an increase in our knowledge and abilities."This leads us to the reverse that "teaching is imparting knowledge or skill" (B. O. Smith, 1969). That's the way how I want to leave it, as there doesn't exist any definition on teaching which is entirely accepted.

4.1 Learning theories

For more than a century various psychologists tried to examine human behaviour concerning learning. They have come up with some mainstream theories which cover almost all possible human learning behaviour. Before going deeper into the main learning theories, it should be of interest to us to look closer in which ways humans most likely observe information.

When we are talking about observing information which is given by a teacher or coach to a learner, we are talking about three types of learners: the visual learner, the auditory learner and the kinesthetic learner. Although an individual will use all of the senses to receive information, it is very likely – especially by kids in the middle childhood years or even still in the preteen phase – that one of the senses will dominate and will be preferred. The coach should be aware of that the dominant sense will be the method to receive new information and she or he should be able to pass on new skills always in various ways to the learners, as not everyone in the group or team will have the same dominant sense. (Navin, 2011, 46)

According to Navin (2011, 46) three different main types of learners exist:

The visual learners:
Two types of visual learners exist – the visual-linguistic learner and the visual-spatial learner. They differ from each other: the visual-spatial learner prefers charts, demonstration, video or picture material, while the visual-linguistic learner will prefer reading and writing tasks, as any information in written form will remain in his memory also if it is only read once. Visual learning kids can often be identified after you as a coach finished your verbal explanation of a drill. They would still be standing, looking at you with big eyes and waiting for the actual illustration of what they should do next.

The auditory learner:
As the name already say's, this type of learner likes to talk through a situation and would not enjoy reading and writing tasks.

The kinesthetic learner:

This individual prefers to learn new skills by movement or contact with the subject. She or he would lose concentration quite rapidly if movement is not interlinked to a learning subject – these are most likely those kids who never can stand still while you as a coach try to explain something verbally.

After this short excursion to the three main senses used by learners, I will now focus on the main learning theories explored by the different psychologist throughout the last century.

4.1.1   Behaviorism:

Behaviorism operates on a principle of "stimulus-response", which means that all behavior is caused by external stimuli (operant conditioning) and it can be explained without the need to consider internal mental states or consciousness.

Behaviorism is a worldview that assumes a learner is essentially passive, responding to environmental stimuli. The learner starts off as a clean slate (tabula rasa) and behavior is shaped through positive reinforcement or negative reinforcement. Both positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement increase the probability that the antecedent behavior will happen again. In contrast, punishment (both positive and negative) decreases the likelihood that the antecedent behavior will happen again. Positive indicates the application of a stimulus; negative indicates the withholding of a stimulus. Learning is therefore defined as a change in behavior in the learner. We can decide two mainstreams within the behaviorism: the classical conditioning (Pavlov's dog) and the operant conditioning (B. F. Skinner: "behavior is shaped and maintained by its consequences") That means that people are more likely to repeat rewarded (reinforced) behaviors and less likely to repeat punished behaviors. "The Classical Conditioning (Pavlov) is defined as a process of learning by temporal association in which two events that repeatedly occur close together in time become fused in a person's mind and produce the same response (Comer, 2004)

Originators and important contributors: John B. Watson, Ivan Pavlov, B.F. Skinner, E. L. Thorndike (connectionism). (Learning theories.com, 2008 – 2012, behaviorism)

4.1.2 Cognitivism:

The cognitivist paradigm essentially argues that the 'black box' of the mind should be opened and understood. The learner is viewed as an information processor and learning occurs through an observable change in the learner.

Cognitivism focuses as mentioned before on the inner mental activities – opening the 'black box' of the human mind is valuable and necessary for understanding how people learn. Mental processes such as thinking, memory, knowing, and problem-solving need to be explored and learning is defined as change in a learner's schemata, as well as knowledge which is stored in our memory.

As a response to behaviorism, people are not 'programmed animals' who merely respond to environmental stimuli. People are rational beings that require active participation in order to learn and to make some progress, and whose actions are a consequence of thinking. Changes in behavior are observed, but only as an indication of what is occurring in the learner's head. Cognitivism uses the metaphor of the mind as computer: information comes in, is being processed, and leads to certain outcomes – despite to the behaviorism the process is the main interest of all cognitivists.

Originators and important contributors: Merrill -Component Display Theory (CDT), Reigeluth (Elaboration Theory), Gagne, Briggs, Wager, Bruner (moving toward cognitive constructivism), Schank (scripts), Scandura (structural learning). (Learning theories.com, 2008 – 2012, cognitivism)

4.1.3 Constructivism:

In the constructivism learning is an active, constructive process. The learner actively constructs or creates her or his own subjective representations of objective reality.

New information is linked to prior knowledge, that mental representations are subjective and based on the learners previous experiences and knowledge.

As a reaction to didactic approaches such as behaviorism and programmed instruction, constructivism states that learning is an active, contextualized process of constructing knowledge rather than acquiring it. It cannot just be given to the learner by the teacher, it is constructed based on personal experiences and hypotheses of the environment. Learners consistently test these hypotheses every day through social negotiation. Each person has a different interpretation and construction of the knowledge process based on past experiences and cultural factors to a situation. (Learning theories.com, 2008 – 2012, constructivism)

When teaching or coaching from a constructivistic point of view a teacher should recognize how a learner believes the world to operate. New information presented to the learner should be modified by what the student already knows and believes. You as a teacher or coach assist the students the most when you start, where the learner respectively your player is at. So they can build on his or her understanding of the matter more easily. In her book "Nichts als Stroh im Kopf" describes Vera F. Birkenbihl (1987) quite visual how important it is to link new information to already existing knowledge in order to be able to uptake the new information - also mentioned in Martens Successful Coaching when he talks about the mental stage while learning new technique skills. She gives an example by learning new languages – each word which should be kept by the learner will more likely be taken up if it can be linked to an already existing word (no matter from the language to be learned or a different one) or picture that already exists in the students head, than if it has to be remembered just by the word itself. She calls it "the branches" concept according to the function of a tree. (Birkenbihl, 1987)

Originators and important contributors: Piaget, Duckworth, Hein, Gardener. (Learning theories.com, 2008 – 2012, constructivism)

4.1.4 Humanism:

Humanism believes learning is viewed as a personal act to fulfill one's potential. Humanism, a paradigm that emerged in the 1960s, focuses on the human freedom, dignity and potential. A central assumption of humanism is that people act with intentionality and values and that it is necessary to study the person as a whole, especially as an individual that grows and develops over the lifespan. In order to that assumption it follows that the study of the self, motivation, and goals are areas of particular interest to every humanist.

A primary purpose of humanism could be described as the development of self-actualized, autonomous people. By this point of view learning is student centered and personalized, as well as affective and cognitive needs are keys, and the goal is to develop self-actualized people in a cooperative, supportive environment. Key proponents: A. Maslow, C. Rogers, M. Knowles. (Learning theories.com, 2008 – 2012, humanism)

A stream within the humanism and in this way a similar theory was published by Kolb, the experimental learning circle. It is a four-stage cyclical theory of learning, which gives us a holistic perspective that combines experience, perception, cognition and behavior. Kolb believes "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984,38)
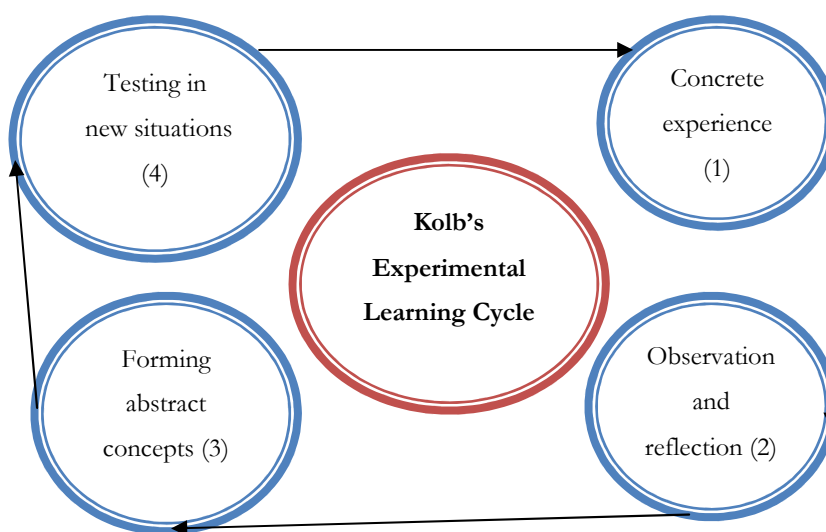

Figure 2: Kolb's learning cycle (1984)

For a better understanding of the graphic Kolb describes the cycle as follows:

> "Kolb's four-stage learning cycle shows how experience is translated through reflection into concepts, which in turn are used as guides for active experimentation and the choice of new experiences. The first stage, concrete experience (CE), is where the learner actively experiences an activity such as a lab session or field work. The second stage, reflective observation (RO), is when the learner consciously reflects back on that experience. The third stage, abstract conceptualization (AC), is where the learner attempts to conceptualize a theory or model of what is observed. The fourth stage, active experimentation (AE), is where the learner is trying to plan how to test a model or theory or plan for a forthcoming experience." (Kolb, 1984)

