

TPS Junior Hockey: Coach Manual

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<p>The purpose of making a manual for coaches in TPS Junior hockey club was to offer a tool for their everyday work on the field. The idea was to give help for their planning and coaching, but not straight answers.</p> <p>TPS is one of the biggest and most traditional hockey clubs in Finland. However the club did not have any implements for the coaches in the junior side. Starting point of this thesis was to create one. The know-how among the coaches is often not on the level that it should be and for that reason they need guidelines to show the road.</p> <p>The manual brings understanding to the basics concerning areas like development of the human body and the trainability at different age. Manual offers tools for teaching the basic skills of the hockey – skating, stickhandling, shooting etc. It gives also guidelines for the coach that helps him or her to realize what should be done at certain age on and off the ice.</p> <p>The manual consist of following chapters: 1. Values of TPS 2. Playing and player style of TPS 3. The development of the human body 4. Training the physical properties at different age 5. Season plans 6. Testing 7. Teaching and learning 8. Sport specific skills</p> <p>The project was started in the summer 2009 and finished fall 2010. Manual is written in Finnish so that coaches feel it easy to be used.</p>	
<p>Key words Manual, ice hockey, training, player development, junior ice hockey</p>	

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1 Introduction

The idea for making the manual, rise up when the author started his work as a head of coaching in Kaarinan Kiekko-Pojat and TarU Hockey. Soon he realized that the know-how level of the coaches in both clubs, were not on the stage that it should be, when we are working with juniors. Author had few meetings with Sami Aaltonen - head of coaching in TPS at the time. When Sami told that the same problem was perceptible in TPS, the idea of making the manual was born. The author of the thesis became the head of coaching in TPS 1.3.2010 and for that reason manual was done for TPS – not for KaKiPo and TarU.

When author told about the manual to the TPS junior hockey club's board they were excited. The chairman told that this is just what the club needs, because of the fact that in today's world the work in the sports club's, such as TPS, should be very organized and well planned. Chairman and the author made an agreement that the deadline of the manual was fall 2010.

TPS is one of the biggest and most traditional hockey clubs in Finland. It has 11 championships in the Finnish SM-Liiga, which is the main hockey league in Finland. TPS has also produced many NHL players – Mikko and Saku Koivu, Miikka Kiprusoff, Antero Niittymäki, Lauri Korpikoski, Sami Salo etc. However the club did not have guidelines – with enough details – for the coaches and that caused the fact that almost every team inside the club had different kind of coaching with different focus points. The problem was also that certain physical properties – such as strength - were trained at the wrong time of the maturation of the child, which will cause injuries in the future. The main principle of the manual was to create the guidelines that the coaches will follow and that way get the club working more as a unit and develop better players.

The starting point was to create the guidelines for all of the age groups between D1 – F2 juniors (D1 juniors are 13 years old and F2 juniors are eight years old). With the guidelines we mean, what should be trained on and off the ice, how, when and why should the players be tested, how many games should the players play during the season etc. The objective was to introduce the basic facts of different areas concerning the coaching – growth and development of the human body etc. Most important thing was that the manual deals with the things that the coaches will “struggle” in their everyday work as coach. During the process the author tried to take care that the manual is not going to expand too large, because then the coaches will not have time and interest to go deep into it and get most out of it.

The manual is structured so that first the coaches will get the basic information of the physical development of the human body and after that it goes more in the details of, what should be done at different age and why. With this order we make sure that the coaches will get a big picture about, why we will do different things at a certain order and time of the growth.

Manual will be handed out for the coaches in TPS junior hockey club and later it will be also published in the TPS junior hockey web page – www.tps-juniorit.net.

2. Skill and technique – learning and teaching

2.1 Principles of learning and teaching

Learning is always dependent on the individual. We learn things different ways, in different order and for different reasons. Basis for teaching is the previous knowledge and skills, level of maturation and needs of the children that we are coaching. The better the coach knows his or her athletes the better are the attributes for learning. It is vital to get the athletes be interested in learning, because thinking is always part of learning. The atmosphere should be motivating such as the environment where the learning happens. The environment is not requisite for learning, but it is a big help. (Hiltunen & Huhtinen 2004, 4; Vuohiniemi & Miettinen 1999, 160-178.)

