

My team and my own development during the 2019-20 season

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<p>This diary-type of thesis describes the author's personal and his teams development during the 2019-20 season while coaching in a junior club in Finland.</p> <p>First, the nature of employment is analysed which is followed by the 10-week observation period which consists of daily and weekly analyses. The weeks are not following weeks, but weeks from different periods of the season. In the daily analyses the author sets goals for each day, reflects it and then analyses the day. In the weekly analysis the author reflects the daily and weekly goals, it tells the problems, challenges faced and how did they got solved. It tells about his personal development as well as his teams development process.</p> <p>Author worked as an assistant and strength & conditioning coach in the U18 age group but served duties in other age groups as well. Author took part of the morning skill sessions too as a coach.</p> <p>In the discussion/conclusion section the areas which have been developed are highlighted, shows what kind of new ways, methods were discovered and it shows the outcome of the whole season and analyses the diary-type of thesis as a learning tool.</p>	
Keywords Development, coaching, leadership, teaching	

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1 Introduction

For my diary type of thesis, I wanted to write something which I'm interested and what I want to develop and improve with the best of my abilities. I also wanted something which is strongly related to my work placement and helps my actual work there. This is why I came up with the title of "My team and my own development during the 2019-20 season".

The organization where the internship is made it's called Vaasan Sportin Juniorit ry, which is a nonprofit organization. First, the club has been part of Hockey Team Vaasan Sport, but then on 3.10.1985 become a registered association. It is the junior organization of the Hockey Team Vaasan Sport Oy. At the moment, all the top teams of every age group in this organization are playing in the highest finnish national championships.

In my work placement, I'm working as an assistant coach and strength & conditioning coach in Vaasan Sport U18. Our team plays in the "Jr. B SM-sarja" series, which is the highest U18 league in Finland.

The league consists of the top 16 teams from all around the country. The regular season consists of back to back games, and it ends in December. After December, the teams separate into two groups based on the standings, which are called the higher and the lower group. In both higher and lower groups, teams are playing back to back games. In the higher group, organizations are aiming to qualify for the playoffs. In the lower group, only the number one team can make the playoffs. The other teams are battling to keep the league spot for the next season since the last four teams will drop down to the lower league after this period.

The observation period it's split into multiple periods. The first period consists of one week, which includes the try-out period and the first week in Vaasa. The second period describes the first week in June when the final team starts practicing together. Then a five-week period starts, which represents the whole pre-season period and gives a touch from the beginning of the league games where the team stepped into the in-season period. In the 8th and 9th week, the happenings of the in-season are highlighted. The last reporting period is the last week of the season.

The purpose of the whole thesis is to get feedback for me, and other coaches' work, finding new ways/methods, to make the team better by setting goals each week and analyzing them and helping the individuals to reach their full potential.

As the first theory background behind my work and coaching is athlete-centered coaching since I believe that this philosophy is essential already in younger age groups but especially in a team where I am coaching is a key factor that I need to help my athletes to take responsibility of their sporting behaviors that create their results. They should learn what it takes to be a professional athlete. For the second theory background, I was choosing autonomy-supportive coaching because the components of this method will help my coaching process, for example, athlete profiling or athlete and coach assessment.

In my work duties, I need to be able to work together with people in the late adolescence phase. I need to show them that I have knowledge about the sport, the requirements of the age group so they can trust me and look at me as a coach and not a friend since they are only four years younger than me.

In the organization, I'm working closely with our sports manager, the head coach, the other assistant coach, and the goalie coach. Since it's quite a small community, we have close daily interaction with the U20 coaching staff and once in a while with the Liiga coaches staff. We have monthly meetings together with the coaching staff all the way from U15 until Liiga. In these meetings, we share the challenges and problems faced, good and bad things in our daily work with our own team. We agreed that if we have a chance, we watch each other's games also, so we know more about one another and their team, and we can give direct feedback to help each other.

For the academic frame of reference, I was choosing "The coaching process" by Kidman & al. (2011) since this book provides other coaches and me with information about how to create a successful sporting environment where success is measured by athlete's satisfaction and performance improvement. Since I want to use the athlete-centered approach during my coaching, this book emphasizes opportunities for me to identify and practice coaching strategies using this method.

2 Framework

2.1 Analysis of my current work

My duties inside the club are being an assistant coach in the U18 team, which means I need to help the head coach's work with my best, but still, I can come up with new ideas to challenge him.

On the other hand, I am responsible for the video analysis of the games, being able to show the head coach which areas are lacking and what should we work on practices but parallel with this I have to be able to show the players individually their performance and help them correct their mistakes.

Part of my duties is that I'm also the strength & conditioning coach in our team, so I am responsible for the whole physical preparation of the players.

Part of my job inside the club is that I'm coaching in the morning practices also which is usually individual skill development of the players, and I'm taking part as a coach of the academy program also which is organized together with the schools. It is held once a week, and the main goal is the same, to work on the individual development of the players. For this, we had to determine each player's biggest weakness to split them into seven groups. These groups are skating technique, power skating, strength, strength endurance, muscle endurance, and speed. Here I am responsible for the last three listed.

In games, our bench is organized so that I'm running the forwards, the other assistant coach runs the defensemen, and the head coach is leading the bench by overseeing the whole game, giving feedback for the team as a whole and discussing with us. I need to be able to read the actual situation what happens in the game, the flow of the game and based on that I need to varyate and determine who goes in and when, and I need to be able to give valuable feedback for individuals or the whole forward unit.

My stage of professional development right now is really in the beginning phase because of the lack of experience. At the same time, I learned an enormous amount of things during the short, two year period in Vierumaki and gained some more experience throughout participating in different kinds of projects, camps. One of the camps was the IIHF High-Performance Camp, where I got the chance to take part. This camp was really about sharing ideas and methods between

coaches and other team staff members coming from different kinds of cultures. At the same time, being part of the organizing group, I got to know how a camp like this should be organized, so I gained skills in organizing as well. In this particular camp, I learned how to use the most usual video analyzing program from an expert video coach from the NHL (National Hockey League). The other camp was the Finhockey School camp, where I got to see how a whole camp is built up starting from really young players until the age of 15-16. I got to see and learn the different requirements for each age group, which is a precious skill to oversee the big picture of the player's development. I fulfilled this "big picture" with the requirements of the age group that I was preparing to coach and receiving and learning a lot of materials from my tutor teacher during my stay in Vierumaki.

In the future, I need to focus on developing my tactical knowledge as a coach. One of the big reasons I was choosing this particular work placement is that because the head coach's strengths are pretty much my weaknesses, and I would list the tactical knowledge here. What I want to achieve this season is to acquire and pick up new things, new methods, ideas, observations in this manner. Since the activity is much more tactical oriented in this age group, one of the main requirements is strengthening playing skills and the player's ability to recognize different game situations and game situation roles tied into team-specific tactics.

2.2 Interest groups at work

Board members (Figure 1) in our club consists of two different groups. In the top of the management is the sports director who oversees the whole sports-related activities, he is in charge of the three oldest competitive teams which are the U15, U16, U18 and he does cooperation with the Oy (men's club) side also which is the U20. He is the main boss of mine. Our communication is usually made throughout the head coach, who is in charge of our age group, but we still have a couple of short meetings about my personal development, following up the plan of the off-ice practices and player's individual development. There are four full-time jobs inside the junior organization, which are the following: the sports director, secretary, head of juniors, and the skills coach.

The board is leading the organization. The board consists of people with different jobs inside the organization. The board members are volunteers, most of them being parents. The board members are changing season by season, and they are selected in the AGM (Annual General Meeting). The meeting is held every year, the persons who would like to have the right to vote for the

next season's board members have to pay 20 euros. In the AGM, the chairman of that meeting sums up the results, and they make the decisions of the new board members.

The head of the board is the chairman. His duties are leading the whole junior club financially, and he is the boss of the sports manager too. He is responsible for the board meetings which are held every month. Here the sports manager takes part also and has a word about the decisions made.

The vice-chairman is responsible for the budget. He follows that the organization stays in the given budget. The junior organizations budget consists of two parts; first being the parents, which takes 60% of the budget, and second, which takes 40% is the kiosk and the sponsorship deals. Every parent has to pay club fees, which includes ice time, coaches, employee salaries, and referees. Next to this, they have to pay team fees, which depends on the level and the age group where their kid is playing. The sponsorship deals are made with companies in or around the city. The deal is so that the logo of the company is put and shown on the boards of the ice rink or the jersey of the teams. For this marketing, the companies give financial support for the junior organization.

The secretary records the decisions of the board meetings. She is in charge of the social media and the webpage of the club.

The man who is in charge of the sport strategy is a physical education teacher with a sports background and parent of a junior-hockey player. He discusses and analyses the goals, plans made by the sports manager and gives feedback on them.

The sales and purchases volunteer duties are the sponsorship deals and negotiating with the companies.

The team supporters job is organizing the monthly meetings with the team managers. She is the one who keeps the connections between parents and the head coach and makes sure that the parents get all the information needed.

Mathias West is in touch with the board members of the other clubs. It needs to be mentioned that the Vaasan Sportin Juniorit ry has cooperation with 18 clubs, which are the total amount of clubs in Pohjanmaa region. Part of his duties is the possible loans or player transfers from one club to another.