4.2   Teaching styles

Recalling the first chapter we know that teaching is a big part of coaching. So it is essential that every coach, especially on the youth level, knows the context of his/her role as a teacher and the players role as a learner. The most comprehensive work on teaching and teaching physical education in particular was researched by Muska Mosston, who created a spectrum of ten different coaching styles – from the command to the self-teaching style. In their book "Teaching Physical Education", Mosston and Ashworth point out that the discovery that "teaching behaviour is a chain of decision making" led Mosston to creat "the Spectrum". In the literature you can also find some statements by Good & Brophy, who mention that teacher decision making, guided by clear goals, is the key to effective instruction. Also Westerman says it in a very similar way as he states it as "decision making is involved in every aspect of a teacher's professional life – teachers thinking and decision making organize and direct a teacher's behaviour from the context for both the teaching and learning." Both underline Mosston's main concept, that "teaching behaviour is a chain of decision making". According to that the next fundamental step on which "the Spectrum" is based on is Mosston's idea that, "...neither teacher nor student can make decisions in a vacuum. Decisions are always made about something. This "something" is the subject matter of teaching and learning". The goal of "the Spectrum" is to demonstrate "mobility ability" – teachers using "the Spectrum" should have the ability to shift among the behaviours, as needed

and to accommodate learners' needs, the focus of the content and the countless goals of education. (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 4, 5)

To understand the Spectrum and the eleven different teaching styles it consists of, we first got to understand the O-T-L-O Relationship and the fundamental anatomy of any teaching style.

4.2.1 The O-T-L-O Relationship

The O-T-L-O Relationship describes the connection between objectives (O), the teacher (T), the learner (L) and the outcome (O). The bond between teaching behaviour (T), learning behaviour (L) and objectives always exist as Mosston shows.

In any teacher-learner interaction two sets of objectives exist – the subject matter, that defines the particular content of a lesson episode, and the human behaviour objective, which reflects the wanted behaviour of the learner. These separate objectives for subject matter and behaviour always exist in teaching.

When looking at the end of an episode one more aspect has to be considered – the outcomes. The outcomes are based on the selected objectives and shaped by the teacher-learner interaction during the process. The teacher-learner interaction always produces outcomes in subject matter and in behaviour, as seen in figure 3. (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 13 – 15)
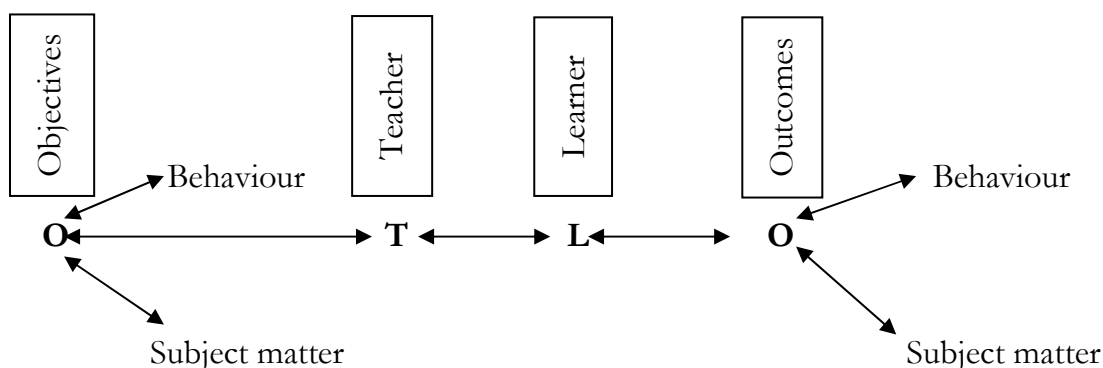

Figure 3: The Pedagogical Unit – O-T-L-O (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 15)

4.2.2 The Anatomy of any Teaching Style

After studying the teaching-learning transactions, Mosston created categories of decisions which always have to be made in any teaching event. He puts the randomly identified decisions into three sets. Their unique characteristics permits the combination of the specific decisions according to their overall purpose.

Decision Clusters (Three Sets)		Overall Purpose
Pre-impact	←------→	Intent–Objectives
Impact	←------→	Action–Implementation
Post-Impact	←------→	Assessment–Feedback

Figure 4: The decision in any style clusters to purpose. (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 19)

Here Mosstons definition for a better understanding of the three sets:

- – The pre-impact set defines the intent – planning and preparation of decisions.
- – The impact set defines the action – the face-to face implementation of the pre-impact decisions (the transaction, task engagement or performance).
- – The post-impact set defines the assessment – including feedback about the performance during the impact and overall evaluation of the congruence between the intent and the action of the learning experience.   (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 19, 20)

The anatomy of any Style is represented by those three sets and all styles are based on all the decisions which are made within the sets. What differs' one style from the other is "who makes which decision about what and when". It is vital to understand the individual decisions and that they are made by purpose and not by time, before identifying who makes which decision. (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 20)

4.2.3   The Feedback

Before looking at the Spectrum itself I want to focus on one of the main criteria of teaching and coaching – giving feedback. "Its presence and power pervade every aspect of life – everybody knows it, gives it, and receives it." Feedback can be given via several modes of communication, such as symbols, gestures and verbal behaviour. It is fundamental to the progress of the learner for two primary reasons: It may reinforce or change subject matter, behaviour or logistics and it shapes the self concept of the learner. (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 27, 28)

Four forms of feedback exist as the next graph shows us – they differ in its characteristics and its impact on the learner.

FOUR FORMS OF FEEDBACK

Value Statement
(positive or negative)
Corrective Statement
Neutral Statement
Ambiguous Statement

All forms can be:

…about Subject Matter
…or about Behavior
…or about Logistics

…and can be:

Specific or Nonspecific
Public or private
Direct to and individual or to a small group(s) or to the whole class
Immediate or delayed
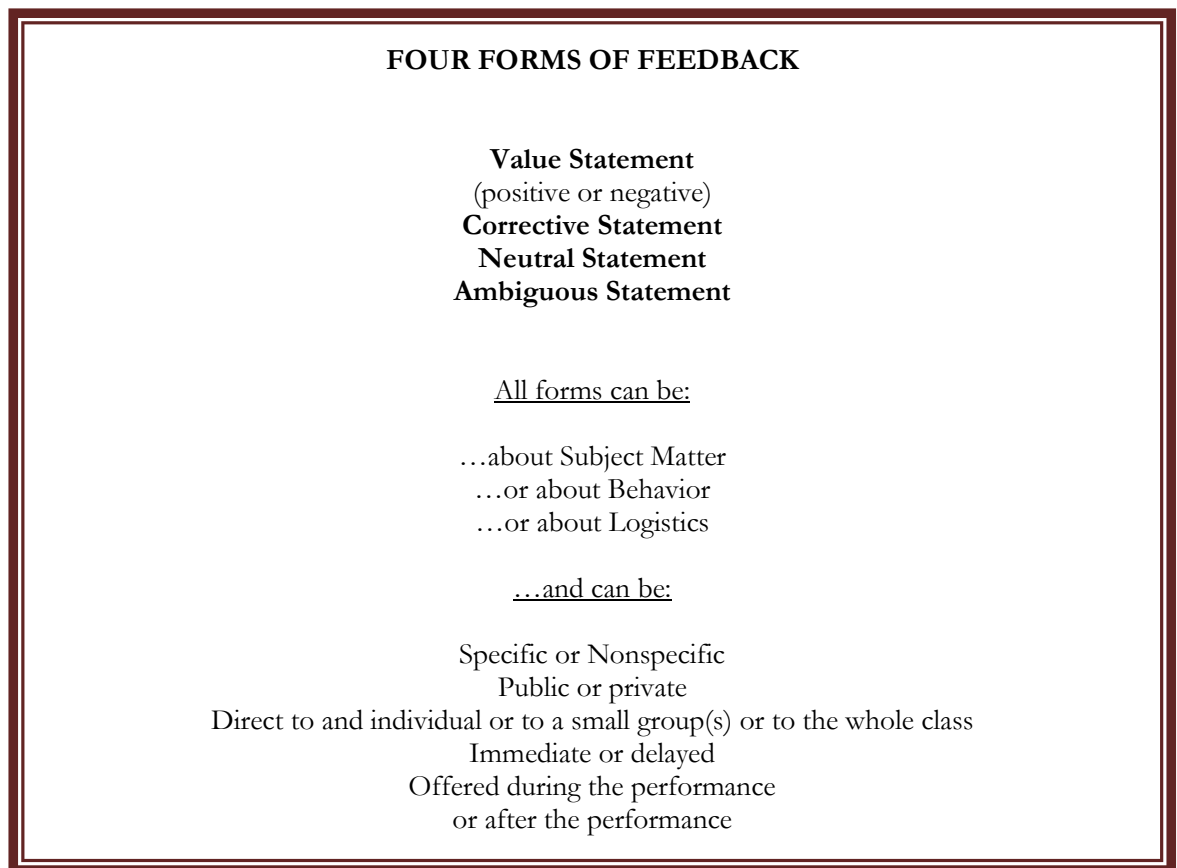Offered during the performance
or after the performance

Figure 5: Feedback overview. (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 28)

As the forms which are shown in the graph above are basically self-explanatory, I will just give a short description on the four types of feedback mentioned by Mosston and Ashworth (2002, 29 – 39):

- Value statements: A word (or symbol) that judges the performance and projects a value or a feeling about the performance – it may be specific or nonspecific as well as positive or negative.