Vital for learning is to observe the signals that are significant for the performance. When the child is motivated he or she is able to pay attention to many small things and also to the significant parts in the performance. Motives improve child's attention whereas pressure decreases it. Fear and anxiety are things that use the energy of the child and also decrease the results in learning. (Hiltunen & Huhtinen 2004, 4.)

2.2 Types of skill

Skill and technique are the most important parts of sport performance (Mero, Nummela & Keskinen 1997, 141). By skill we mean individuals capability to perform movement's rhythmically correctly. Performance of skill in sports can be seen skillful when it is ongoing action that consists of multiple parts that are following each other timely. (Forsman & Lampinen 2008, 435.). Skill as a term can be divided into two: overall skillness and sport specific skillness. Sport specific skillness can be yet divided into two subsections: technique and style. By overall skillness we mean individuals capability to learn and master different skills in different sports – running, jumping, kicking, throwing etc. – and also the ability to control the body in the situations that require balance and changes of direction. By sport specific skillness we mean individuals capability to perform a technique of a certain sport in right situations, capability to correct mistakes in sport specific techniques and capability to learn new techniques in less time. Skill and technique are the most important elements when considering the performance in any sport. (Mero, Nummela, Keskinen & Häkkinen 2004, 241.; Hakkarainen et al. 2006, 8.)

2.3 Elements of skill

There can be found eleven elements of skill. These elements are requirements for sport skills and they regulate the overall skills and different kinds of movements. Several elements are needed in one performance. Training these elements creates better base for training and absorbing the sport specific skills.

Elements are listed:

1. Ability to orientate. Individual's ability to perceive the posture – and changes in the posture - of the body and limbs. The information that comes through sense of sight (vision), sense of movement and sense of balance regulates the action.
2. Ability to assort. Individual's ability to regulate tension and relaxation of the muscle and also smoothness and frugality of the movement. Ability is based on the information that comes through the sense of motion (khinesthesia).
3. Ability to react. Individual's ability to react quickly to stimuli that are received through the senses of sight, hearing or touch.
4. Balance. Individual's ability to reach or maintain the balance in a certain position or movement. Balance is maintained through the senses of sight, balance (ear) and movement (khinesthesia).
5. Rythm. Individual's ability to discover and perform movements rhythmicly correctly.
6. Ability to combine. Individual's ability to perform multiple movements simultaneously and also to combine parts of a movement to a whole.
7. Individual's ability to variation, adaptation and orientation. Individual is capable of adapting his/her lines of motions and the use of strenght to varied situations and conditions.
8. Individual's ability to lead the movement. Accuracy and standardizing of the movement.

9. Individual's ability to differentiation. Individual is able to make difference between two or more nearly similar movements.

10. Agility. Individual's ability to perform change of direction in the body rapidly.

11. Individual's ability to anticipate. Size and utilization of individual's movements and skills.

(Forsman & Lampinen 2008, 437; Mero et al. 2004, 242; Hiltunen & Huhtinen 2004, 20-22.)

2.4 Development of skill and technique

Basic skills considering motion and movement develop, when children is young, because of the early development of the nervous system. The nervous system is 80-90% completed at the age of five to six. Approximately from the age of 12 the development of the nervous system becomes markedly slower than the development of the other body (Mero et al. 2004, 21; Hakkarainen 2008).