ORGANISATION

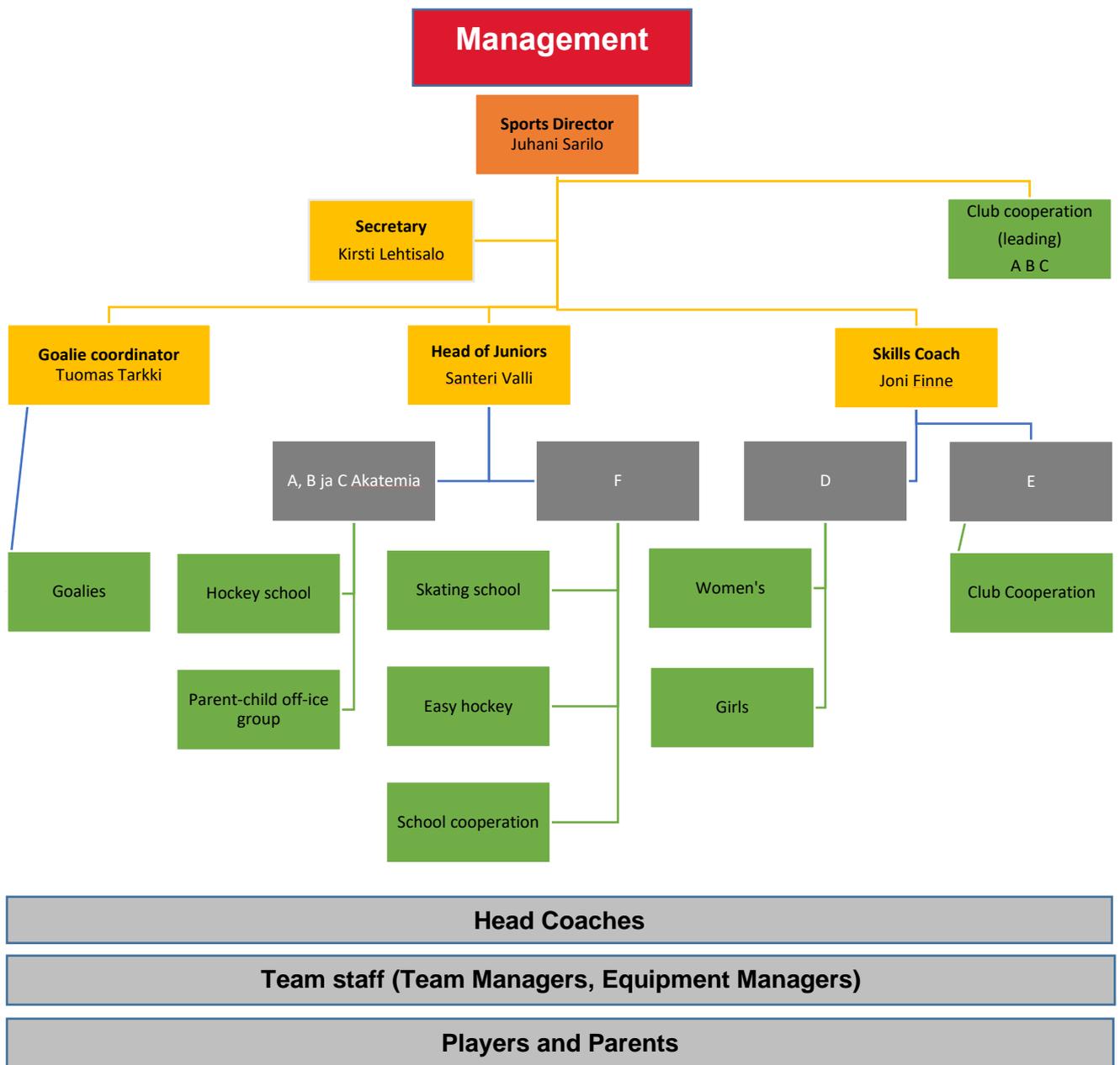


Figure 1. The management chart of the organization

MANAGEMENT



Figure 2. The board members of the organization chart

2.3 Interaction skills at work

Co-workers inside the organization are all older than me. Since the organization has only four full-time workers, there is only them and myself present during the day in the offices.

We have two offices. In one of them, the sports manager is working together with the secretary woman. In the other office, there is the skills coach, the head of juniors, the head coach of our team, and myself.

The interaction between the co-workers and me is usually asking for help or guidance from each other since they are mostly responsible for the smaller age groups or the second teams of the organization. The U20 team belongs to the seniors; thus, our team is the most important in the Junior Sport organization, so we can have offices to work.

As seen in Figure 3, the most interaction I make with the head coach, our interaction is more two way. Most of the time, he is the connection between the sports manager and me. The interaction between them is daily and really active, since they make the big decisions together about the players and the team.

My connection between the other assistant coach and goalie coach is way more less since they have their own work during the daytime; they spend way less time around than the head coach and me.

My interaction with the players is definitely two-way. They serve the second-biggest slice from the people who I interact the most. They share their thoughts, ideas freely, they have a lot of questions towards me either about just daily life, either sports specific questions. Most of the players are really open-minded and willing to learn and be better persons and athletes.

Interaction with the team manager is mostly at the weekends when we have the games.

The equipment manager is usually present in the afternoon's practices and the weekend's games, but since he doesn't speak English at all, our interaction is really less. Communication between us it's usually made through the head coach, who translates the message what we want to forward to each other.

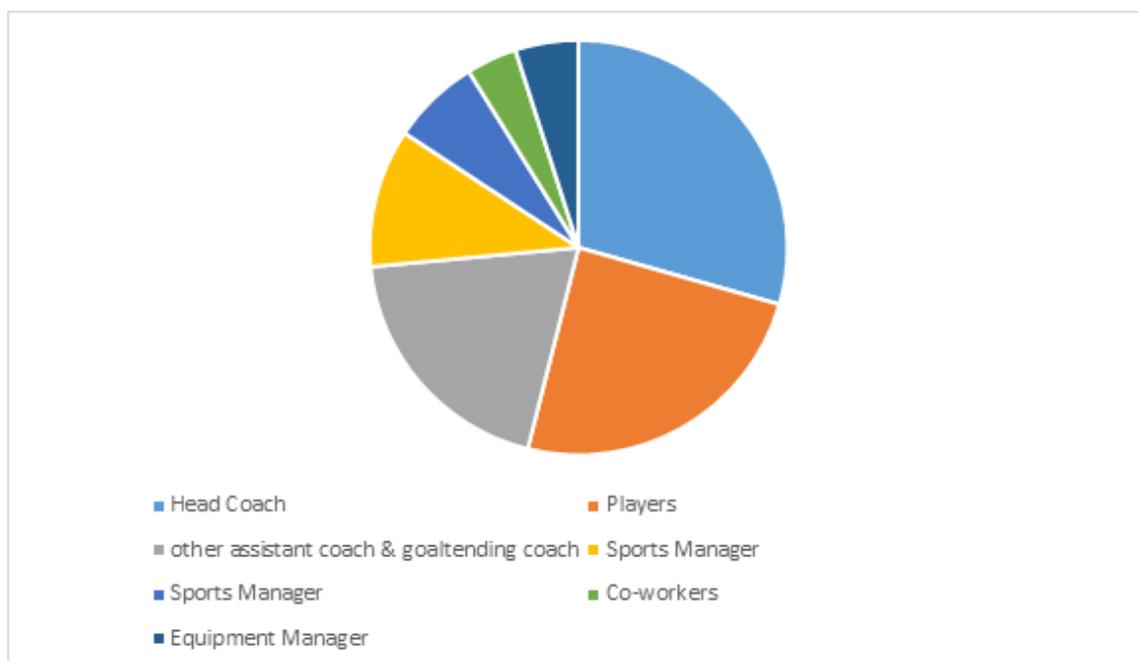


Figure 3. Interactions made inside the organization

3 Diary entries

3.1 Report week 1

Friday-Saturday-Sunday 12-14.04.2019

The first time being in Vaasa, the excitement level is high. Today (Friday) the try-out period starts. Goals for today are that to really keep my eyes open to recognize what type of players we are facing and to share my ideas with the sports manager and other coaches. The second part of my goals is to be able to make a document with all the players listed and analyze their technical, tactical, physical, and mental skills from a 1-3 scale. The technical, tactical, and physical skills were mostly visible on their on-ice performance, but the mental was seen on the face to face meeting.

In the try-out weekend, we had about 40 players attending, and 10 of them made the team. On the try-outs, we had five games in 3 days to be able to watch and analyze each player who has a chance to make the team. Next to this, we had different kinds of off-ice tests such as counter-movement jump test, 5-10 meter sprint tests, and agility. We were curious about their personality also, so we had face to face discussions with each player. The questions were the following; Why Vaasa, why Sport? How would you describe yourself as a player, as a person? What are your short-term, long-term goals? Where do you want to be in 3-4 years? Do you know what do you have to do to reach it?

The head coach was not able to attend to the try-out weekend since he had coaching duties with team China in the World Championships Division 2 A group. This meant that I already had my work starting. I was taking part in the decision making together with the sports manager and the U20 head coach, and I had to make the video clips from each player's every shift using Steva Hockey Pro program to be able to send it to the head coach. After day 2 (Saturday), we already had to cut a couple of players and send them home. On the last day, we had only two teams remaining supplemented with the players from Vaasa, who already made the team. From these two teams, we had to make two by the end of the day. In the try-out period, the sports manager of Hermes Juniors was present also, he had a meeting with the players, who didn't make our team but would have good chance to make the Kokkolan Hermes U18 team.

To be honest, we didn't face too hard decisions because there were just a couple of outstanding players that we knew already on the first day that they are going to make the team. The end of

the day we announced the team and had a players meeting with the ones who made the team following with a parents meeting, in both the sports manager presented our values, the Vaasan Sport type of players, the coaching staff, team manager and the equipment manager. The team manager presented the money part, which are the expected expenses and season fees. Important to mention here that the central values on the ice of the players in this organization are; good skater, reasonable reactor, and good at battling. Me being the only coach present I presented myself also, after a short discussion with the parents, we all got into the conclusion that having a coach who speaks only English will have a good effect on the player's personal development. Right away, when the meeting has ended, I had to run to reach my train back to Vierumaki since I had two more weeks of duties there before I move to Vaasa to do my internship.

At the end of the day, I managed to reach two of my really first goals in Vaasa. We had great conversations with the sports manager about our observations. We shared our ideas and opinions about the type of players we are facing and how we could implement them into the future team. The second part of my goals was successful too. I was able to make a document where I put all the possible player's names and filled the technical, tactical, physical, and mental skills. Also, sending them the video file from each player's every shift and sharing him my and the sports managers ideas helped him so much in helping the selection.

Monday 29.04.2019

Since I prefer punctuality and wanted to show reliability, I wanted to start my work placement right away, so I packed my belongings and drove from Vierumaki to Vaasa on the 28th of April, Sunday afternoon. The reason and goal that I started this early was to acclimate a little bit, get to know the people better around here, the facilities, and be 100% ready when our final team gets together. It's my second time in the city after being here two weeks before when we had the try-out period. So many things are going on, and the events are happening so fast, but still, I try to put my main focus on the first practices together with the "team" and the other staff members. Objectives for the whole week is to get to know the people who I'm working with, the staff members, the other team's coaches, the people in the office, and most importantly the players.