- Corrective statements: A statement that refers to an error; it provides information on how to correct the error and identifies only the correction. The focus is either on the subject matter, behavior or logistic of the error.

- Neutral statements: Is factual, descriptive and nonjudgmental. An objective description of what the performer has done and permits continued conversation.

- Ambiguous statements: Words or phrases which do not provide precise information about performance – it leaves room for interpretation and also misinterpretation as the focus is uncertain.

4.2.4 The Spectrum

The basic idea of the Spectrum is that teaching is well-regulated by a single unifying process: decision making. Every act of teaching is a consequence of prior decisions and according to decisions made, a certain behaviour will follow. Understanding the primary decisions and identifying the possible combinations of decisions opens a wide range of teacher-learner relationships. (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 8)

When looking at the Spectrum itself we can see that it consists of eleven different styles which can be separated into two major categories – the reproduction styles and production styles. Style A – E represent the reproduction styles as the learner is requested to reproduce past knowledge. These styles are designed to acquire basic skills and the replication of models and procedures – it involves the learner primarily in cognitive operations that deal with past and present knowledge, such as memory and recall, identification and sorting.
Styles F – K represent the production styles as the learner is invited to produce new knowledge. These styles ask the learner to go beyond facts and memory and to discover new concepts. (Mosston & Ashworth 2002, 10, 11)

The following list gives us a brief description on each of the eleven teaching styles and of the role of the teacher (practitioner) and the learner (participant):

Mosston & Ashworth 'Teaching Style'	Interaction	Role of Teacher T	Role of Learner L
Command (A)	T makes decisions; L copies and complies with decisions and instructions.	Instructing	Copying
Practice (B)	T sets up opportunities, giving feedback to L who is working at own pace on tasks set.	Establishing	Repeating and improving
Reciprocal (C)	L work together, receiving feedback from each other; L provides reference points for feedback.	Supporting	Performing and peer assessing
Self-Check (D)	T sets criteria for success; L checks own performance against theses.	Directing	Self assessing
Inclusion (E)	T sets out a variety of tasks/opportunities; L select which task is most appropriate for their abilities and/or motivates.	Facilitating	Selecting
Guided discovery (F)	T uses questions and tasks to gradually direct L towards a pre-determined learning target.	Questioning	Uncovering
Convergent discovery (G)	T sets or frames problems; L attempts to find most appropriate solution	Guiding	Finding out
Divergent discovery (H)	T sets or frames problems; L attempts to create possible solutions	Prompting	Creating
Learner designed (I)	T decides on area of focus; L develop within this area, drawing on T expertise;	Advising	Initiating
Learner initiated (J)	L decides on how and what they are aiming for; T drawn on for support as needed	Mentoring	Deciding
Self teach (K)	L engages in development on their own	N/A	Self determined

Mosstons teaching styles (compare D. Hayden Davis, M. Whitehead, 2010)

4.3 Skills teaching

When talking about teaching skills three basic ingredients have to be taken into consideration according to Wrisberg – the athlete, the task and the performance environment. The most important of those three is the athlete and here again his or her personal characteristics. Characteristics you will need to keep in mind are age, sex, height, weight, physical assets, learning style and previous experiences, as well as their basic ability what they are able to do or even willing to do. Each task that is about to be taught consists of one out of three possible elements – sensory-perceptual elements, decision-making elements or motor control elements.

Sensory-perceptual elements refer to the types of information an athlete must be able to detect and interpret. Decision-making elements relate to the choices athletes must make and the demands associated with those choices. Motor control elements represent the multiple components of movement athletes attempt to produce in a coordinated fashion. The third ingredient Wrisberg talks about is the performance environment which has to be taken into consideration. For example a player performing a skill in an empty arena experiences a different environment and pressure than performing the same skill in front of teammates or some seconds left on the clock and the score tied in a championship game. An effective practice involves performances of tasks in all types of environment a player might get confronted with. (Wrisberg, 2007, 6 – 8)

According to Martens six different skills exist which should be taught in one or the other way when thinking about teaching skills in sport. Besides the two main skills, the technical and tactical skills – which might obvious to most coaches – skills such as physical skills, mental skills, communication skills and the skill of character development exist.

The term skill has two meanings:

> "It may mean task." And "it also may mean the quality of a person's performance at some task. ... Technique and skill are two terms often used synonymously, but they shouldn't be. Skill in sport is being able to execute the techniques required at the right time and place. The overall use of skill is different from the more narrow use of technical and tactical skills. Remember that technical skills or techniques, refer to the specific

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motor skills used to perform a task; and tactical skills, or tactics, refer to the mental skills to know when and where to execute the technical skills." (Martens 2004, 170)

Besides that all six types of skills are important to become an entire player in any sport, in the following chapter I will only focus on how to teach technical skills as it is the most important and most used type of skill in youth sport.

4.3.1 Basics teaching technical skills

Martens (2004, 195 – 198) also consideres three stages of learning – the mental stage, the practice stage and the automatic stage – when thinking about learning new skills.

<u>The mental stage</u> requires a great deal of cognitive activity as the learners' brain searches for a mental plan of the correct technique. The brain seeks connections with previous activities you've learned and seeks for familiar movement patterns. In this stage it is important not to teach too much – too much information overloads the learning circuit.

<u>In the practice stage</u> you will spend much more time than in the mental stage. This stage basically emphasises on the quality of practice to refine technique and to decrease errors.

<u>In the automatic stage</u> the technique becomes more and more automatic. As a consequence you free up more mental capacity, which allows you to focus on the more critical elements of the skill.

Now as we have some basic information on the three different learning stages we can focus on the four steps that are needed to teach technical skills.

Step 1: Introduce the technical skill – the key points of a good instruction are:

- Getting the teams attention.

- Arranging the team so all can see and hear you.
- Naming the technique and explaining how it is used in the game.

Besides those key points it is important to introduce the new skill with enthusiasm, clearly and simply spoken words (as brief as possible) and show it in action.

Step 2: Demonstrate and explain the technical skill – the key points when you demonstrate and explain technical skills:

- Demonstrating and explaining – tell your players what to look for; demonstrate the whole technique unless it is too complex, then break it into major parts;
- Relating the technique to previously learned techniques.
- Checking for understanding – inviting or asking questions.

Step 3: Have the athletes practice the technical skill

In the list below you can see the seven principles for technical skill practice (Martens, 2004, 204). Principle four and five will be covered in 4.5 creating a practice; all the other principles are self-explanatory.

1. Have athletes practice the right technique.
2. Have athletes practice the technique in game like conditions as soon as they can.
3. Keep practices short and frequent when teaching new techniques.
4. Use practice time effectively.
5. Make optimal use of facilities and equipment.
6. Make sure athletes experience a reasonable amount of success at each practice.
7. Make practice fun.

Step 4: Correct errors. Practice alone is not enough – to be productive you must provide your players with two types of information to correct errors:

- How the completed performance is compared to the desired performance.

- How to change an incorrect performance to more closely approximate the desired performance.

To do so you got to observe and evaluate the performance and give feedback on it. Identifying the correct cause of inadequate performance is one of the big challenges in coaching. The better you understand the technical skill the easier you will be able to correct it – there is no substitute for knowledge and experience in correcting technical skill. The use of video can be a great help to observe your athletes and to correct mistakes. Don't rush into error correction – as long as you couldn't clearly identify it. One of the most common coaching mistakes is to provide inaccurate feedback and wrong error corrections. In general it is important to provide specific and accurate feedback – more information on that was already given in 4.2.3 the Feedback. (Martens 2004, 199 - 209)

4.4   Set goals – create motivation

"If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

<div align="right">Antoine de Saint-Exupery, "Citadelle – The Wisdom of the Sands"</div>

4.4.1   Type of motivation

When talking about motivation we first got to identify the two different types of motivation which exist. In his book "Successful Coaching" Martens bases his analyze of motivation on a very simple quote: "people are motivated to fulfil their needs." So what are those needs?

According to Martens (2004, 121) the primary needs are:
- To have fun – which includes the need for stimulation and excitement.
- To feel worthy – which includes the need to feel competent and successful.

This can be achieved through intrinsic and extrinsic rewards which cause motivation in a player.

Extrinsic rewards, such as trophies, medals, money, praise, equipment, recognition from others and so on, come from the outside to the athlete and are either given by the club, media, parents or coaches to motivate players.