Windows of accelerated adaptations for skill and technique are in the childhood and for that reason versatile training of different sports as a young is the basis for the future. Between years 1 – 5 children is able to learn the different elements of skills without putting extra emphasis on them. That is still not enough if we are considering that the child would like to become a top athlete some day. That means, between years 6 – 10 extra emphasis must be put on training those elements. We can say that years 1 -6 are best for improving the overall skillness and years 7 – 10 mastering those skills. Training the sport specific skills should be started from the age of seven - in some sports, like figure skating, gymnastics and several ball games, practising the sport specific skills must be started before the age 7. Mastering of these skills should happen between ages 11 and 14, in most sports. (Mero et al. 2004, 242-244; Mero, Nummela & Keskinen 1997, 143-144.)

Like was mentioned in the previous chapter, sport specific training should be started from the age of seven. It is vital that training the elements of skill and overall skillness continues. Sports such as running, skiing, swimming and skating are good for everyone through the childhood. The selection of a sport should not be done too early - before age of 12 - because mastering multiple sports builds up a base for the training and mastering a certain sport in the future. (Mero et al. 1997, 144.)

Techniques of the athlete should be ready at the age of 13 – 14 if we are trying to reach the top in chosen sport. From the age of 14 starts the finalizing of the technique and training the physical aspects that are vital for the overall performance in the chosen sport. To be able to reach the best results, training of a technique should happen when the athlete is recovered. Training sessions that are aimed for learning a technique should be after a recovery day. (Mero et al. 1997, 145.)

2.5 Stages in skill learning

Thinking is always part of learning a skill. Learning of a new skill starts with perceiving the performance. There are different ways of showing the performance – by coach, by another athlete, from video. Vital thing is that athlete has a general view of the skill that he or she is going to start practising. On the first stage of practising the athlete gets the model of the motion into his or her brains. At this point it is common that the athlete makes several mistakes. Athlete needs multiple repetitions for the skill to improve. Motivating the athlete to practise is vital at this stage. Feedback from the coach should consider athlete's motivation.

When the athlete has been practising the skill for longer time and has done multiple repetitions, we move to the next stage. At this stage so called “rough mistakes” disappear and the performance of the skill comes smooth. At this stage the feedback should be based on correcting the performance of the athlete.

Third and the last stage starts when different parts of the skill or performance become automatic. Ongoing performances are easy to perform and the athlete does not have to think the technical details of the skill. (Forsman & Lampinen 2008, 435-436; Hiltunen & Huhtinen 2004, 23-24.)

3. Windows of accelerated adaptation

There are periods in the childhood when the learning of certain qualities – speed, skill, power etc. - is easier for the child. These periods are called windows of accelerated adaptation. These windows should be considered when planning and executing training of a child or young athlete. It is vital to note that these windows are not specific periods of time, because of the fact that there are always individual differences in the physiological maturation of the child. (Hakkarainen et al. 2006, 8.)

3.1 Window of accelerated adaptation for skill learning

Like was mentioned before, (chapter 2.1 Types of skill) skill is divided into overall and sport specific skillness. Years 1 – 6 are the best for training the overall skillness. Years 7 – 12 for training the sport specific skillness, and mastering the overall skillness. At this age it is vital for the child to be part of versatile training that includes practises for the different elements of a skill (read chapter 2.2 Elements of skill). The reason for this is that during those years the properties of motoric skills, balance, agility and coordination improve extremely well.

The window for sport specific skill learning is dated after the window for learning and mastering the overall skillness. Approximately from the age of 12 the development of the nervous system becomes markedly slower than the development of the other body (Mero 2004, 21; Hakkarainen 2008). That means that learning the skills becomes slower. Crucial for improving the sport specific skills is that the level of overall skillness is good. (Hakkarainen et al. 2006, 8-10; Forsman & Lampinen 2008, 415.)

3.2 Window of accelerated adaptation for speed

Training the speed properties must be started early in the childhood. Training that is fun and based on plays should contain fast movements and moving. There are certain properties that affect to the speed: frequency of the movement, individual's ability to react, sense of rythm, skill and strength. First four should be emphasized in training programs before puberty. Essential in training the speed properties is the versatility of the programs. Training should include components for each of the four properties. Improving these properties becomes challenging yet impossible after the puberty and the neglects are very hard to compensate in the adulthood. (Hakkarainen et al. 2006, 10; Mero et al. 2004, 293-294.)