Coaching mate is really helpful. He guided me around the city and showed everything that I need to see and know. Time has come, it's time to get to the rink and have my quick introduction and then jumping in already to run the warm-up before the ice. The team is not full yet. In the morning practices, the U16, U18, and U20 players are involved together, players that remained from the previous season and will continue playing in the same club. In these practices, the emphasis is on individual skills such as skating, shooting, or passing. In the afternoon practices, we don't

have a full team yet either, so we are just running basic drills and still having skills development in mind. Arriving first time to the locker room, players know about me, I saw the curiosity in their eyes. The head coach gave the word to me so I could start introducing me. Everyone was listening quietly. I tried to keep my presentation short but on point. I already made sure that I'm here to help them improve, such as players as individuals also. Surprisingly all of them understand English really well. I explained my situation, why am I here, what am I going to do, what am I going to be responsible for and then some basic things about me such as where was I born, grew up, about my player and coaching career and of course about my studies in Vierumäki. Then there was time to start the warm-up, which I coordinated already. The players were really open, and they were asking questions, they wanted to interact already. I had a plan in mind that I will be really open and try to observe everything that they do, how they behave inside the team, trying to see what role each player has and what are their personality types. Since I really had to consider these aspects in our future work together because not every person should be handled in the same way.

The warm-up went smoothly. Since I work out on my own, too, and I own an athletic body, I am able to show my athletes how to perform the exercises correctly and underpin with some important key points that they need to consider. Then we went on the ice. It was really interesting to see and compare the skill levels of different age groups after coaching U15 and U16 teams. I already observed that the skill level really differs in this case. Before I got here, I tried to get to know most of the player's characters on the ice by watching videos of their previous season's games. I did some research and been asking about the organization's values, what type of hockey do they represent, what are their strengths and weaknesses. Ice practice went okay; also, a good work ethic was present, so I could already see that we are going to have a hard-working, good skating and tough team.

Getting to know the culture here, after practice, we went inside the locker room with the head coach and had some good conversations with the players. This was a really good way and a chance for me to get to know the players and encourage the ones who are not that talkative. I didn't want to hide anything, so I just tried to be honest with them but still taking care of how we talk about things because I want them to gain respect towards me. Being honest with the players was one of my main objectives when I came here, I decided this after a conversation with Kari Savolainen during my studies. I explained my situation to him and asked him about how to act, how to interact, and how to build authority. His advice, first of all, was just to be honest. If the players catch me with a challenging question or with a situation that I'm not sure about the answer, just tell them the truth but promise them that I will find out for the next day. Showing reliability plays a big role here.

Tuesday 30.04.2019

Objectives, goals for the second day are still continuing the process of getting to know the players, but particularly for this day is to teach something which will leave a mark for the rest of the season.

The early morning warm-up was run by me. Since we discussed with the head coach that we share responsibilities, the warm-up is going to be my all-time responsibility for the season. This is a great opportunity for me to study, do some research, come up with new exercises, new warm-up setups based on my own thoughts, and the research I make. Gaining one season-long experience in running warm-ups and trying to keep it varied will pay me back so much during my coaching career. Already from day 2, I had my own warm-up structure. Personally, I use one full phase of the warm-up to do mobility movements, which are indispensable for athletes competing in elite levels. Mobility means moving a joint freely through its full range of motion. If the players are not mobile enough, they are putting themselves under risk of injury while they are lifting weights or battling in high intensity and speed on the ice. Yesterday I invented one mobility flow at home where I combined mobility exercises, which can be done in the most smooth way possible, allowing for a smooth transition from one to the other. I introduced the mobility flow and taught it for my players and told them that this is something that they can always implement when they prepare themselves for any type of sports activity. I find this useful for my upcoming work also because if we might have less time to warm-up because of individual meetings or pre-practice meeting with the head coach, I can just remind the players about the mobility flow and they know already how it goes. This mobility flow could be useful as an active rest between sets while the players work out in the gym.

Not a big goal for the day, but still, I was able to reach it. Players learned something new, and they got some new ideas of how to warm-up their bodies properly.

Thursday 2.5.2019

The third day of many starts today. The goal for the day is still to get to know the organization better, the people around me and to discuss with the head coach of the pre-season period a little bit.

The morning practice went well. We did some coordination drills off the ice using ladders and some reactive drills. On the ice, we followed with the same idea; reaction games were the main topic. This included games with quick transition from defense to offense and inversely and

change of game situation roles. I had some discussions with my athletes after it. It was good to hear that some of them already recognize their weaknesses, and they look forward to the preparatory period to work on them and get ready for the next season.

I talked with couple of people from the organization, such as the new assistant coach of the men's team, after being the head coach of the U16 team in the previous season. It was great to share some ideas with him since he is kind of in the same situation as me. (obviously in different levels). He is having a huge step in his career just like me, he is also really young, and he is just about to create authority for himself in the men's team. We both are so excited and can't wait for the actual season to start. After that, I shared some words with the skills coach. He explained to me his daily duties and how he is trying to develop the younger kids to be ready for high levels of competition. Then we discussed a little bit about the past of the club. I was asking that is there any type of players which are typical for this area and this organization. He answered that usually, players here are not that skillful, but they are good skaters and hard workers. This was great information for me. In the afternoon I met our team's equipment manager first time too, and I found out that he doesn't speak in English at all, so this made me think of really start working on my Finnish skills because if we are going to spend whole weekends together and I don't want to myself to be excluded from any discussions and want to interact with everyone inside the staff too.

In the office I explained the players the importance of the core muscles in almost every sport but especially in contact sports and ice hockey, which was followed by a medicine ball workout. It went well, players really activated their core, and they were happy to do something new because they haven't really done these types of exercise before.

After the ice, we sat down with the head coach and went through the calendar to check how are we going to play the pre-season period. The preparation phase period is already set, we practice until the end of May with the current team, then on the first week of June the final team for the next season gets together, and we practice on and off the ice until the last week of June. Then we share individual plans for the players, and everyone gets summer break until the last week of July when we start the actual pre-season period.

Overall, I had a quite successful day by reaching one part of my goals. I shared some words with people around the organization, which helped me to get a bigger picture of what to expect in the future in terms of player development and the level of the players here. The second part of my goals was reached partly since we wrote down the schedule with the head coach, but we didn't plan or talk about how and what are we going to focus on our practices.

Friday 3.5.2019

A day full of actions ahead. I will be in charge of the morning ice, which is going to be skating technique and edge use. The main objective for the day is to design a proper plan for the ice session and run a good quality practice.

This was the first time for me running this kind of practice with this group, so I had to really pay attention and discuss with the head coach who knows these players in what level they are so I could design challenging enough but performable drills.

Practice went as I expected; players were concentrated and did their job well. Working with players who are eager and interested to learn new things it makes my job easier and enjoyable.

Somehow I feel like I reached my goal, players went to school after morning practice that they learned something in the morning. I think I was able to learn some new ideas, new teaching points in the topic, and I was able to forward and show it to the players as best as I could.

Weekly analysis

If I think back to this week, the main idea was to get to know the people around me, get to know the players and the facilities. Interaction skills gained in communication skills class of my university studies has helped me to connect with people; it taught me how to interact with different individuals and people in different positions. I got to know the player's personalities by having face to face meetings with them, and I got to know the facilities where I am going to work every day.

The try-out period was about scouting, discovering what type of players we are facing, how is their skill level on and off the ice. With the try-out period, I gained experience in player scouting. With the basis of what I studied in the university of player scouting, player profiling, I refined and fulfilled my knowledge with the help of the sports manager and other coaches who I shared ideas.

The other thing which I had to deal with and discover was the cultural differences. Being two years in Vierumäki I didn't have much chance to experience the Finnish culture deeply since the environment I was in it was more international. By observing their behavior, communication, and reaction to different kinds of happenings, I was able to discover a couple of core things about the culture. There is still a lot to discover, but I feel like already in the first week, I made good steps towards getting to know the people around here.

A big challenge for me during this week was to build authority and make myself as a person who the players can rely on, can trust and respect. Obviously, this is a long process, but I think I made big steps towards this objective with good preparation, readiness, and overall that I have been organized in front of them as a person. This preparation and execution in real life coaching is a really good way for my individual development both in physical and sports specific coaching.

The overcome of the meetings with the players were successful in the end. First, it was hard to deal with the stress when the head coach gave me the word on the meetings in the locker room, but I managed to overcome my fears, and with the proper preparation I made in advance, I managed to make it a success. During my studies, I have been in uncomfortable situations, which made me strong and made me ready for these real-life situations. But this comes with experience too. I am aware of my lack of experience, and I am trying my best to get involved and have more and more responsibilities in the team and in the coaching process. Based on an article, if people choose to remain in their comfort zone, they will never find out what their real potential is or what they are able to achieve. You can't succeed at anything without breaking through your comfort zone. Challenging yourself and expanding your comfort zone is an important part of developing as a person. Each step brings you to the next level and keeps you in the right way towards self-improvement. (Herefold) The head coach throwing me to the deep water has made me get used to working outside my comfort zone. The feeling after fulfilling a task that seemed to be challenging is indescribable.

As shown in Figure 4, things we are used to are being inside our comfort zone. (Lynch, 2019) In order to grow and improve, we need to step out from that level and take some risks, put ourselves into uncomfortable situations, trying to fulfill challenging tasks. These things will lead us into the fear zone. The fear zone can be characterized by uncertainty, where we don't feel comfortable until we reach the security of knowledge, stepping into the learning zone. There the more knowledge and skills we accumulate, the more confident and motivation of developing ourselves we will have. The following step in our development is the growth zone, where we can reach our goals and set new ones.

Considering my own case, when I arrived in Vierumaki to start my university studies, I was way deep inside the comfort zone. During my studies, I landed in the fear zone, which felt really uncomfortable for me at that time. Fulfilling challenging tasks made me stronger and made me believe I am able to reach the things I want. When one starts to feel good in uncomfortable situations, that is when one learns. This is the transfer from the fear zone to the learning zone. At the moment, I am in the learning zone, gaining experience, and extending my comfort zone to reach the growth zone, which is my next step towards my individual development.