Intrinsic rewards are internally satisfying when players participate in sport – such as having fun and feeling competent and successful.

The problem is that extrinsic rewards given to motivate may become less appreciated from time to time and so may lose its value to the athlete. On the other hand intrinsic motivation is 'self-fueling' and cannot be given to the player, a fact every coach should realize when thinking about motivating athletes. You as a coach can create conditions in practice and games that provide your players with the opportunity to fill their need of their own intrinsic rewards. (Martens, 2004, 121,122)

Talking about motivation within a team you have to separate individual and team motivation. In general motivation is done by coaches and players daily – with every meeting, practice, team meal, bus ride, game or video session. It starts with the coaches own work habits and behaviour which influences the players attitude and motivation in various ways – and it varies from player to player and team to team. Looking at all the individuals within a team each of them has his or her own reason for playing and linked with that their own level of what price they are willing to pay to achieve a certain level of success.

Motivation is associated with aspiration, which can be realistic or not and will vary from individual to individual. Some players aspire to win championships, some to improve to play on a higher level and some just want to play and have fun. Also if some aspirations might not be realistic, you as a coach should allow your players to dream and strive even for the unrealistic – especially in youth hockey – as long as the unrealistic aspiration doesn't hurt the individual or the team.

Always keep one thing in mind when you want to move an individual up the aspiration ladder: "you cannot make some into something they don't want to become." Thinking about team motivation it is important to create something very special, unique and even uncommon. It should correspond with your coaching philosophy and it should be something the players buy-in, identify themselves and carry out on daily bases. (Gendron, 2003, 18, 19)

4.4.2 Type of goals

Before talking about the different type of goals, I want to define what is a goal and of which form a goal can be. According to Weinberg and Gould, "goals are objectives or aims of action." They may be subjective and based on general individual statements of intent (e.g. 'I want to do well') which are not measurable or they can be objective and focus on "attaining a specific standard of proficiency on a task, usually within a specific time." (e.g. specific weight loss within a certain time or win-loss record in a season). (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 346)

In general said,

> "goal setting improves performance by directing attention, increasing effort and persistence, and motivating the athlete to learn new learning strategies. ... Goal setting is one of the best motivational strategies available to the athlete." (Cox, 2002, 93)

In sport goals focus on outcome, performance or process (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 346):

Outcome goals focus on a competitive result and/or compare the performances of athletes with those of other athletes. For example, winning a championship or a race. The sucsess doesn't only depend on "your" ability but also on the play of your opponent.

Performance goals focus on achievieng and improving an athlete's individual performance usually on bases of his/her previous performances – they tend to be more flexible and within the individual's control. For example, lowering your handicap in golf.

Process goals are used to improve the execution of a skill by focusing on little things to be corrected to execute or perform even better. For example, in tennis hitting the ball at the peak of the throw when serving.

4.4.3 What to consider when setting goals

After defining what type of goals exist, Weinberg & Gould (2007, 351) explain why goal setting works. They point out that researches in this area have shown that goal setting works in two ways. In the indirect thought process view goals lead to changes in psychological factors which then influence performance. In the direct mechanistic view, which has been researched even more, they define that goals influence performance in one of four direct ways:

- – Goals direct attention to important elements of skill being performed.
- – Goals mobilize performer efforts.
- – Goals prolong performer persistence.
- – Gaols foster the development of new learning strategies.

In his book on Sport Psychology Cox follows the question on what type of goals are best to improve an athlete. He points out that many researches' have been done by Burton, Weinberg, Yukelson and Weigand (1998) as well as by Filby, Maynard and Graydon (1999) which all led them to the same conclusion. They all showed that the most effective goal setting strategy to all test groups was the multiple goal strategy. It means that those groups who were given at least two out of the three types of goals developed way better than the groups which were limited to just one type of goal. So a multiple goal strategy is more effective in improving performance and psychological skill in athletes than a singularity goal setting strategy. (Cox, 2002, 91)

A good help for athletes to set effective goals is to think of the acronym SMARTS which was initiated by Smith (1994, in Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 357):

- **S**pecific. Goals should indicate precisely what is to be done.
- **M**easurable. Goals should be quantifiable.
- **Ac**tion oriented. Goals should indicate something that needs to be done.
- **R**ealistic. Goals should be achievable given various constraints.
- **T**imely. Goals should be achievable in reasonable time.
- **S**elf-determined. Goals should be set by, or have input from the participant.

4.4.4 Principles of goal setting

In addition to Smith's SMARTS the authors of both books – Sport Psychology by Cox (2002, 93 – 98) and Foundations of Sport and exercise Psychology by Weinberg & Gould (2007, 351 – 356) – mention ten specific principles what makes goal setting effective. Most of them resemble each other and are mentioned below:

- Make goals specific, observable and in measurable terms:
  A measurable goal is one you can quantify, in the sense that you know exactly how close you are to achieving that goal. Observable goals are those that can be measured and are specific. Identifying what is a general goal can help develop specific goals that are observable and measurable.

- Clearly identify the time constraints:
  Asking athletes to improve a certain skill will be ineffective unless you have a specified date or event to work towards. Well stated goals should be timely.

- Use moderately difficult goals:
  Moderate goals are better than easy or very difficult goals – by the first athletes soon lose interest, by the second athletes get frustrated – because it pushes athletes to work hard and extend themselves in order to meet the goals. They are also more satisfying when attained.

- Use a mix of process, performance and outcome goals:
  Outcome goals are the least controllable of all three types of goals and still are used by every athlete when defining their goals such as winning games or a championship. As stated before the most effective way to set goals is to have a multiple goal strategy, as the best way to win a championship is to focus on performance and process goals. Focusing too much on the outcome may create anxiety – so for every outcome goal an athlete sets, there should be several performance and process goals that lead to the desired outcome.

- Write goals down and regularly monitor progress:
  Goals are ineffective if forgotten – write them down, being as specific as possible. Keeping a journal or a publicly posted goal monitoring chart can help athletes and coaches with the monitoring process.

- Use short-range goals to achieve long range plans - As Weinberg & Gould show in two drawings, goal setting is much like climbing a mountain. The long range goal of reaching your main goal requires strategic short-term goal setting to be successful in the end.

- Set practice as well as competition goals:
  It is important for an athlete, a team and a coach to recognize the critical importance of effective practices to prepare for competition. Practice goals should match competition performance goals as often as possible. Goals related to work ethic and attitude during practice are essential. Practice goals should also involve using mental skills such as imagery which can help with skill learning and working through competitive anxiety.

- Make sure goals are internalized by the athlete:
  It is important that athletes feel in control (self-determined) of their goals – so let them set their own goals and just assist on it and make sure they are positive verbalized. Ensuring that athletes accept and internalize goals is one of the most important features of goal setting.

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– Consider personality and individual differences in goal setting:
Coaches should also keep in mind that athletes' personality characteristics can determine the effectiveness of goal setting. Whether or not a player is ego oriented (compares his performance to that of others) or task oriented (compares his performance to himself) could determine the extent to which he will be able to internalize goals. When athletes define success as beating others, they have little control over the outcome. Ego oriented athletes also have a tendency to set unrealistically high or low goals so they can have an excuse if their goals are not attained. Task oriented athletes set goals about doing their best and making some improvement experience success more frequently, persist at tasks longer and are more confident.

– Provide goal support:
In addition to the team coach, this usually includes other coaches, family, friends, teachers and teammates, who can help the athlete to ensure that goals are achieved. Effort should be made in educating these individuals about the types of goals that you are setting for yourself and the importance of their support in encouraging progress towards the goals.

– Set team as well as individual performance goals:
Performance for the team can be set just as easily as for individuals. Coaches should also consider involving the team in setting some of the various types of goals.

4.4.5   Set team goals

According to Johnson & Johnson (1987, 132) a group or team goal can be defined as "the future state of affairs desired by enough members of a group to work towards its achievement."
Team goals are important to create a change of behaviour to increase motivation and cohesion. They are best formed in team meetings, where group members have to iden-

tify the team goals which then lead to the task that has to be accomplished in order to achieve the common goal.

Widmeyer and DuCharme (1997, in Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 358) named six principles of effective team goal setting:

- Establish long term goals.
- Establish clear paths of short term goals on route to long term goals.
- Involve all members of the team in establishing team goals.
- Monitor progress towards team goals.
- Reward progress made towards team goals.
- Foster collective team confidence or efficacy concerning team goals.

In addition to that Cox mentions that Gould (2001) defines a goal setting system for teams which is based on three major phases:

- A planning phase, where the coach for him/her self defines the team needs and how he or she is going to approach the players in the meeting.
- A meeting phase, where the coach explains the team need from his point of view and the team and coach together agree on team goals and how to achieve them.
- An evaluation phase at the end of the season or competition and in addition to that also throughout the season. Goals in general should be monitored regularly and assisted with feedback so the goal-setting process will stay effective.