Running as a skill improves markedly between the age of five and seven and that should be trained through games and plays. Window of accelerated adaptation for speedfrequency is during the age of 7 to 12 and for stridlength during the puberty. Training of speedstrength and explosive speed should be highlighted in the childhood. (Mero et al. 2004, 300.)

3.3 Window of accelerated adaptation for strength

Muscle strength is reliant to the ability of the nervous system to command the muscle fibers and also the surface area of them. Diverse development of the nervous system, builds good base for improving the strength. Before the puberty training should consist of practises which improve the musclecoordination, strength training techniques, speed strength properties, muscle endurance and the aerobic properties of the muscles. Before the age of seven the strenghtening of the muscles, bones and ligaments is reached through the plays, games and competitions which include running, jumping, climbing etc. Strength training before puberty (between ages 7 – 12) should be executed with own body weight and long sets preferred. This builds up a good base for heavy strength training in the future and it also improves the recovery of the muscles and prevents injuries. Training of the pelvis area should be emphasized, because of significance that pelvis area has in the heavy strength training. During the puberty the strength training should be dynamic and be based on training the speedstrength. From the age of 15 – 16 the strengthendurance type of training may be included to the training program, because the development of the anaerobic capacity of the athlete. So the training of the strength properties can be started as a young even tough the window of accelerated adaptation for strength is after the puberty between the ages 16-20. (Hakkarainen et al. 2006, 10; Forsman & Lampinen 2008, 415; Mero et al. 2004, 274.)

3.4 Window of accelerated adaptation for endurance

The significance of the endurance properties is big in sports in which the duration of the performance is longer than two minutes or during a longer time the athlete performs multiple short and intensive work periods. (Mero et al. 2004, 333.) Childrens body is adaptable for aerobic stress from early beginning. All the exercising in the childhood and youth that include aerobic properties, builds base for the training in the future for all sports – e.g. working order of the heart improves constantly from the birth to the end of the puberty. Aerobic type of training is one of the most important parts of daily training before puberty. Child should take

an interest in aerobic type of sport from 30 to 60 minutes daily. Anaerobic endurance training should not be done purposely before puberty because the child's body cannot deal with the lactic acids that form into the body. After the puberty starts the window of accelerated adaptation for anaerobic training due to reason that then child's body is developed so that it can deal with the lactic acids and other waste that form into the body. (Hakkarainen et al. 2006, 10-11; Forsman & Lampinen 2008, 415.)

3.5 Windows of accelerated adaptation in mobility

To be able to reach the best results in mobility, training must be started early in the childhood. The window for training is the first seven to eight years from the birth, but practically all the years before the puberty are auspicious for improving the mobility properties. Those properties have a positive effect to a strength production, endurance and speed of the athlete.

Mobility training and properties can be divided into two active and passive. When the athlete's range of motion is received by his own muscle strength, we are talking about active mobility. When it is received by a help of a outside power, we are speaking about passive mobility. Maximum levels of passive mobility should be received between years 11 – 14.

Training the mobility properties becomes highlighted during the puberty. When the athlete is going through the puberty his or her body stiffens, because of the growth. Then it is vital to include versatile mobility training in the practise plans. Otherwise the athlete is not able to maintain the skill level and prevent injuries. (Hakkarainen et al. 2006, 11; Mero et al. 2004, 364; Forsman & Lampinen 2008, 415.)

4. Testing the physical properties of the athlete in ice hockey

Testing the physical properties is a vital part of well planned monitoring of the performance of the individual and team. Testing gives a base for monitoring the progression during a longer period of time (IIHCE, website, 3.10.2010). Basis for all the testing is the specific sport. The entire testing program must be planned so that it fits to the physical properties that are needed in the specific sport. Testing schedule should be found from the yearly plan of the team or individual. (Mero et al. 2004, 430-431.)