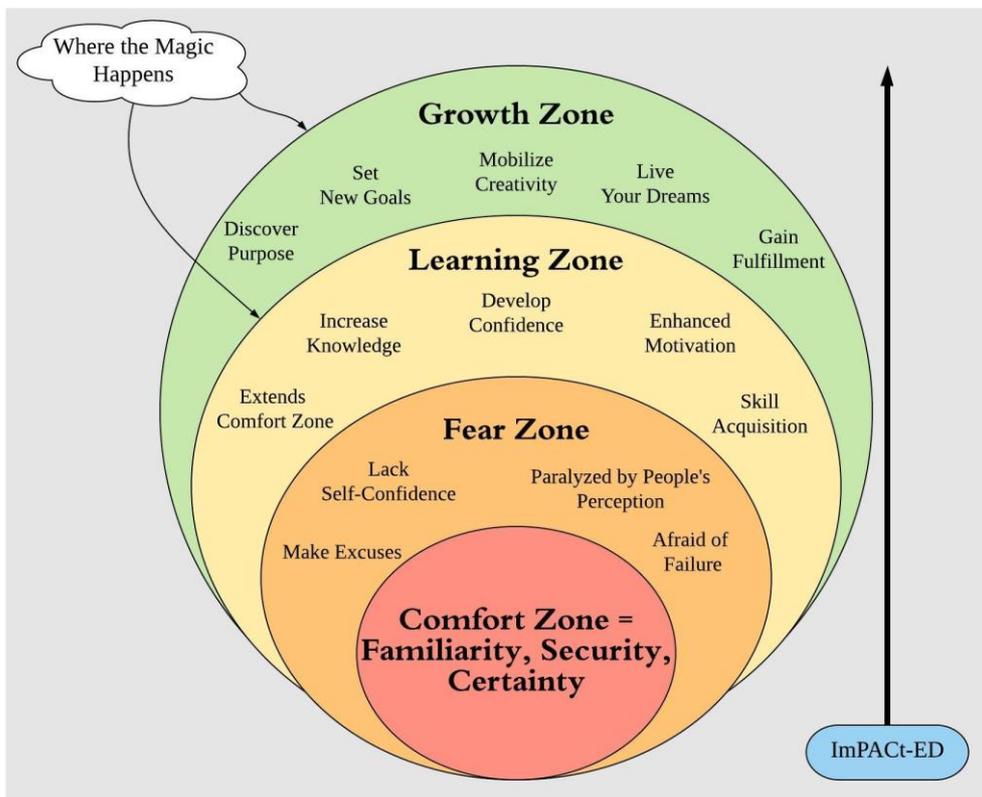


Figure 4. Overcoming Fear and Expanding Your Comfort Zone (Lynch, 2019)

3.2 Report week 2

Monday 3.6.2019

Starting the first week when all the players have to be in Vaasa. This is the first time when the “final” team for the season is getting together. Of course, some import players might be joining the team later in august, but there is no concrete information about that yet.

The day starts already with a parents meeting. The goal of the day is to build authority for me in front of the players and to interact with the parents in the best way possible. Trying to create trust between the parents and myself, I want to prove for them that regardless to my age I will be able to improve their kid and I have got enough education in my past two years in my university that I can implement all those into my coaching process and make them better players and better persons. I am hoping that the parents will react positively and think of it as a good thing that I will talk English with their kids every single day. Based on my opinion, it is a good chance for the athletes to get involved in English speaking daily and sometimes to be forced to talk English if they want to talk or ask something from me. Daily use of English will not only be an advantage in the daily

interactions but also while running off-ice and on-ice practices will teach the players to the professional literature. As all hockey people know, in this sport, everyone talks the same language. Using the professional words has already been popular in every hockey country, and implementing and supplementing it with non-usual words will have an advantage for their player's future career.

It was good to see and talk with the players who I am going to spend a whole season. I was feeling excited, and the players seemed to be too. I was being honest all the time with them and just tried to be myself. Parents were full of eyes when I started introducing myself. I do think that the parents were facing a whole new thing because it's not too usual to have a coach from abroad in juniors, especially at this level. I'm trying to deal with the pressure what this causes and make the best out of it. The parents were listening carefully. I think almost all of them understand English, so it was easy to forward my message. After I finished my speech, I felt like this was great, it went well, I had no pressure talking.

I kind of reached my first goal, but didn't have a chance to talk personally with every single player yet. I can say that I reached my second goal by forwarding my short but clear message to the parents.

Tuesday 4.6.2019

The plan and goal for today is to make the players get used to the drills, the structure of our practices.

We are going to have some principles and structure on how we are going to build up every practice, and we are going to stay with them. This helps the players to concentrate on always doing better and better, and they can be prepared because they always know what to expect in terms of the structure of the practices. The idea is to always start off with couple of short full speed laps just around the rink to wake them up a little bit and make them realize that there is no way to cheat in the intensity of the short, 60 minutes on-ice practices. We don't call any drill as a "warm-up drill" since the warm-up is usually made more than one hour before, which is followed with an intense off-ice session, depending on the day we are. The structure of the practice will always look so that we build up progressively the drills, adding new elements to the same or similar type of drills, or implementing some more challenging variations to them.

Off-ice was about implementing the progression and structure of the warm-up now again when everyone is here. Introduction about it was more like a discussion. I gave everyone a chance to share their own ideas, own routines what they did before. Using questions, I made them think

and get more involved in the topic. After this, we started the actual warm-up based on the structure that we discussed together. Using the RAMP method. RAMP method is a useful method to warm up the body used by many professionals in the field. R stands for raise, meaning that raising up the heart rate. A means activate, meaning to activate all the muscle groups of the body. M stands for mobilize, mobilizing the joints is important to reach the full range of motion while exercising. The last phase of the RAMP method, which is P, meaning potentiate is used to potentiate the main muscles what the athlete is going to use in his/her upcoming session. (Mead, 2015) Players showed curiosity and open-mind while performing new exercises, exercises that they might never done before. It was good to see during the warm-up that they are trying to interact with each other, trying to get to know one another.

On the ice, we did full-ice drills with a lot of long paced skating and scoring. Players were really pushing themselves. We could really see that they want to show now what they can and want to make a good first impression. Maybe because of this, they made a lot of basic mistakes too, such as passes were not on the blade, when they got to score we could only hear the boards crashing. We have told the players that they doesn't need to panic; they will have a lot of chance to show their skills. Head coach also came up a little bit hard too that no matter what, this skill what they showed today it's going to be way too low for the level of the league we are at.

I totally reached my goal off the ice. The discussion/introduction was successful, as well as the actual session. Players made them active and got involved in the discussions, and they did a great job performing the new exercises which I showed them. On the ice, we kind of reached the team goal of making them get used to the structure of the practices, but this is going to be a little bit longer process. The little panic and skill that they showed today interrupted a little bit of our plans, so we took more time for feedback and even changed the progression a little bit when the drills didn't go that well.

Thursday 6.6.2019

Hard day for the players today. We are having fitness tests. I can't really have a big goal for today since the trainers in the sports hall will take care of the tests. The only goal for today is to run a really good warm-up, which makes the players ready for all kinds of upcoming activities, to help the trainers job to monitor the players results and to encourage, motivate the players to do better and better.

Warm-up was progressive, started up with two laps of light jogging, then I tried to go through every single joint to mobilize them and every muscle to activate them, then we did dynamic

stretches and couple sprints specific exercises. I counted the time so that after the session, they still had about 5 minutes to work on their own on areas that they feel weaker or where there is more risk of injury if they don't warm up properly.

Tests included Vo2 Max testing, 10 and 20-meter sprints, long jumps, vertical jumps, bench press, back squat, and pull-ups. Next to these, we measured their body fat percentage and body mass index too.

The purpose of the tests was to monitor the player's current shape and to help us coaches to design the right practices and then the individual physical plans for the summer.

I think I reached all three parts of my goals for the day. Warm-up went really smoothly since it was well planned. Tests went based on the plan; there was not much waiting for the players; it was well organized. I helped the trainers to monitor the player's performance, and I was pushing and motivating the athletes to do their best while performing the tests.

Friday 7.6.2019

Players are quite exhausted from yesterday's tests. They even had to bike home as a cool down in an about 8 km road. Still, based on the plan, we have a hypertrophy workout for today, and I will use this opportunity to work on the players lifting technique. This is the goal of the day. This week has given me so much feedback about their current lifting technique and strength levels; there is really a lot of things to work on.

Only practice today is this hypertrophy workout. After that, players can rest for the weekend. Since only practice and they are having fatigue from yesterday, I used this time to focus more on mobility/flexibility exercises, which I implemented as part of the warm-up. I was choosing more "comfortable" ones than usual. Most of the exercises were made on the floor, focusing only one stretch at a time, I left out the more complex moves from today. It was on the air a little bit that they know it's the last one for the week, and they just want to get through it. I explained to them that they still need to push them all the way even if it's the last stretch and that they need to get used to this since this was only the first week together.

Warm-up was followed with the workout. Based on my observations so far, there is a lot of players having trouble with the technique of lifting. During the workout, I really paid attention to every single detail and corrected the player's performance. I was not able to reach out the every individual since I was alone with multiple players and multiple exercises. The issue, for now, is that

even if they learn in theory how to perform an exercise correctly, they are not able to do it because of the lack of mobility/flexibility. This will be a long process, but consistency is key here. If we keep moving the joints and muscles and challenge them to reach the full range of motion almost every single day as part of the warm-up, improvements will be shown.

As I mentioned, I couldn't reach out to every single player today to help them correct their lifting technique. The player who I managed to reach out I explained in theory how to perform an exercise, and then I gave feedback based on their performance. The most common mistake was not going low enough while performing a squat or not having straight back while performing a deadlift or back squat. Main key points and small details such as look at one point on the wall in front of you while doing a back squat or deadlift were mentioned and explained for the players. We continue this process from here.