As all three phases are important, the planning phase has to be the most important to each coach. Without a good planning phase and an effective needs analysis, both other phases will be ineffective. (Cox, 2002, 98 – 101)

4.4.6 Problems in goals setting

- Failing to set specific goals.

- Setting too many goals too soon.
- Failing to adjust goals.
- Failing to recognize individual differences.
- Not providing follow-up, feedback and evaluation.

<div align="right">(Weinberg & Gould, 2007, 361)</div>

4.5 Creating a practice – what to consider

Besides the already mentioned areas – age group, skill level, teaching styles, motivation, goal setting and so on – what else should be considered when thinking on planning a practice at the youth level?

According to Dennis Gendron (2003, 29 – 32) the next step to plan a quality practice would be to review your objectives for the week and your season master plan and try to fit your upcoming practice within the given criteria. In men's hockey your practices might differ from time to time as you got to adjust to unforeseen circumstances. In youth hockey coaching it should be possible to stick to your master plan and your weekly objectives, as your main focus should be on development.

The next step is to establish the main theme and any subthemes needed to fulfil the practice objectives. A good practice usually has a beginning, a middle, and an end.

The beginning should be used to warm up your players bodies so that they get ready to execute the main tasks in the middle section at game speed. The beginning or warm up should at least last for 10 minutes and more, depending on the practice time available.

In the middle part of the practice the drills designed for the main theme should be executed at the greatest possible level of intensity.

In the final phase you as a coach can choose from a wide range of intensive drills for conditioning your players up to fun games where the athlete can enjoy and have fun.

This last part should always be followed by a cool-down period of light skating and stretching maybe combined with some type of mental training.

Another crucial aspect, especially nowadays, is the effective use of practice time – "time is money". Marten shows us in his book on Successful Coaching a list on time wasters and time savers, as you can see printed below:

Time wasters	Time savers
Drills in which most of the athletes time is spent waiting.	Reorganize drills so athletes are more active.
The coach talks too much.	Keep demonstrations, explanations and feedback concise.
Moving between activities in the practice schedule.	Be sure you have a practice plan so you know what you'll do next and develop routines for athletes to follow when changing activities.
Practicing things that don't help athletes play the sport better; selecting useless drills.	Don't spend too much time on techniques athletes already know well; work on those that need the most improvement.
Dealing with athletes' misbehaviour.	Separate the misbehaving athlete from the team; have the team continue practicing, and then speak with the misbehaving athlete.
Insufficient facilities or equipment or not having the facilities or equipment ready.	Be sufficient organized to make the best use of the facilities and equipment available.

Time waster & time savers (Martens, 2004, 207)

Always keep those does and don'ts in mind and try to plan your practice considering an effective use of time. (Martens, 2004, 207)

According to Hockey Coaching ABCs by J. Wahlsten and T. Molloy the following aspects are important to be considered when planning a quality on ice youth training:

- How old are the players – "...the younger the player the less verbal the instruction."

- What is the skill level – use exercises that suit the skill level of the players; it should challenge and improve the players... "...too simple bores and too difficult frustrates."

- What time is the practice – late in the evening or after weekend games and tournaments players may be tired. Consider this circumstance when planning the practice and use simple exercises and games.

- How many pucks / much equipment – make sure you have enough pucks (at least one for each player), goals, pylons etc. to run your planed drills.

- How many coaches – do you have a coach for every group on the ice or will you have to adjust the formations so that one coach can supervise more groups.

- How many goalies – as most drills are designed for at least two goalies, make sure to have a backup plan if you have less; e.g. putting a stick in the goals top corner where the players have to score, or putting a goal wall into the net, or lying the net face down, only allowing a goal when the puck hits the top netting.

- How much practice time is there – most of talking should be done in the dressing room as the ice is for moving and practicing.

- How much ice is available – adopt to the given situation as most of the exercises can also be executed cross-ice, which leaves space for more groups or teams.

- Discipline – "When the coach signals or whistles, the players must come to him right away." Try to foresee problems before they occur so distractions can be kept to a minimum.

- How many players are there – to run practices with a large group of players on the ice the tasks must be simple and few. If the coach is flexible there can be a lot of room on the ice – how to divide the rink into working areas, groups or stations you can see in attachment 1 (Basic formations A, B) and attachment 2 (Basic formations C, D). (Wahlsten & Molloy, 1997, 43, 44)

5 Coaching kids in games

After considering all the other aspects of coaching kids in the different age groups we finally come to the main reason why kids and people in general do sport – the competition, the game. Also if the main focus in youth hockey should be on development of skills and the young human itself, there are some points to keep in mind what should be considered when thinking about the game day or a tournament.

5.1 Before the game

– Preparation for the game at practice:

If you want to use a specific team tactic in the upcoming game make sure to use some practice time ahead so your players get to know what to do and how to do it. Two things should be considered when talking about tactics at youth level. The first is that the younger the kids are the less complex any tactic should be – especially before the age of 13 it is much more important that your players learn the basics of the game (skating, passing shooting, using space, holding their position and so on...) than any big tactic or strategy.

In older ages focus on the execution of plays which have been worked on in practices.

The second thing what you might consider is to open your players the chance to give input on how the team tactics should be. It helps them to learn the game, gives them a feeling of ownership instead of just being "the coaches order fulfiller" and raises their enthusiasm and motivation.

– Other pre-game information should involve:

<u>Pregame meals</u> – make sure your players eat the right thing at the right time. Your players should eat a high-carbohydrate meal (mainly noodles and pasta) about

three to four hours before the contest.

They got to <u>check their clothing</u> and equipment before coming to the game.

<u>Set time of arrival</u> before the contest – there should be enough time to unpack, settle down, concentrate, warm up, get dressed and some last information from the coach.

For you as a coach always <u>get familiar with the rink</u> and its' size, the condition of the ice and the most important areas of the facility – especially when you play away.

– Create a strategy how to handle unplanned events:

How will you react when <u>players come late</u> for the set arrival time – being a member of a team also means being committed to the team and its' rules.

What will you do <u>if you are late or if something unexpected take place</u> – make sure you contact your assistant coach, your team helper or some parent as soon as possible to take over till you arrive.

When <u>games get postponed</u> make sure to inform everyone in time or if it happens while you are already at the rink, make sure that every player has a ride home before you leave.

– Before the game all your players have to warm-up in an adequate way to be ready for the game. A good warm-up should last about 20 minutes and should consist of, besides the basic muscle activation, some brief games that focus on game like situations. No matter how you do the warm-up it is important to get a routine in it that stays during the season, so that the players' minds and bodies get used to it and know that the game is to be next.

<div align="right">(Coaching Youth Hockey, 2001, 53 – 59)</div>

5.2 During the game

Always try to keep in mind that winning is not the primer goal in youth hockey. The main focus should be to learn the skills which are needed to play, to stay fit and to be good sports in the game they love and in life. "Your young athletes are 'winning' when they are becoming better human beings through their participation in hockey", as "winning is more than the final score", especially in youth sports where our main focus has to be on development as mentioned before. You are in charge and have the privilege to set standards how your team approaches the game.

– Tactical decisions:

In youth hockey tactical decisions – such as line up, who starts and how we approach the game – are basically made before the contest starts. Just make sure that all your players get to play a reasonable time of the game. The younger the kids are and the lower the level is the less need to win exists. In this case try to give all players the same time on ice, so they all have fun and get the same chance to develop.
The younger the kids are the less you will adjust your team tactics during the game. The older they get the more you might want to guide their attention also on how the opponent plays. How do they attack, who are their strong players, how do they play on defence and so on, and you might want to adjust your team tactics towards the opponents play. Also if you decide to point out tactical issues from the opposing team to your players the main focus got to be on your team's play and on your players' development.

– Players errors:

Basically two types of players errors can be identified – the learning and the performance errors. Learning errors should be recognized but not corrected during games as practices are the right place to work on the skill needed to avoid those errors. Performance errors can be corrected during games by specific feedback on

the point of the error. Sometimes a word of encouragement to concentrate more may help, sometimes it takes more to focus the player to handle a situation in a better way. It is crucial to know your players' capabilities to find the right access and the right words. No matter what you want say to your player, do it in 'a quiet, controlled, and positive tone of voice during a break or when the player is on the sidelines with you.'

– Coaches and players behaviour:

Your behaviour as a coach influences your players behaviour – if you are up your players more likely are up, if your are down or anxious your players might reflect on that. Don't over-commentate on mistakes or errors, stay in control, stay positive as the main aspect always should be having fun. Remember you're not playing for the Stanley Cup – it's still youth hockey where the main focus is to help players to develop.
Besides your own behaviour you are also responsible for your player's behaviour. Set a good example, establish team rules on how to behave and discipline players when necessary. Areas to watch are: players' language; players' behaviour in general; Interaction with officials; discipline for misbehaviour; dress code for competitions.

– Opponents and official:

Respect them – without them there wouldn't be any competition. Remember referees are also humans who make mistakes as you are. Respect them and treat them with integrity. No matter how the opponent behaves, your team should show respect by giving the best effort. Don't allow 'trash talk' and taunt as this is disrespectful towards the opponent and the spirit of the game. Basically spoken, teach your players respect for the game.