Ice hockey is a team sport for which a fast tempo is characteristic. It has been said that ice hockey is one of the most versatile sports, when it comes to the demands of the physical properties. Following properties are vital for the ice hockey player: good aerobic endurance, which is needed e.g. for recovering between the shifts, muscle strength and anaerobic endurance, which is needed, for example in spurts, change of direction and checking. (Huovinen 2009; Tiikkaja 2002; Pesola 2009.)

4.1 Testing the strength properties of the player

Ice hockey may be seen as a contact sport, and for that reason players must have sufficient strength properties in both upper and lower body. Upper body strength is needed in shooting, stick handling and one on one situations, whereas the lower body strength is needed mostly in skating. The strength production for skating in ice hockey happens by one foot. Strength production starts from the pelvis by extending the hip joint. For that reason the tests that are planned for measuring the strength of the lower limbs, should be performed by one foot. Abdominals and M. iliopsoas are muscles that are relevant in skating and shooting – likewise the lower limbs. Those muscles work always together, which means that the test – e.g. sit-ups – should be performed with a support for feet. Ice hockey player's lower limbs should be explosive and able to produce strength alternating during a long period of time. Commonly used test for measuring that property is standing five jump, where the time that is used for producing the strength and also the joint angles of the lower limbs are compatible for skating. Chin-ups is widely used test for measuring the strength of the upper limbs by the hockey players. It is a good test for measuring the strength levels of the upper limbs and body, muscle coordination and muscle endurance. (International Ice Hockey Centre of Excellence 2010, Tiikkaja 2002, Pesola 2009.)

4.2 Testing the endurance properties of the player

The intensity and duration of the shift determines the proportion of the aerobic and anaerobic metabolism. All out spurts demands good levels of strength production, power and anaerobic endurance from the player. For maintaining the capacity of the performance and recovering the player must have good aerobic endurance properties. Good aerobic endurance is a base for all kinds of training, playing and recovering. The active time that the player is on the ice is mostly anaerobic. During the game the player must be able to perform multiple shifts with only little time of recovery between the shifts. That means that the player's body must be able to get rid of the wastes that are producing into the body. (IIHCE, website, 3.10.2010, Tiikkaja 2002.)

Good test for measuring the aerobic capacity of the player is 30 minute running test – measure the distance - because of its length. During the 30 minute test player's adiposemetabolism starts to work. We can also measure the mental toughness of the players. When we are talking about anaerobic test, widely used test is speed endurance test, where the player must perform short – 20 meter – spurts twelve times on the sets of three. Between each set player has four minutes for recovery. With this kind of test, we are able to measure the capability of the athlete to bump of the lactic acids from the body, capability to refill the energystorages and his or her mental toughness. (IIHCE, website 3.10.2010.)

4.3 Testing the speed properties of the player

Speed in ice hockey includes multiple factors. Ice hockey game consists of fast tempo transitions, which means that the player must possess good sense of reacting and skating skills – stops, starts, turns etc. Player must also have good properties in power production of the lower limbs and skating frequency. During the game the player must be able to perform multiple short spurts. This kind of speed properties should also be testes on and off the ice. Good test for off ice testing is 30 meter running test and on ice testing 30 meter skating test, where the time that the player uses for traveling the distance is measured. (IIHCE, website 3.10.2010, Tiikkaja 2002.)

5. Empirical part

5.1 Project planning

The planning of this project started with creating the big picture. I started with doing the table of content, because I wanted to have a “list” about the areas that I will go into. First couple of weeks I used for collecting all the ideas into the same paper. The motto was that if it is well planned it is 50% done. I was very precise with the fact that I should not take too much into the manual, because there was a risk that it would become boring and messy.

When I was creating the table of content – the areas that I will write about – I used my coaches as a help. I made an inquiry to them. That way I wanted to find the areas that they were interested in, and they would like to get more information. With the answers and my own ideas I came to the result that can be found from the manual.