Weekly analysis

Exciting week behind. I got to know the players of the final team. The main focus was more on the observation side, getting to see the players strengths and weaknesses. While observing, I checked their technical skills mostly since we didn't get into team structure or tactical drills yet in the first week. I can say that most of the players reach our requirement standards in this team, where skating and hard battling are key elements.

One of the skills which I improved during this week is on the physical side, more concretely gaining experience in testing methods during fitness tests. With the leading of professionals in the field, I had a chance to help out and see deep inside the professional facilities and learn how to use them. To mention a couple, the body composition analysis is a useful tool to determine body fat, muscle, and total body water or the VO2 max test using an ergometer to determine the athlete's aerobic power. Test results were useful while designing the players individual workout plans.

I think in this period I refined my basic skills, but I gained even more experience in observation skills. Good observation creates good decisions. In our team's case, it is important to be able to observe the players to design the right drills for the practices and to find the right linemates for each player. I created the next off-ice practices based on my observations on their physical abilities. Observation will not take part in this period only; it will follow along the whole season because we will always need to be seeing their current performance on practices and on games to make adjustments, changes. Figure 5 describes the steps of the coaching process, which I found

useful. In this week, I went through the observation period, and now it's time for analyzing the observations I made.

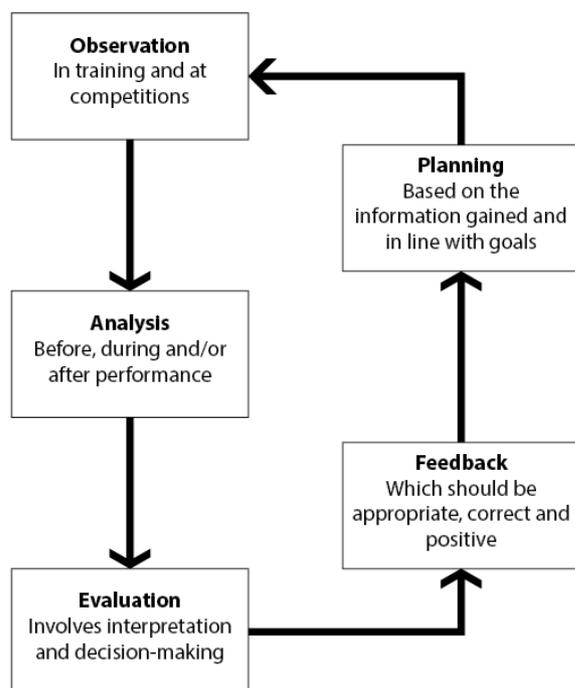


Figure 5. Diagram of the coaching process (WJEC CBAC LTD, 2016)

3.3 Report week 3

29.7.2019 Monday

Today is the first day on the ice after the summer break. Goals for the week are to work on on-ice conditioning, focusing on the skating and reaching an optimal conditioning level for the players, which makes them ready for the season. The goal for the day is to make players excited about stepping on the ice again and have a good ice practice with a lot of fast-paced skating drills included.

Even though players made improvements in the muscles needed for the sport during summer, the ice is always different. We have a plan to build up the conditioning progressively since we don't want the players to get injured or burn out even before the season started. Practicing twice on-ice and twice off the ice a day will already be a big step for the players after practicing only off the ice, so we don't want them to have extra fatigue.

Plan for the day is to keep the off-ice physical development plan going with implementing only “get them going” ice practices. Skating with moderate speed serves a big part of the program.

Players seem to be really excited to step on the ice again, but based on discussions with them, they are worried about having tough practices in the first couple of weeks based on their experience from the last years. We explained to them our approach and plan, trying to make them understand what we are going to do and what is the purpose of it. Every coach must invest time to explain the reasons for the tasks given for the players. The players knowing and understanding the idea behind the tasks that they are doing helps them to perform better.

Overall, good feeling inside the team seems like the period which they were together in June gave them a good opportunity to get each other to know better, now they look like they are happy to get together also.

Captain is serving his purpose very well, trying to interact with everyone a little bit. Choosing him as a captain was not even a question; the decision was made by us coaches. He is a charismatic person and way more mature for his age, he is able to keep the team together, helping us to build high team cohesion and being able to push the other players forward in terms of working hard or pushing their limits.

After the short meeting, when we explained our short-term goals for the upcoming month, I had my usual task to run the warm-up and the off-ice practice for the players. In the next couple of weeks, my plan with the warm-ups is to teach them the proper structure, how to build up a warm-up session. After a while, I am planning to make the warm-ups more open, offering more space for the athletes. After they pick up enough information and exercises, I will make them come up with the exercises. Using this method will make the players choose activities by their own needs since they should be able to know their own body already with this playing experience behind.

Ice practice included a lot of fast-paced skating drills. Players looked really tired after, even though this practice was just the beginning of the progress that we want to build up. Ice surface is still quite thin; this makes it even harder and exhausting for the players.

The team goal was reached. We designed simple full ice drills with a lot of skating but still with scoring to make the players have a price in the end. Raising up the excitement was not hard, players were already excited. After hearing that we will have a small competition at the end of the practice, it even made them feel more excited.

30.7.2019 Tuesday

The goal for today is to have a meeting with the head coach and go through the on-ice topics for the season and concrete plans of the whole month of August. We are also going to set which responsibilities I am going to be in charge, how do we organize ourselves as coaches, how do we run practices and setting the jobs needs to be done for both of us.

As it is set already, one of the most significant responsibilities of mine is the strength & conditioning part. During the weeks, I am going to be in charge of two ice sessions; the Monday, which usually will be skating and skill. The second day of mine will be the Thursday morning ice session, which is going to be reaction games.

I partly achieved my goal of the day. The concrete drills still need to be done for the ice sessions, but we agreed that we both would look after some sources, try to get some great ideas and we both will prepare and come up with drills for the sessions. Based on these drills, we are going to discuss, share ideas, and make a conclusion together, which ones are we going to use this month.

As a result of today's discussion, seen in Figure 6, I made a table with the on-ice topics set for each morning and afternoon of one week. I taped this table to the room where players keep their gear so they can always see what is the topic of the upcoming practice and are able to prepare themselves it. Knowing what to expect helps the athletes to prepare mentally and get ready for the next session.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
MORNING	FREE	ACADEMY- IN-DIVIDUAL	FREE	REACTION GAMES	TEAM
AFTERNOON	SKATING & SKILL	POSITION SPECIFIC & BATTLE	FREE	DZ; OZ TEAM STRUCTURE	GAME PREPARATION

Figure 6. Weekly on- ice plan

31.7.2019 Wednesday

Today the club is going to have discussions with other organizations to set up pre-season games. My part of this is only to have a discussion with the head coach about who are we going to give a chance, who do we take from the U16 team. This is the only goal for the day.

It's a free day today, but we came in to have some discussions and to call some other teams. Possible opponents are Assat from Pori, which is about 200 km from Vaasa. This is the closest team to us in the league we are playing at.

Meanwhile, one parent called that the pre-season trip to Sweden is set. We are going to play there three games against Swedish highest level teams in the same U18 age group. This means we need to build up the other pre-season games around it. Even if I am an assistant coach, I really try to get involved in everything that is happening around the team in every manner. This helps me oversee the whole process and helps me gain experience in other fields too, such as organization or management.

We decided to take only one player from the U16. We are curious how he can handle the speed and how he can keep up with the strength differences between the two age groups. At the moment, we don't see anyone who could have a chance to play with our team.

I reached my goal of the day. We were able to go through all possible players from the younger team and share some valuable ideas.

1.8.2019 Thursday

The goal for the day is to discuss how we are going to implement the tactical elements to the practices and the pre-season games.

Discussions went pretty well, the conclusion and the plan for the tactical part is to go through all three zones defensive and offensive game. Meanwhile, we created the final schedule of the pre-season games. We have a plan to practice one of these elements for the next match and demand it as a primary objective in the game. The schedule looks so that we have the first game on the 2nd of August at home against Porin Assat. Then the week after, we are heading to Sweden for three games against Swedish highest level teams. After arriving from Sweden, we are going to Rauma to have two games in one day against Lukko, which is again a team that is in the same league with us. Then in the week after we have a game against Kokkolan Hermes, which is a

U18 Mestis league team, the league one lower than we are playing at. Then for the last week of the pre-season, we are going to Pori to play another game against Assat.

2.8.2019 Friday

The first game of the season, home against Porin Assat. To be honest, we didn't have much time to go into team structure and tactical elements, since it was our first week on the ice. Still, we managed to go through some fundamental theory part and practicing some drills with an emphasis on defensive zone defensive play.

As coaches, we still try to find the ways to get these players as a team and find out who can play with who in the most effective way. In the age group is not so easy to keep everything in balance since there are multiple factors to consider. These are winning games, keeping the player development in mind, trying to give everyone chance to prove what they are able and at the end of the day, we need to produce players for the next years U18 juniors roster, for the U20 team and in long-term for the men's team.

Plan for the day for my coaching development is to have a good start of my bench management, to be well prepared, and to try to look confident even though it's my first time running a bench at this high level.

Preparation went well; I prepared for every scene which possibly can happen in the game. Of course, these are just small parts of the whole picture. As a coach, one needs to be able to give direct feedback for the player's actual performance and react for the situations of the game.

We decided to give all the possible players chance for at least one pre-season game. The best player of the U16 team was in the lineup also, but he didn't manage too well at this level, he couldn't keep up with the skating and the speed yet, so we got answers which we have to analyze.

Weekly analysis

Intense but effective week behind us with a lot of happenings. I feel like the most significant objective for the week was fulfilled, we really designed all the ice sessions so that we worked on conditioning. Starting to implement the tactical elements was not the main thing, but we managed to show the players the plan what we will follow.

A lot of meaningful discussions were made with the head coach this week. We designed and went through our plans for the pre-season period. We invented the weekly on-ice schedule, and we shared our responsibilities as coaches.

The players reacted well to the new challenges, and they made a reasonable effort throughout the whole week. With the first game of the season, obviously, we can't be too satisfied in tactical and team structure terms. The game itself served its primary purpose since we could see the player's performance in a real game situation, and it added a great plus to our observations. Considering the big picture, this week has given us a plus in almost any terms.