<div align="right">(Coaching Youth Hockey, 2001, 59 - 64)</div>

5.3   After the game

Teach your players winning and how to cope with losing. No matter if you win or lose behave in an appropriate way, as winning and losing is not just a part of the sport but also a part of life. Celebrate winning, but don't show disrespect to the opponent and handle a loss in the way that you maintain positive despite all the disappointment that come with a defeat.

It is also important to say some words to your players after the game either in a team circle or in the locker room. Tell them specifically what they did well, what team goals – set before the game – they achieved and maybe what they got to do better next time. Don't go to deep into details as they wouldn't be able to pick it up – especially when losing – save it for the practice.   (Coaching Youth Hockey, 2001, 64, 65)

6 What else should be considered when coaching children...

6.1 Communication

Communication itself and how to do it and use it right is the Alpha & Omega in coaching.

The correct communication creates "an environment that builds athlete competence, confidence, connection, character, cooperation and sense of community." (Lynch, 2001) As mentioned before in the chapter 2.2.3 concerning child development, children are unique according to their age and the associated individual development. They process information differently and use learning strategies different from those adults use – so communication with children will always be a challenge.

6.1.1 The role of communication

- Communication is used to deliver information and knowledge that enables children to learn, build confidence, competence and capacity.
- Communication is also used to motivate, persuade and provide reason for engagement in an activity.
- Coaching is a relational job and communication is the mechanism used to develop a positive relationship between the coach and the participant. Both, the coach and the child interact together through communication to build mutual trust, warmth and understanding in their relationship.
- Through correct communication the coach has the potential to influence the child's psychological development and learning strategies.

> "In summary, communication between the coach and young participant creates an environment where children can develop as individuals and team members, build competence and confidence in physical activity, and know that there is mutual support and understanding for all involved in the process." (Walsh in Stafford, 2011, 84, 85)

6.1.2 Three dimensions of communication

In addition to Walsh, Martens describes the three dimensions of communication. In his book on "Successful coaching", Martens talks about sending and receiving a message. Also if you think that your main job as a coach is to provide information, it is as important to be able to listen and receive information from your players, other coaches, referees and parents. Receiving and processing the received information is sometimes even more important to understand what's going on, than just to send messages. To be able to really receive a message you got to be able to listen. If you repeatedly fail to listen to your athletes, they will simply stop speaking to you and are less likely in turn to listen to you. Martens also mentions that it is not enough just to listen passively (that means being silent while another person speaks), as passive listening leaves room for speakers interpretation, that you might not really pay attention or understand his or her concerns. In contrast to passive listening, active listening is a tremendous skill that conveys to your athletes, that you accept their feelings and that you want to understand and help. (Martens, 2004, 96,114)

The next dimension of communication involves the sending of verbal and nonverbal messages.

> "Gestures of hostility, facial expressions of joy, movements of intimidation, and acts of kindness are all forms of nonverbal communication. It is estimated that over 70 % of communication is nonverbal, which reinforces the previous observation that what you say is not nearly as important as what you do." (Martens, 2004, 97)

> "Verbal communication is an important channel for sending messages when the words clearly convey a meaningful message for the participant. It is a learned skill that takes practice and rehearsal for it to be effective." (Walsh in Stafford, 2011, 90)

The third dimension of communication covers the content and emotion of the communication – The content, the substance of the message, is usually expressed verbally, the emotion that comes with it (how you feel about something) is expressed nonverbally. For a coach, especially in games, it is always important to control his/her emo-

tions and focus more on the content of the message they want to communicate. (Martens, 2004, 97)

In the book Coaching Youth Hockey (2001, 10 – 12) the author mentions four things which should be considered when sending verbal messages to young players:

– Be positive and honest – don't get negative too often. Try to find and state positive things and so give encouragement to the young players, but still be honest and don't cover a poor or incorrect play or game with nice and rosy words, this gives the players a feeling of being twit by you.

– State it clearly and simply – organize your thoughts before you talk, explain things in-depth, but on the point and use age adequate language.

– Say it loud enough, and say it again – when terms are new kids might not understand it right away, so repeat them, explain them and make sure you send your messages loud enough and with an enthusiastic and encouraging voice.

– Be consistent – avoid sending different messages than you want to say.

As once Paul Watzlawick (1921-2007) said, "One cannot not communicate", remember that you always communicate, either verbal or nonverbal through behaviour and gestures. So you actually always function as a model in your function as a coach and one of the most important things you communicate by your actions is the respect, and the approach towards your sport and the people. (Martens, 2004, 116)

6.2 The Parents

The times where 'my way or the highway' model of coaching was appropriate is long gone and with it the time where parents stood back and accepted everything what a coach decides and executes. Especially in youth coaching parents are immensely important as they can provide a positive or negative influence on their child participating

in sports. Many different authors made statements on how "to handle" parents, their needs, concerns and problems in a positive way. In this chapter I will stick close to the words of Dena A. Deglau who, in her article on Effective Coach-Parent Relationship, explains most comprehensive which options exist for a coach to deal with and prevent parental problems.

At first always keep in mind that almost all parents 'have the best interest of their children at heart…' and therefore parents have a right to understand and be informed about all aspects of their children's experience.

As a coach it is important that you try to develop a shared understanding between your athletes, you, your athletes' parents and the club. Four ideas can help to create such a positive and helpful environment.

– Be transparent about your coaching philosophy – let the parents know how you see the game, your values and believes.

– Engaging in appropriate and ongoing communication – talk to the parents about all aspects of their children's experiences. Let them know what you think on the individual child, about his/her behavior, development and potential and always be open when parents have questions and concerns. Helpful tools for an ongoing communication are a welcome letter at the beginning of the season, an information package and a parent's forum (…an organization run by parents that helps the coach by handling some administrative responsibilities of the team).

– Collecting data to guide decisions and assess progress – this will help the coach to argue on decisions he/she made as during a season discussions with parents occur about their kids playing time and so on. The collected data should not be limited to game statistic, such as plus/minus, turnovers etc., but should go beyond it (for example specifically defining the knowledge of the game or the player attitude).

- Providing social opportunities outside of the coaching context – it is very benefi-
  cial if you find a way to organize a family day where parents and coaches have the
  opportunity to get to know each other, as coaches only have little time to socialize
  informally with parents during practice and games. (Deglau in Robinson, 2010, 69-
  83)

6.3 The safety and health of the kids always go first

General spoken, from the moment a child enters the arena for practice, reaches a de-
fined meeting point before a game or takes part in a team activity, you as a coach are in
charge and responsible for the health and wellbeing of the child. So make sure to be
prepared for unexpected emergency situations to happen. It is important that you
know where you can find a first-aid kit, that you attended some CPR and first-aid train-
ing that you know or have emergency numbers by hand if necessary. (Coaching Youth
Hockey, 2001, 17 - 27)

Some additional legal duties you should keep in mind to protect your players and your-
self are mentioned in Coaching Youth Hockey (2001, 31):

- Provide a safe environment.
- Properly plan the activity.
- Provide adequate and proper equipment.
- Match, or equate, athletes.
- Warn of inherent risks in the sport.
- Supervise the activity closely.
- Evaluate athletes for injury or incapacitation.
- Know emergency procedures and first aid.
- Keep adequate records.

6.4 Create and establish team rules

In almost every team you will find mostly sport specific team rules, rules which have to
be adhered otherwise some punishment will follow.

When thinking and talking about youth sport coaching rules should be used less to punish miss behavior and much more to create character and sportsmanship, which is the bottom line to create a good working attitude within a young athlete that later leads him or her to become a winner.

As you can see in the table below Martens provides us with six moral values which shape the character of a young athlete.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">ATHLETES CHARACTER CODE</td></tr>
<tr><td>Moral Values</td><td>Actions in Life</td><td>Actions in Sport</td></tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Respectful</td>
<td>Be respectful of other people
Be respectful of others' property
Be respectful of the environment
Be respectful of yourself</td>
<td>Be respectful of the game and to its rules and traditions.
Be respectful of your opponents
Be respectful of the officials
Be respectful in victory and defeat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Responsible</td>
<td>Fulfill your obligations
Be dependable
Be in control of yourself
Be persistent</td>
<td>Prepare yourself to do your best
Be punctual for practices and games
Be self-disciplined
Be cooperative with your teammates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Caring</td>
<td>Be compassionate and have empathy
Be forgiving
Be generous and kind
Avoid being selfish and mean</td>
<td>Help your teammates play better
Support your teammates in trouble
Be generous with praise; stingy with criticism
Play for the team, not yourself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be Honest</td>
<td>Be truthful and forthright
Act with integrity
Be trustworthy
Be courageous to do the right thing</td>
<td>Play by the spirit of the rules
Be loyal to the team
Play drug free
Admit to your own mistakes</td>
</tr>
</table>

Be Fair	Follow the Golden Rule	Treat other players as you wish to be treated
	Be tolerant to others	Be fair to all players including those who are different
	Be willing to share	Give other players an opportunity
	Avoid taking advantage of others	Play to win within the rules
Be a Good Citizen	Obey the laws and rules	Be a good role model
	Be educated and stay in form	Strive for excellence
	Contribute to the community	Give back to the sport
	Protect others	Encourage teammates to be good citizens

Athletes Character Code. (Martens, 2004, 59)

As we all know in many sports not even one percent of all the kids who start the sport ever make it to the professional level. Youth sport coaching basically comes down to develop children in more than just the particular skills which are necessary to play the sport.