When the framework was ready I started to collect information from the books and articles which were dealing with the growth and development of the human body, ice hockey, physical training etc. As a source of information I used library and internet. During the whole process I managed to use also my own views and ideas.

5.2 Project implementation

I started the manual with a message to all the coaches that are reading it. I went through the aims and objectives of the manual and I wanted also to thank all the coaches of their work for TPS. I found it very important that I have a message in the beginning of the manual that I want to deliver to all the coaches in TPS juniorijääkiekko ry. That way I was able to get the coaches start the thinking process from the page one.

When I started to do the section two, I decided that I want to determine the values of TPS junior hockey. The objective was to give a tool for the coaches that they may use when they are going through the one on one discussions with the players – It is stated in TPS that the coaches will have three one on one discussion with each of their players during the season. That section tells also to the coach, what TPS as a club expect from him or her. I had own parts for the personal player, independent player, rousing coach and “winnerguy”. After each

title I opened for the reader what does that mean in our club and what he or she should do in his or her coaching.

The next section was about the playing and player styles of TPS. The objectives were the same that I had with the previous chapter: to give tools for the coach and also determine what kind of players and what kind of actions we want to see on the ice. I went through things for offensive and defensive game for the perspective of a team and an individual etc. The idea was to create a big picture of a playing style that all the TPS junior teams will execute. For an individual player I had five things that should be seen in his or her game – 1. Player is in the playing position in every situation 2. Player is aggressive in one on one situations 3. Player feels comfortable in front of the both goals 4. Player is a team player who can be seen as an example 5. Player has good technical skills. Those things are basics of ice hockey that every player should fill, but with this kind of tool the coaches will remember to go through them with the player, every once in a while, and the player will execute them better.

The third section deals with the human growth and maturation. The main point for this section was to give a general view about the growth and maturation of the human body. I wanted also to offer a general understanding about the affects that the growth and maturation have in the trainability and coaching of a children and youngsters. I divided the section into several parts which all handled the development of different systems in the human body. I covered the development of the nervous system, muscles, bones, joints and ligaments, cardiovascular system, hormonal activity and intestines. I also noted that there are so called windows of accelerated adaptations that should be taken advantage of in training. I found this section as one of the most important in the manual, because of the fact that if the coaches are able to notice these things that are in the section in their coaching, we will have better players with fewer injuries in the future.

The fourth section of the manual deals with the trainability and training of physical properties at different age. I wanted to determine what should be done when and why during the growth and development of a children. I divided the age groups so that I had own things for ages 1 – 6, 7 – 12 and 13 – 15. I had also own parts for following properties, strength training, speed training, endurance training and mobility training. The objective of the section was to give tools for the coaches, because often they are in a hurry and are doing things that should not be done yet, because of the fact that the body of the children is not developed enough for that kind of training. I pointed out that heavy strength training and anaerobic type of training are

two things that should not be trained too early, because of the affects that both may have to the body of a children.

In the fifth section I wanted to aggregate everything that I had gone through in the manual at this point. I collected all the information together from the development of the human body to the training of certain physical properties. I had own parts for F, E2, E1, D2 and D1 – juniors. Inside each of the parts I stated what sport specific skills – teaching tips and tools for these skills can be found from the section eight in the manual - and tactics should be taught and trained when. I stated, what are the skills that should be rehearsed, what are the new skills that should be trained, what are the playing skills that should be trained and what are the educational things that should be went through in each of the age groups.

I also stated the off ice training. The objective was to take advantage of the windows of accelerated adaptations in off ice training. I had own parts for speed and agility, coordination and body control, endurance, mobility and skill training.

The idea of the whole sections was to find the red line to the training that will go through from the F – juniors to the D – juniors and give the information of what the coaches will make a season plan for their team. Like I stated earlier, the objective of the manual was to create lines for the coaches at the club and this section was the most important part of the manual when considering that, because now I determined what should be done in each of the age groups.