Considering my personal development in the past week, first, I need to highlight the bench management skills. I can't say yet that I made improvements, but I got a taste and the first impression on how is controlling a team at this level. Coaching is different teams and age groups in the past years has given me experience in this manner. Coaching at this level it's different. Here the coach really needs to be aware, really needs to have high-level sports specific skills and leadership skills. Leadership skills are indispensable for any sports coach.

By trying to observe myself, I found out that I already grew as a coach. I observed it by behaving and leading a team that consists of players with only a couple of years of age difference compared to me. For me, this also gives a feedback that I can be a person who people can look up. There is a lot of room for me to improve this particular skill, but I have a whole season before me to get better week by week.

The second skill which I need to mention is the interaction and communication skills. This week has helped me to implement my interaction skills in a real work environment, which I learned already, and I made improvements. The main interactions I made this week were with the players, but at the meeting with the head coach of Tuesday, I really needed these skills. For task and problem-solving purposes, I need to interact with the people around me.

3.4 Report week 4

5.8.2019 Monday

Second week on the ice. We have only two days to practice before leaving for the Sweden trip. The plan is to continue practicing the defensive zone defensive play since we didn't have enough

time to do it last week. The goal for me is to look after some resources, key points, teaching objectives in these two topics.

Players had two free days, players who are from other cities went home, we found it essential to let them go and give these players (and the others) some free days to spend some valuable time with their families and friends since they are still in summer break from school and the season is going to be long.

I kind of reached my personal goal since I came up with teaching points and drills what the head coach found useful to implement.

We reached the goal with the team since we were able to practice what we wanted, and the players got the idea of what to do, and they could successfully perform it. Every drill served its own purpose, and I found the practice was a big and useful part of the preparation for the upcoming three days of this week. Players looked good doing their thing; they have been working hard and concentrating on the details.

I think my skills surely developed in the topic of what we are covering this week, but there is still plenty of things to learn. I feel like I could run a practice on my own with this tactical topic that we covered.

6.8.2019 Tuesday

Last day to practice before the Sweden trip. I will start today some individual meetings with the players. Since I am responsible for the defensemen at the moment, I will begin with them.

The goal is to find out what are their personal goals and to design a plan to reach their goals. I started with a first-year U18 player who has great potential, but he came from U16 Mestis (second league). He was not that confident about himself, and he said he would be happy to get enough playing time to get the speed of the league. I told him if he works hard now and on and proves that he can make a big step now already at the beginning of the season, he will be able to be one of our crucial defenseman. The second player was also a first-year U18 player, and he had big goals for the season. Now in his case, I had to tell him to be realistic with himself. He really has to keep up and work on his skating and speed to be able to play a significant role in this level. I designed an off-ice plan for him for speed/explosiveness, which I will follow up every week.

That was it for today of the meetings, no time for others because the off-ice started soon.

Not a big goal for the day, but I reached it, I got useful information about the players, and I got a great picture of the athletes goals and thoughts about their own performance. Based on these meeting, I will know better which player to demand more in which case, either off-ice or on-ice performance.

8.8.2019 Thursday

The long awaited day has finally come, time to go to take the bus, and travel through the ship to Umea, Sweden. The idea and goal of this whole trip is to get some games on the player's feet, find out ways how to get them together, but the biggest goal is to build team cohesion inside the team, it is like a team building for us. The goal for me is to try to keep myself being honest since it's a long trip, and the idea is not to make a different picture of myself than I am. The other goal is to make the players have trust in me by seeing and realizing that I am here to help them reach their best potential with the best of my abilities. I will implement this by trying to use the free time to have individual meetings, preparing and showing them video materials, and showing confidence on the bench.

Trip has been okay. There was a lot of room on the ship to "hang" so the players already went into smaller groups, this is something that we want to work on now during this trip, so we already made the step and texted to our team group to get together and play some cards. After that, we sat in a big circle, and everyone had to come up with a couple of sentences about himself and with one fun fact. It seemed like they enjoy each others company while interacting.

The ship was leaving early morning, and there is the first game already coming in the afternoon. Game is against the local team, Bjorkloven Umea. They play in one group of the highest Swedish U18 league. Further information that we know about them is that this is their first week on the ice, so they probably have only a couple of practices in their legs. For our team, this is the second week, and we already have one game behind, but this doesn't change anything on our goals for this weekend.

The game was a good level, intense ice hockey. We could experience how the Swedish players are able to skate and how skillful they are. The differences between the two country's ice hockey have shown, we played way more physically, made more attacks, and it was clearly visible that they are a little bit more skillful individually and they defend as a unit. We didn't come with our final team for the season, and we have a couple of players who came from the U18 Mestis level.

They are a little bit behind in terms of game speed, decision making, and fast skating. Basically, they are a little bit struggling to do everything at a higher speed than they used to. This is another thing that we have to consider, pay attention for, and work on it.

We lost the game, but we have the video material that we have to use to analyze and really go into the details and “get to know” our team.

In my perspective, for me, the speed is still so high that I really have to pay attention to the shifts and feedback.

9.8.2019 Friday

Second day in Sweden, the day started with morning walk and mobility session run by me. The idea of the walking was to start the day well on the fresh air and make them be together as much as they can so they hopefully don't interact only with their roommates. The mobility session was also organized so that in a circle, every player had to come up with one mobility move based on the exercises that I showed them already. With this, I tried to just stay in the background and let them interact.

The goal for the day is to build up some process with the team structure and make/encourage everyone to give and show their best in the game because it might be one of their few chances to show what they can.

The day started with reminding the players that even though we can have fun and enjoy the ride, we came here for the games, and we can't take the focus off from them. In the meeting, we showed some clips about the yesterday's game. We collected and also showed good and bad material from the essential game elements such as breakouts, forechecks, and regroupings. After the video meeting, I had a short presentation of the Growth Mindset. I used the Figure 7 principles as main objectives to illustrate the content.



Figure 7. A Growth Mindset Drives Motivation and Achievement (Dr. Dweck & al., 2007)

The game was against a well-known Swedish hockey academy, Modo hockey. It's an excellent feeling that I started to understand a lot of things in Finnish, especially stuff in ice hockey. This helps me with my personal development because I can steal some of the head coach's speeches, realize and learn new things even when he is giving feedback to one player based on his performance.

It was good to see that we are able to compete even against top teams of Sweden. Battling level, the work ethic was exceptional, players enjoyed the game. Their hockey culture was easily seen from the bench, when after a turnover, odd-man rush the whole bench was shouting "backchek-backcheck". They were well organized already now that it's just the first weeks for them also on the ice.

We could see some of the practiced elements in our game, but there is clearly a lot of things to teach them. Personally, it's easier now to give more and more feedback, but at the same time, I don't want to forward them unnecessary information. Most of the players at this level and age group are skillful enough that usually, the only thing I have to give them feedback is related to game elements and tactical details.

I think more or less, we reached our goal with the team. All of the boys were giving their best, they started skating, blocking shots, began to fight for each other. This is a good sign considering the future and good feeling as a coach.

10.8.2019 Saturday

The goal for the day is to be able to reach out and give individual feedback to each of my defensemen during the game.

Today the opponent is the same team we played against two days ago. The demand is still on the work ethic. We are going to play against teams which are similar level as these Swedish teams, so we already want to make sure and let the players know that our stone legs will be a skating, and hard-working team which is really hard to play against. That's what we want to represent during the season, especially in the regular season since we play against the big teams such as Jokerit or Karpat.

We are planning to start the season with a team system which emphasizes on breaking out from the defensive zone with long passes to stretch out the play, we are surely going to give hard fore-check by the first player, and we want to skate hard and work hard all game long. For this type of playing player's conditioning is crucial, I will serve a big role in this.

The morning routine was exactly the same as yesterday, morning walk, and breakfast, which was followed by a team meeting where we went through some video material. At this time, we decided to show only good things about their performance since we don't want them to lose the motivation before the upcoming game. We leave those clips for the beginning of the next week, and then they can recognize their mistakes and have a chance to work on them together with us coaches during the week.

The score in the end was not in our favor, but the outcome of the game shows improvements. Personally, I reached my goal, I managed to recognize different mistakes and different game situations to be able to give feedback to all of my defensemen.

Weekly analysis

The goal for the whole week was more or less achieved. Players got more game experience together, which is an excellent way to discover each other in a real game situation and to see their strengths and weaknesses. The main topic on the ice was still about conditioning in the mornings

and practicing the defensive zone defensive play in the afternoons. Personally, I fulfilled most of the goals I set for myself. I had successful preparations, fruitful meetings, and designed successful team building activities. The team itself it started to look better playing the game, players began to grow as a team. Quality practices served their purpose, and based on our and the sports managers' observations, the process is heading in the right direction.

Personally, at the moment, I feel like I'm living a dream. So far, it is confirmed that the decision I made to come and coach here was probably the best decision I made. It was part of my short-term goals to coach in a junior team in Finland in one of the highest levels first as an assistant coach to gain experience in this environment. I needed to be realistic to myself and admit that I am still very-very young for this profession, especially for this age group, but I felt like I can deal with the challenge and make this step. I am really thankful for the sports manager for trusting me and giving me a chance to be here. He helped me to reach my first big step in my career. The professionalism is seen every day. The schedule itself it's planned just like for the professionals in this sport. The dedicated, goal-oriented players make my everyday work more manageable. So far, I feel like the fact that I have 4-5 years of age difference with the players it's not a barrier, but it is a preference. I can talk on their language in a way that I know how is the life of a 16-17-year-old these days. They trust me as a person, but at the same time, they respect me as their coach.

With the first tournament process of the season, I already developed my organizational skills. The head coach gave me the task before the tournament to organize the player's schedule, including wake-up times, food times, and other activities. I had a quick meeting with the team captain before every day, where I considered his opinions, and together we came up with the final schedules. I wanted to involve him because he has the team's word and he knows what is deep inside the team.