 It might be best described with a quote from Grantland Rice, sportswriter:

"When the Great Scorer comes to write against your name, he marks – not that you won or lost, but how you played the game."

Besides identifying, teaching and practicing those principles it is important that you as a coach inspire your players "to be the best they can be both on and off the sport field."

A mediocre coach tells,

A good coach explains,

A superior coach demonstrates,

But the great coach inspires.

(Martens, 2004, 65)

6.5   Show enthusiasm

Important in coaching, and especially when you are working with kids is to show emotion and enthusiasm. Showing just enthusiasm and having no knowledge is not enough. But if you have all knowledge and show no emotion and enthusiasm for what you do, you won't be successful either. Enthusiasm paired with knowledge is the most powerful and effective tool you posses as a coach.

So I will conclude my thesis work on "what to consider when coaching kids in the age of 7 to 17" with the words "Coach D" always said to us:

> "Either you are fired with enthusiasm or you are fired with enthusiasm."
>
> Anthony de Carvalho

7 The project

7.1 The aim of the project

The aim of the project was to create a practical guidebook with ideas and coaching aids for the novice as well as the experienced youth coach. These guidelines should help the coach to plan a season. They should provide each coach with basic ideas on what to think about before going into a season and also what to consider in certain areas during the season.

I wanted to create a booklet that focuses on the coaching part of youth sport. In this area so many manuals exist which describe how to do or learn a technique in a certain sport, but very little of them spend even one thought on what would be a proper way to teach it or how to handle the child that should learn it.

Despite ice hockey being the sport where I usually coach and work, I wanted to keep the guidebook very general so that it can be used for any sport where young people are coached.

7.2 Project planning

What bothers you in your sport? What do you think should be done different? What would you like to change if you could? What do you want to pass on to the world? These were the questions I got asked by a good friend of mine in May 2011. These questions made me think what I would really like to write about. What was it that bothered me when I watched youth team practices. What would I do different if I would be the coach on the playground? These questions and the upcoming thoughts helped me to create the framework of my thesis. It is within my nature to develop new ideas and form new concepts and so from the first time I stepped into coaching twelve years ago I wanted to change how things are done. Now I recognized the chance I got to do what I always wanted to – to create something beneficial for the sport.

My first step was to write down my ideas and create the table of content, which I did just the next day. With some feedback from my supervisor and some more Vierumäki teachers I finalized the basic frame of my thesis.

After the framework was created I had four more days at Vierumäki to screen useful books and material, copy it – with my camera – or loan them and so take enough information back to Austria to start working on my project. In addition to that I bought some books on coaching and also tried to find some supporting material in German.

7.3 The implementation of the project

The whole thesis basically was written in two parts. The first part – chapter 2.1 to 2.2.2 – I wrote in the summer 2011 and the rest of the thesis and the booklet I created in spring 2012. The gap occurred as I started to work for the second season at the EHC Laufen, Switzerland, in August 2011 and just couldn't find enough time and concentration to sit down and keep writing on my thesis during the winter season. This circumstance, and the instant that English – as much as I like to use this language – still isn't my mother tongue explains why the style of writing changes a little within the chapters.

The practical guidebook and its 21 chapters are based on the theoretical part of my thesis, which I wrote ahead of the booklet.
The guidebook starts with a short introduction where I explain the idea of it to the reader.

Chapter 2 to 6 deal with the coach, his/her personality and philosophy. As shown in the theoretical part of the thesis, the first and maybe even most important step when you start coaching is to confront yourself with certain thoughts and questions. In those first 5 chapters I tried to "wake up" every coach reading the practical guidebook by asking tough questions and providing some basic information on personality traits, coaching styles and how to create a coaching philosophy.

Chapter 7 and 8 focus on the children, the players you as a coach have to deal with. I ask the coach to think about the age group he or she is coaching and their development stages in general and give the reader some basic information what to consider on kids getting into puberty. I then focus on why children participate in sport and what you as a coach could do to keep them interested.

In the following chapters 9 to 12 I focus on the teaching and learning process, on how children learn, and what tools you as a coach can use to successful teach them. In these chapters for me it was essential that the coach gets an idea on how children learn and take up new information the best way. In addition to that I wanted to give the reader a broader view on styles he or she can use to teach their players and some basic information on giving "the correct" feedback. As our main job is to teach our players new skills, I conclude this section with ideas and guidelines on how to teach a skill.

In the next two chapters 13 and 14 I talk about motivation and goal setting – the different possibilities and the importance to do it in a specific and correct way.

In chapter 15 I focus on the principles of what to consider when you create a practice – beginning with gathering the basic information on the group you are going to practice with up to the different formations on a field to make the practice more efficient.

Chapter 16 deals with the game and the tournament, which is an essential part in every sport. It provides the coach with ideas and thoughts on what to consider before, during and after a game. It deals with all basic areas a youth coach should think about.

In the chapters 17 to 20 I add some more information on areas which I think are important for coaching and in the coaching process during a season. These areas are communication and ways to communicate, the parents and how to handle

them, the players' safety and team rules versus a code of character. Each chapter provides the reader with basic thoughts, ideas and guidelines how to handle situations in a better way or how to use certain tools for the benefit of success.

In the last chapter 21 I talk about a circumstance that bothers me personally as I see it way too often when looking at youth sport. It's the instant that best can be described as "talent coaching versus coaching the average", or in other words, it's "the old way of coaching versus a new more open and humanistic way of coaching". For me it is important that we coaches and the reader start to understand that sport is not all about talent, but it's all about coaching, teaching and educating our young athletes the right way.

My final thoughts in the booklet belong to a phrase "Coach D" used to use quite often during our coaching education. It's on enthusiasm and how important it is that you as a coach are enthusiastic in what you do. As I came to my work placement, the organization moaned that they have a lack of young players and that more players quit the sport or change to a different team in the region than to join their organization. During the first three months I learned to know the people who coached their youth teams before and how they did it. Before the season passed I understood the phrase "Coach D" preached to us in a totally different way. That's also basically the reason why I used it to end my thesis and my practical guidebook.

7.4   The description and results of the project

The guidebook consists of 34 pages and gives the reader a short but detailed guideline on what to consider when taking over and coaching a youth team.

It focuses on team sport, but wasn't written specifically for a specific federation or organization, as I wanted to create a booklet all different type of sports can use to educate their coaches and so can benefit from.

In my point of view it reaches its main objectives and I am proud to contribute something unique to the sport, something which hasn't been created or written in that particular way – focusing on youth coaching, and there really on the coaching and teaching part – so far. Of course books on coaching exist, but almost all of them deal with coaching University students or professionals. The guidebook I created is one of the first booklets that gives' the reader, the coach, a comprehensive view and ideas on what to consider when coaching youth teams.

8 Summary and discussion

Coaching is teaching and teaching means to educate people by using different tools and skills.

These fifteen words maybe describe best what coaching is for me as a conclusion of my thesis work. To me everyone can take a book, find a drill and put it on a board to show it to players. Then let it run, maybe yell or punish if it's not done in the correct way, and then go on with the next one and finally call him- or herself a coach. You can see this type of "coach" everyday and everywhere in the world, no matter if you go to the far-east or to the west.

My thesis and the guidebook were created to get away from this "drill sergeant trainee style" towards teaching and educating our young players to become better people and sports men and women and to come closer to the main idea and ideals of what makes a coach a coach.

The main difficulty for me, when looking back on the thesis process, was to define what should be a part of the guidebook and the thesis and how deep I should go into the different areas which should be a part of my work. Especially when looking into the theoretical part I know that there so much more information exists which I could have used and put into that part. In some chapters I only scratched the surface of the possible information available. During my work I decided that going to deep into the scientifically side of each area wouldn't be beneficial – neither for the work itself nor for the reader. So I tried to go with the easier, more understandable information that I could find, to make it more readable also for the average coach – who is the mainly targeted group. I understand that this leaves room to argue and that some will claim that the work might not be scientifically enough, but as I mentioned I wanted to create a work that can be read easily and also understood by using common sense what everyone working with children should have.

Overall seen the practical part provides the reader with tips, ideas and tools which I wanted to pass on to other youth coaches. Based on these information provided in my

work I am sure that every anxious youth coach can have a successful season with his or her youth team, judged on coaching criteria.

I think that my work, in the guidebook and in my thesis, shows a main "red" thread and gives a comprehensive idea on how youth coaching can be done. I am proud of the outcome and the booklet I created. As I know this is a very subjective perspective I will conclude my work with a quote borrowed from Anthony de Carvalho alias "Coach D": "This is my way, what is yours?"