After the season plans I started to create a testing system for each age group. Testing is very important part of developing the player, and it is vital to have tests that serve the individual as an ice hockey player. I wanted to create a system for testing that will measure the properties that are needed in the game. I started with dividing the tests into a two, ice tests and field tests. Then I stated what tests should be done at certain age. All the tests are based on the physical development and maturation of the player. Players will do same tests from year to year – with little adjustment concerning the age and maturation of the player - so that it is easy for the coach and the player to see how he or she has improved the skills and physical properties.

In the field tests I created own tests for following properties: mobility, muscle endurance, explosive power and endurance. All those properties are vital for ice hockey players and by measuring them we will find the strengths and weaknesses of the player and that way adjust the on and off ice training of the individual.

On the ice the tests are measuring the stick handling skills, versatility of skating and skating endurance of the player. Tests are created by the international ice hockey central of excellence.

The seventh section in the manual deals with the teaching and learning a skill. I wanted to have couple of chapters about the basics in skill teaching and learning, because I had noticed that the coaches have big caps in the knowledge when it comes to these areas. I went through following things: types of skill, purpose of the learning, elements of skill and levels in skill learning. I found it vital that the coaches have the basic knowledge about these things, because one of the most important things in coaching is to find the way that the players will learn new things. The objective of the section was to clarify to the coaches that each player is an individual when it comes to learning a skill and the motivating atmosphere is the key in learning. The purpose was also to offer basic information about the levels in skill learning and what should be recognized in each of the levels.

The longest section in the manual is the section eight which handles the teaching of sport specific skills. I divided the sport specific skills in four different areas: skating, stick handling, shooting and passing. Those are skills that are vital in ice hockey and it is important that those skills are learned the right way from the beginning. The objective of the section was to offer the basics for teaching the skills that are listed under.

Skating part includes following skills and tips for teaching: straight forward and backward skating, starts for forward and backward skating, stops from forward and backward skating, cross overs for forward and backward skating and all the turns.

In the stick handling part I stated the principles that the coaches should recognize while teaching. Those principles are playing posture, grip, hands apart from the body, use of the wrists and the eyes on the game.

Shooting part has own chapters for wrist shot from forhand and backhand and also for slap shot. Passing part has own chapters for wrist pass from forhand and backhand and also receiving the pass with forhand and backhand.

5.3 Project assesment

I finished up with a manual that has 67 pages divided into 8 sections.

My biggest objective, when I started the work, was to come out with a manual that offers the information that is needed in everyday coaching with juniors, without going too deep and without too many pages. I wanted that the manual is easy to read and that it does not have too much in it, because then there is the chance that the reader will get bored and the message will not be delivered.

I was satisfied with the outcome, because I was left with a feeling that I was able to cover most of the information that was needed and that I wanted to. Sometimes I had troubles in deciding where to put the line in writing, because I noticed that now I am going too deep in the details and that will only get the reader confused. In my own opinion, at the end I was able to put that line and all of the eight sections are well ogranized and I am very pleased with the outcome.

I had a few people helping me with going trough the outcome. When I got the manual ready, I wanted these people to go it trough. Some of those people were involved in sports and ice hockey and they gave me feedback from the perspective of sport and then I had one person who helped me with the language. After the feedback I made some corrections, but the work itself was not changed.

The manual was printed and handed out to the coaches in the TPS Juniorijääkiekko ry. Later on the manual will also be went trouhg with all the coaches in the meetings that I have with the coaches of each age group. I am quite sure that the material will also be put on the internet on the TPS Juniorijääkiekko web site.

6 Summary and Discussion

The objective of the manual was to give information about areas that are commonly needed in the everyday coaching in junior ice hockey. Another objective was not just to give information, but also to offer tools for the coaches. I wanted to come out with a manual that covers the basic information about eight different sections – 1. Values of TPS 2. Playing and player style of TPS 3. The development of the human body 4. Training the physical properties at different age 5. Season plans 6. Testing 7. Teaching and learning 8. Sport specific skills. I was pleased with the outcome and I felt that this manual could be a useful tool for coaches in the TPS Juniorijääkiekko.