I encountered a minor conflict with the head coach this week. On the Tuesday afternoon's practice, he came in late, and we didn't have good enough time to go through the practice plan. This already made me feel bad and made me think that this is not professional since we always have to be organized, and both of us have to know what the plan is on the ice and what is the next step. Players need to be observing that we both are well prepared, and we both know what we are doing. Otherwise, we can lose their trust. He was not so talkative during the whole session while I was trying to ask what will we do. Probably with native coaches this wouldn't be that big problem as it is for me, because they will understand everything when the head coach draws the drills on the boards, but not in my case. I was trying to hide my frustration in front of the players, but I was so anxious the whole session. After the practice, my first thing was to start a conversa-

tion with him. I spoke up my problems honestly to him and wanted to get answers. From his explanations, I found out that he did not do this for a purpose. He explained that he was late because he came up with a couple of new drills and new ways to teach, and he got caught up in focus on concentration not to fail himself that he forgave about me and about to share it with me too. He apologized and recommended me to demand these things forcefully next time so we can avoid these misunderstandings. I think I reacted well and handled this conflict well, and with good communication and honesty, I managed to get through it. After all, without conflicts, there is no change and improvement. A great quote that I can use here is "Change means movement. Movement friction. Only in the frictionless vacuum of a nonexistent abstract world can movement or change occur without the abrasive friction of conflict." (Alinsky, 2020)

3.5 Report week 5

12.8.2019 Monday

Third week on the ice. The goal for the day is to plan the week's on ice plans together with the head coach.

Based on the idea of what we follow, the main topic that we are going to cover during this week will be the defensive zone attacking play. We had some brainstorming about how to organize our team, what is the type of breakout which would fit best our team. We needed to consider multiple factors, most importantly, the skill level of our players. We used video material from the last weekend's games as a source. Those games were good to try different kinds of ways how to get out of the defensive. For our team, for now, pushing the pucks forward, trying to create odd-man rushes by stretching out the opponent's defense worked best. We have to be really realistic; we don't have that skillful players to be able to control the games in the league. We expect so that in most of the games, we need to focus on defending and trying to break up the opponents play and trying to build up things from that. After a lengthy discussion, we came up with the conclusion, and we planned the on-ice sessions for the week.

Ice session for today was the usual skating with skill development in the end. In the skill part of these sessions, we try to create a clinic type of practice. Guidelines and key points are usually given for the main topic, but the way of execution is open. Players at this age group have to be able to take their personal development to their own hands.

I can say I had a successful day. I managed to reach the goal. I had a successful, long meeting and discussion with the head coach, and we came up with the final conclusions, plans for the week.

13.8.2019 Tuesday

The goal for today is to execute the on-ice plan what we designed yesterday in the afternoon session.

Before we started the off-ice session, I got a request from one player if I could create a nutrition plan and help him what to shop. I thought that this affects the whole team, so I decided to have a nutrition presentation on Thursday.

Morning academy went as it should, I tried to check and have some discussions with all of my groups. In the afternoon, the off-ice session went based on the physical plan. We had maximum strength for the day. It was good to see that the players already made some good progress; most of the players perform the exercises correctly. Those who had mobility/flexibility issues have improved too. For them, it will take some more time, but we are working on it. Athletes were able to reach some personal records in the maximum strength. Always writing down their results helps me as a coach to monitor their performance process and, on the other hand, helps the players to see where they are and set some individual goals based on their previous results.

On the ice the main objective was the defensive zone attacking play, one part of the theory was already explained in the locker room, we just did a quick recap on the ice, so the athletes remember and we don't waste the ice time. It went pretty good; players were able to adjust to the key points given and for the whole idea of how we want break out from our own zone.

I can firmly say that the idea what we wanted to implement it truly fits the team, so the goal was reached, practice session went based on the plan. Even though our way of defending zone attacking play is not a complicated one, players really need to get repetitions to get used to it and be able to perform them in real game situations. Good start, we continue from here.

15.8.2019 Thursday

The goal for the day is to run the nutrition presentation, which I promised on Tuesday for the players. I really took my time and used the whole day yesterday since it was a free day to do some proper research and complete my base knowledge and underpin my ideas with a couple of

research materials. Nutrition is a really crucial factor when we talk about an athlete who wants to perform at high levels.

I asked the players to come in earlier to the rink so we would have enough time for the presentation, discussions, maybe some questions too, and we still could have enough time for a proper warm-up and off-ice session before we go on the ice.

The presentation went well, there was a lot of preparation and work behind it. I mentioned the proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, food supplements, and the importance of them. I made a couple of questions during the session, so I made them pay attention and think about the topic also. Then I came up with a slide with the effects of nutrition for the sport performance; here I wanted to underpin that how important it is for them to eat appropriately. Later on, I showed some pictures and ideas about concrete meals that they can make easily since most of the players live alone. In the end, I wanted to have something that they bring home after this session, so I prepared in advance a list of the foods they can buy in grocery shops. Subsections included good protein sources, good carbohydrates, good fats, vegetables, and fruits.

Players looked interested, and I saw on their eyes, and there is a couple of new information for them about this nutrition section. They were open; they asked questions and my opinions on different foods.

A successful day behind, I did reach my goals, and I'm satisfied with the preparation and execution of what I did today. I think I reached the primary objective too, the players now know really well what they need to eat. Now they just have to transfer this theory into real life and do their best to eat as a professional athlete should.

16.8.2019 Friday

Last day before the games. The goal for the day is obviously the game preparation, but we want to implement couple of team building games, exercises to the off-ice, and then to the end of the ice practice too.

We started the morning with the warm-up, which was held in the gymnastic hall. This was organized by me for a purpose; inside the hall, there is not that much space, no outside factors. Usually, we do the warm-ups in the big hall next to the stands, there are multiple factors that sometimes tend to take the player's attention, other people and athletes are walking through, and other

teams practices are running on the ice. In the gymnastic hall there was no one just the team and me. This forced them to concentrate more and to interact more with one another.

For today's warm-up and off-ice I was choosing the Reciprocal (C) teaching style (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002). This teaching style makes the players interact even more and to give feedback for each other based on the key points delivered by me. I implemented the fun part to the end of the session, I made them find pairs with similar weight. Then the game was wrestling on the floor. Obviously, the key points and rules were mentioned here, so we avoid any kind of injuries.

Players had fun, and they were so loud that the head coach came across too from the office because of their voice. On the ice, the game elements were practiced, but we interrupted the sessions with a couple of short, simple but competitive drills.

Overall, the day went successful, and goals were achieved, today we really worked on team building and really made the players excited about the upcoming two games tomorrow.

17.8.2019 Saturday

Massive day is coming for the players since we travel to Rauma where we play two games in one day. The goal for the day is to continue the progress of these pre-season games, to build up game by game our team structure and always to show improvements in our way of playing compared to the previous games.

Today's opponent is Rauman Lukko. We don't know the opponent since it's the first time the two teams meet, but this is not the most important thing at the moment. We need to concentrate on ourselves, and we need to grow as a team, that is why we play these games. We want to implement the things we practiced this week to the real game situation.

When the game started, we already saw that the opponent has a really simple breakout, so we quickly had to adjust our forecheck to be able to put hard pressure on them. The game was quite even; both teams had a couple of chances to score. Their goalie and defending were outstanding, and our attacking play is not at a sufficient level yet. The same thing applied when we had powerplay, they defended well and played aggressive when needed, but we were not able to create any offense. This is something that we really have to figure out, because right now we don't have the players with abilities to play powerplay and create scoring chances.

We lost both games, but we still managed to reach some of the goals. Although the goal of the day was just partly reached, players started to act as a team on the mental side, they began to encourage each other, started to fight as a team. Fight for the guy next to you was one of the objectives for today's games, and players made it. Another good learning experience and another great way for us coaches to see which areas we need to improve.

Weekly analysis

This week had both positive and negative aspects, but maybe a little bit more positive ones. If I consider the goals I set, most of them were reached or partly reached, but I did not have that challenging goals for this week. I personally use the ten practical goal setting guidelines from the book by Wilson & al.,(2008). I think I need to believe it as a progress where I need to set more and more challenging goals with the time passing. Team practices were more on the right side, the well-prepared practice plans served their purpose, and we worked on quality also.

The new thing for me this week was trying the reciprocal teaching style in one off-ice session. (Mosston & Ashworth, 2002) While I usually use command or guided discovery style, the reciprocal style was something new and something which I wanted to try if it has the effect that I want to reach using it. Like I mentioned on a particular day, the reason why I used was kind of a team-building purpose for the players. One of the behavioral objectives of the reciprocal teaching style is to expand socialization and interaction skills. I actively developed in applying and recognizing the differences between different teaching styles.

The second thing which I definitely developed this week is the presentation skills. The nutrition presentation which I did this week was successful, but there is a lot of stuff behind it. One's presentation achieves its desired outcome can be affected by the speaker's skills, so it's important to step in front of the audience with one's best foot forward. (Sarah Kessler) Preparation had different phases. Research from the topic had to be from reliable sources and needed a low to moderate level of knowledge to collect the information. The structure of the presentation had to be proper; also, I was planning to ask a lot of questions to include the players and make them think about the topic. Being prepared to answer questions plays a significant role in being creditable for the audience. (Sarah Kessler) I used mostly pictures on the presentation to illustrate the content. It took some practice until I learned at a good level the material and be able to deliver it verbally for the athletes.

3.6 Report week 6

19.8.2019 Monday

The order of the practices for this week changes a little bit since we have two games during the weekdays. This means our seasonal plan changes for the week, but the main focus will still be to step by step and game by game to build up our way of playing by implementing the tactical elements into the practices and games. We can't rush this thing since players need to get enough repetitions to be able to adjust to the new team structure that they are facing. For players who played in this organization in the past couple of years, it shouldn't be a big challenge, but for those who just came here, it might be hard to adjust. Players who are coming from a lower level where they played a big role, and they were in a winning team, it's a huge transition to our way of playing. First, because of the level and speed of this league, second because they need to learn to play in different roles and with different structures here.

The goal for this day is to move forward with the tactical elements and insert them into today's practice session. We can't demand it in the game tomorrow, since one practice is not enough to learn and make a habit from a whole new system.

The main focus, based on the plan, was again the defensive play, but now we moved on to the attacking zone. Our idea is to have a well-structured defensive play where every single player knows it's own role. Execution was okay, but it's clearly visible that a couple of our players have not much idea yet how to play in-game situation role three (defending the puck carrier) or role four (defending players without the puck). To be able to play in the league of the league, they really need to have an all-around game, which means we really have to focus on teaching them to play in each role.