Acknowledgement

The experiences I made while studying at Vierumäki, the people I met, the friends I found and all the memories which were formed, will forever be a part of my life. Now looking back on the last four years – also if it wasn't always easy to cope with all the challenges I had to face (nature, language, people and the studies itself) – I wouldn't want to miss a second of the time I was able to be a part of the whole process. Now that it all comes to a successful end, it is time to thank those people who always supported me on my way and who gave me a helping hand when I needed one.

First of all I would like to give thanks to my parents, Isolde and Alexander Taferner, who supported me in any way they could. They always believed in me and my abilities and backed me up as well as they could while I walked my way. With the completion of this thesis and my studies, I hope that I finally can give some recognition back to them, as I am very grateful to have them as my parents.

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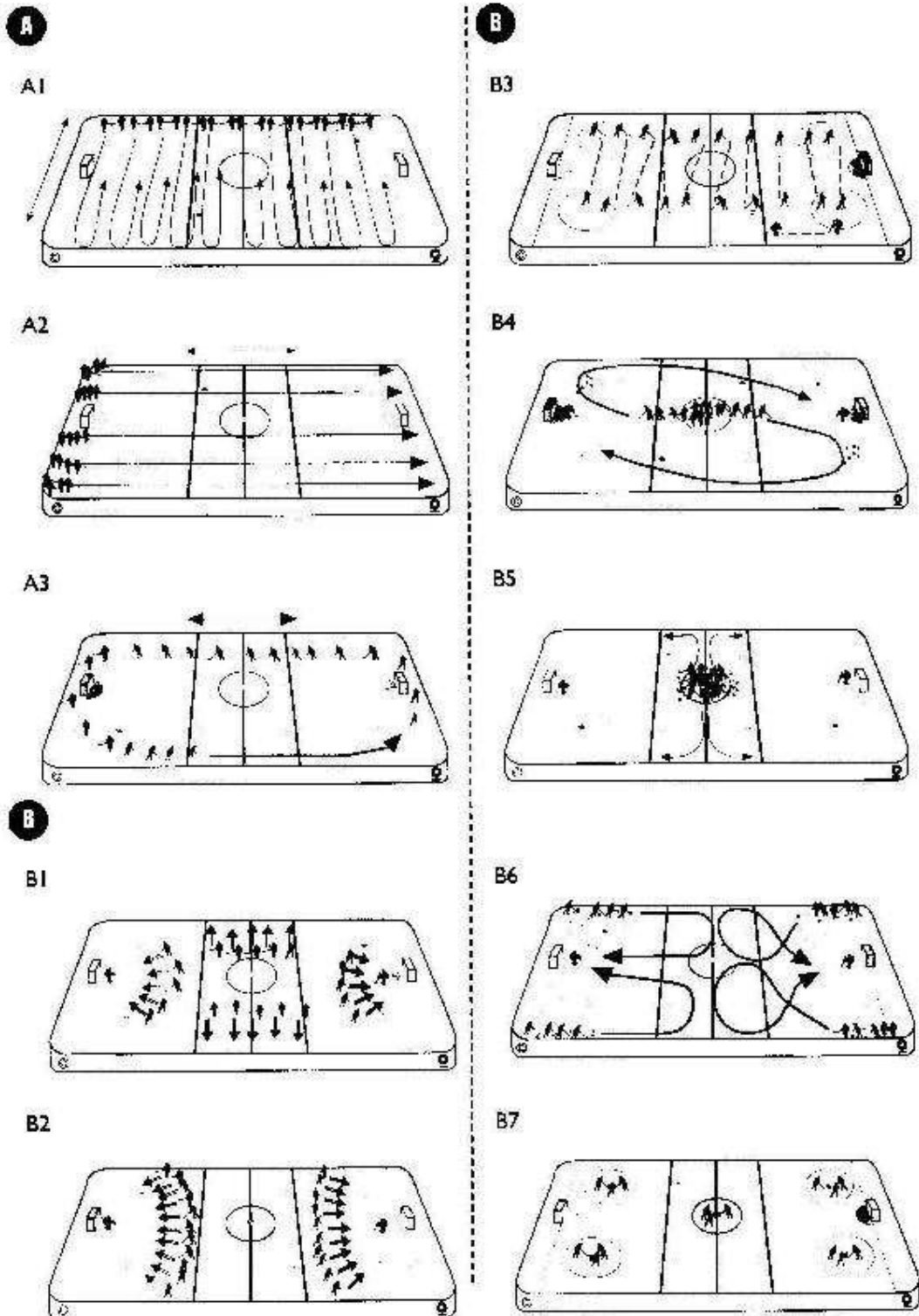Stafford, Ian. 2011. Coaching children in sport. London Routledge.

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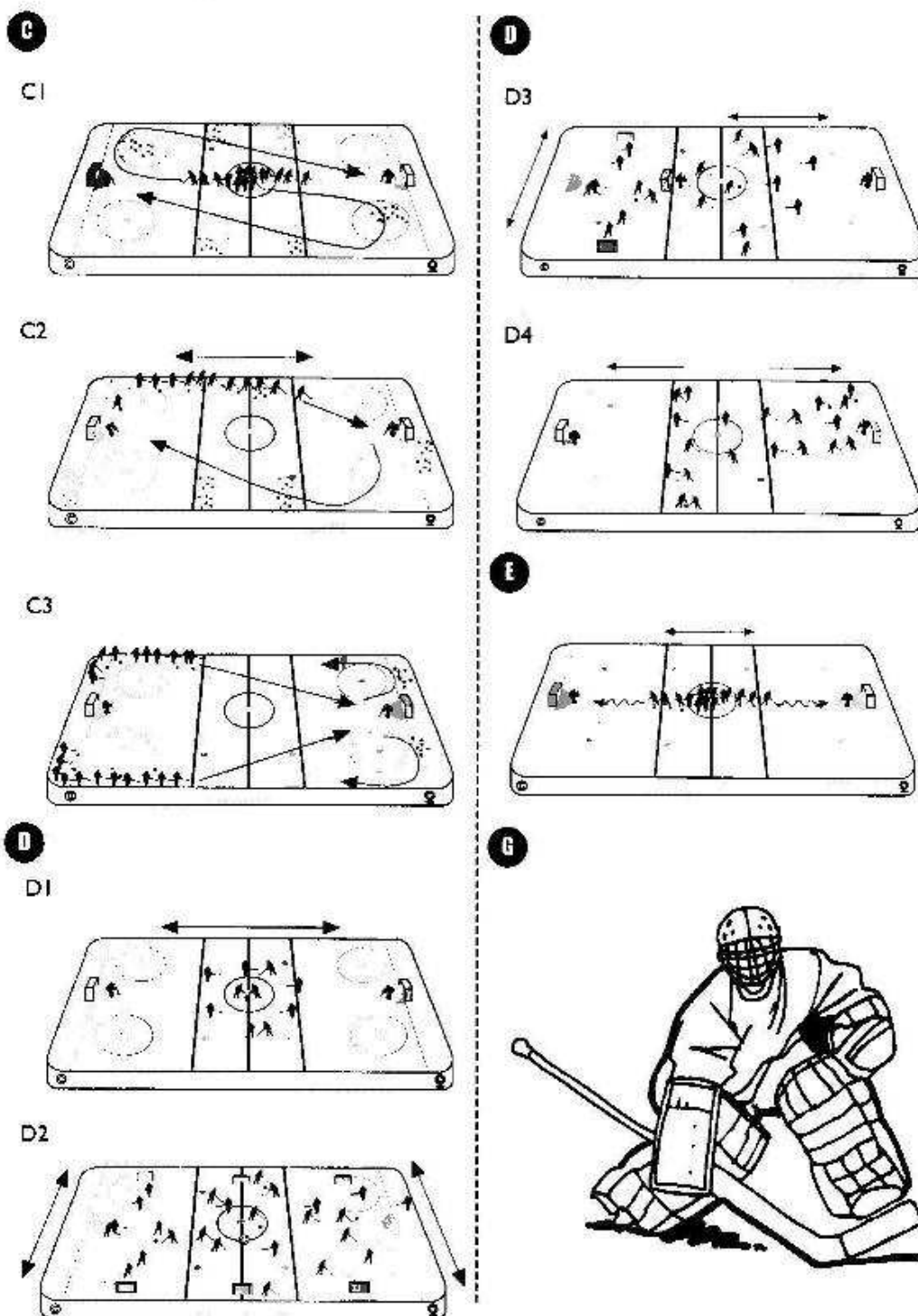
Attachments

Attachment 1. Basic formations A, B – setup on the ice.

BASIC FORMATIONS

Basic formation setup. (Wahlsten & Molloy, 1997, 18)

BASIC FORMATIONS

Basic formation setup. (Wahlsten & Molloy, 1997, 19)

Attachment 3. START TO COACH, SERVE THE TASK –

A practical guidebook on what to consider when coaching kids.