In the very beginning I decided that I will plan the areas for the manual by perspective of a junior coach. I tried to think areas that I was struggling with when I started my coaching career, and I also made a little questionnaire for my coaches to figure out what they would like to know more. I had some things in my head, which I wanted to go through in the manual, because of the fact that I had realized that the coaches have big gaps in their knowledge – e.g. physical development and maturation of the human. By the help of the questionnaire I found out that the coaches are very eager to get more information about things that are concerning the coaching.

One of my biggest challenges was to create a manual that will not be too extensive for the readers. I used a lot of time in thinking what to include and what to left out from the manual. The biggest mistake that I could have done, in my opinion, was that I would have made the manual too large with too many details. We have to remember that most of the coaches are voluntary workers who do not have time or energy to use hours daily for the coaching. They want and need to get information and help for their coaching, but it has to be closely related to their daily job as a coach. I find it also dangerous that the coaches in juniors, coaching players from 7 to 13 years, would get a lot of information concerning about, for example, tactics and systems because then there is always the change that the coach will start to train those areas instead of sport specific skills. Of course it is vital to know the basic legalisms of the game, but those we go through in the meetings that we have during the season with the coaches, and for that reason I left the tactics and systems out of the manual - when we come to the coaches that are coaching in C or B –juniors the situation changes.

Another challenge that I faced came out when I started the writing. How to make the information easy to read and understand? There was the danger that I will use a language, which the coaches without education in sports and human physiology, will not understand. In my own opinion I managed to handle that challenge quite well. Idea for the future could be, to add a section in the end, in which I explain the problematic words like aerobic, anaerobic etc.

Tips and tools for teaching the sport specific skills came out as the most challenging chapter of the manual. The reason for this was the problem of finding out a structure that covers the big things of the skill, but also the smaller details, without breaking the skills in too small. My own practical observation from the field is that, if you break a skill into too small pieces, most of the coaches are not able to find out the most important things concerning the teaching and learning. As a result they give too many instructions to the children who are not able to deal with that much information. Coaches should always find out one to three things, inside a skill, that they and the players are putting emphasis on. Then the players is able perceive the performance and also to estimate his or her own improvement. I felt that I managed in my aims.

The whole planning and writing process of the manual was very educational and made myself think and question things concerning the coaching, especially the areas that I handled in my manual. I found myself discussing about coaching with other people who are related to sports a lot more than before. I also started to build up my own opinions and perspectives concerning coaching and ice hockey, much more than I had done before the thesis process. I find myself a lot more confident and professional in my work nowadays than I did before making the manual. I had some colleagues reading trough the manual, and we had very educational conversations when we went trough things that they were disagreeing with me. I made little adjustments and added few things after they gave me the feedback, and I found that very effective.

I hope and believe that I have been able to come out with a product that will be used on a daily basis by the coaches in TPS Juniorijääkiekko. Manual offers information about so many things that are concerning the coaching that it can be read again and again and always you find out some new things. I also feel that besides the information the manual will get the coaches think and discuss more about these areas, and if that happens I have achieved one of my biggest goals. The next challenge is to get the coaches put the information that they have received into everyday activity.

The goal for the future is that the coaches are and will be able to follow the guidelines and things that they have learned from the manual. My job as a head of coaching is to look after that it happens. In the future – to the following season – I will create more specific season plans for each age group, which will have the whole year divided into a sections with own emphasis areas and goals for both on and off ice. In that process I will use my coaches as a help. I find it important that the coaches are doing it with me, because they are the ones who take it into a daily activity.

As a conclusion I can say that I was able to come out with a product that, in my own opinion, will build up a more systematic and comprehensive coaching and development of the players in the TPS juniorijääkiekko. Due to the manual, now I have build up clear guidelines for the coaching and player development. In the future the are of mental training must be added into the manual.

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