Feeling today was not the best for the players since drills were not that intense; they were more about understanding the tactical part and then trying to perform it and to get the repetitions.

The goal for the day was reached in about a moderate level; athletes seemed to be understanding the theory behind our game and what do they have to do, they just had a little trouble to perform it. We have one more practice this week to have a chance to practice these things on Thursday since we have a game tomorrow and on Friday.

20.8.2019 Tuesday

Home game against Hermes today. Hermes is a team that plays in the league one lower than us (Mestis). It's part of the Vaasan Sportin Juniorit ry organizations cooperation clubs. It kind of serves as one of the farm teams for us too. If we might face a challenge with some players that they are not ready yet to play in our league and we don't want them to play in our direct second team which plays in the third-highest league, the club cooperation helps for these kinds of loans to happen.

Goal and the main objective for today is to refine the tactical elements which we already covered for the last time.

The level difference between the two teams was clearly visible on the game. We controlled most of the game, but there were still some mistakes. Mistakes which harder opponents punish for. Because of the level of the opponent, everyone wanted to prove today and show their skills and to score goals, and this occurred the mistakes which we made today. Major individual mistakes will close the doors in front of us in the league if we want to win some games. Game ended 10-1, we observed signs of the things we have been practicing, but overall it was not a good game if we consider our objectives. As coaches, we mentioned at the end of the game that we need to play as a team, and this part of the season is just about to build ourselves as a team, not just a group of guys. Next to this, we tried to explain the importance of these games, and what do we want to achieve with them. Nobody cares if you score four goals against a Mestis team in the pre-season if we can't make a good breakout as a unit from our own zone when the league games start.

I can't be too satisfied with the way we played today, as mentioned some signs were visible from the main objectives for this day, but it was not enough. The goal was not reached, but we have to move on and keep practicing our way of playing.

22.8.2019 Thursday

The goal for the day is to refine the tactical skills we adjusted on Monday practice. So still, the attacking zone defending play is the main focus in today's practice. The goal is to refine the things we have been practicing on Monday but with higher, real game-like speed.

Before the practice a player came to me, he wanted to talk. He said he doesn't feel his acceleration and first 2-3 strides of his skating explosive enough. Thus his reaction time to different game

situations and changes are not quick enough. I promised him that I would design a specific workout plan for him, which he has to do in plus, and I will follow it up and make adjustments, progression every week.

I started the off-ice, I sent them outside for a short jogging session. Then I run the warm-up. The feeling was excellent there as it usually is. I don't demand that strict silence during warm-ups, I let them feel free and interact while they are walking back to the line or between exercises. The only thing that I demand is to pay attention when I show and explain the exercises and focus while they are performing it. Players don't really have time to interact much since as soon as they arrive at the rink, they do everything with me and then going on the ice. We need them to interact, to build relations, to keep up a good team cohesion. This is why I let them to be more loose in this phase of our daily routine.

The ice practice was intense; players aware focused, they were eager to perform at their best. Today also the willingness was better too compared to Monday. Even though there were a lot of interruptions by us coaches, they didn't lose the intensity and their focus. They were continuing in the same way as they started. Players seemed to be more excited about the topic, they were asking questions, and they were listening to the feedback carefully. We didn't find out the reason why was this practice way better than the one on Monday, but one big possible cause could be that the players realized or started to realize that this is our last week of the pre-season, last week to get ready for the league in the terms we are covering in practice.

To cover it up, the level of the practice has increased compared to Monday. The goal was achieved, since the players were able to really perform the same things but in higher speed, higher intensity, and great focus.

23.8.2019 Friday

Away game against Porin Assat today. Team, which we had our first game against. The main objective for the day is to work hard throughout the whole game, 60 minutes. We need to be able to play 60-minute ice hockey if we want to win some games in the league. We are playing in a league where we give up for even half a period, and we lose that game. During the summer preparation, we put a big focus on the player's conditioning. We have almost one month behind on the ice, so there should be no excuses for giving 100% the whole game long.

We made an observation of the previous games that our start was not the best. Players were not ready to battle when the puck has been dropped. While we were trying to find the answers for it

with the head coach, he came up with the idea that it might be the warm-up. So far, players made their own warm-up on their own, without our supervision. We came up with a conclusion that I will run the players warm-up before today's game, and let's see if it has some impact on our start.

I didn't change on the structure of the warm-up. I kept the same principles in mind and built it up progressively. I didn't want to confuse the players and make them lose their concentration by coming up with new exercises. After we finished, I still gave them 5 minutes to focus and think of the game on their own and refine the work on the weak areas of their body. They had this same own time before too, but now I made sure that they are 100% ready and warmed up physically.

Start was surprisingly well, and we already got the message on our doubts. We will definitely start the season this way. Battling level was high; everyone pushed themselves to the limit and gave everything they had. It was good to see the things we have been practicing all month long and the progression that they made. The tactical elements got together, and we produced a well-structured game. Even though the score didn't show this effort, we reached the objectives of the day, and players can leave the rink with their head up since they battled with class all game long. Now we have only one last topic left from the tactical part which we will work on next week, and then the series starts at the weekend.

Weekly analysis

In this week, the team couldn't progress that much with the things we wanted since we had two games during the weekdays. On the other hand, if I consider the games, I can see progress. On Tuesday we didn't reach the main objectives, but on Friday with a couple of mistakes, we reached our team goal. After all, I can say that this week I could see improvements both in practices and games. The level of the practice has increased by Thursday, and the players were sticking more on the game objectives on Friday than on Monday.

The week offered new challenges and new learning possibilities for me. On the personal developmental side, I developed my tactical and sports specific knowledge. Encouraging, asking, and trying to share ideas with the head coach has helped me to improve my tactical skills this week. Figure 9 shows where the professional knowledge stands of a sports coaches practice. Core competencies shown in Figure 9 are the elements which I need to have and use on a daily basis as a sports coach.

The second aspect which I feel I developed is that I started to get more and more self-confident. Being able to give quality feedback, clear instructions, design well-organized sessions, and run

successful practices has showed me that I could trust myself. Being confident in front of the team makes no doubt for the players to trust me, to believe what I teach them will improve their skills.

One challenge that I faced the first time since I'm here is the language skills. Like I mentioned before, from my team, everyone understands and speaks English at least moderate but rather high level. From the staff, only the equipment manager can't speak English, so the interaction with him is way more less than with others. The thing that I observed was inside the staff in practices and game situations. I noted that even though the head coach's English skills are at high level, it is way more more comfortable for him to talk, share some quick ideas in his native language and make decisions without me. This was mostly happening in critical situations when decisions had to be made quickly. The reaction that I had to make was that I had to make myself more and more involved. Since my personality type is not intrusive, it was a big challenge for me to make these steps. I was asking more questions, and I was sharing more ideas and slow by slow I reached to get under the skin of the head coach and made him to interact with me more. I think I handled this challenge well so far, but this is a constant progress, I need to continue practicing it and also make the head coach more and more used to it.

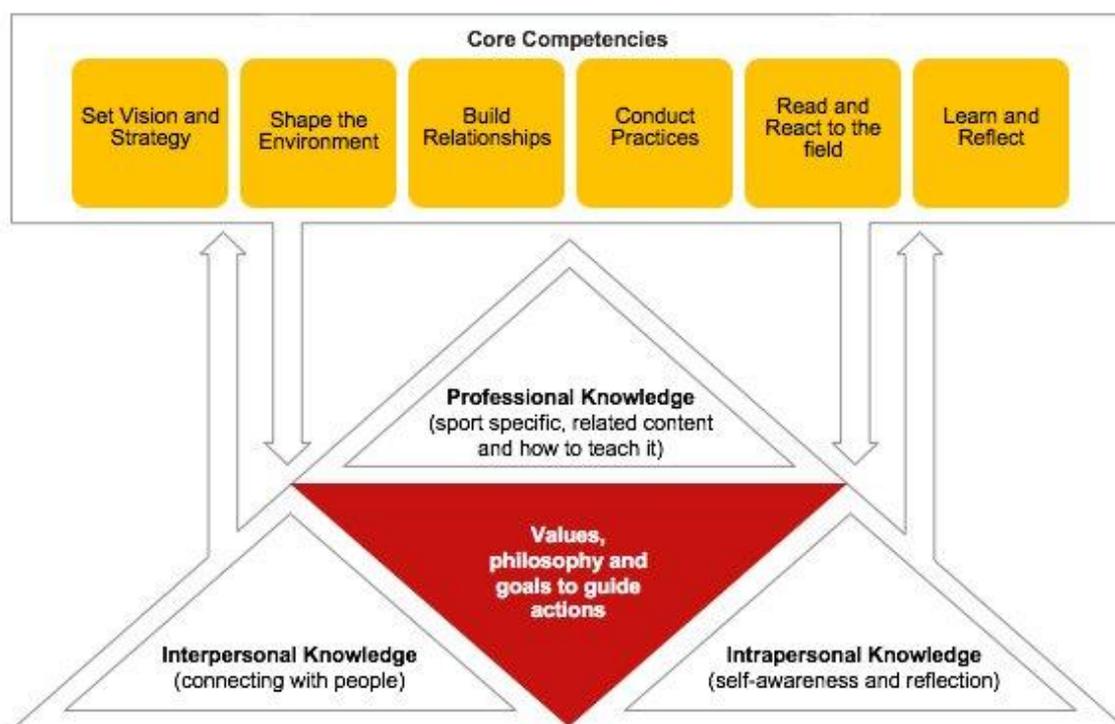


Figure 9. Core competencies and knowledge of sports coaching (Galatti, 2017)

3.7 Report week 7

26.8.2019 Monday

Today we focus on goal scoring on the ice since we had some trouble with scoring in the previous games against the harder opponents. Obviously, we want to move on with the tactical part too, but these Monday ice practices serve their own purposes also which goes more to the player development side. The goal is to use the skill part of the ice for scoring; we want to design and execute game-like scoring drills.

Today's practice was great; players did an excellent job. One of the objectives for the training was to get as many repetitions in the shooting drills as you can, give 100% focus on every single shot you make. Players had good focus, and they did an excellent job executing the drills. It's good to see that they are eager to develop, today we didn't even have to use our voice much as coaches to encourage them to do better. Today their mind was in the right place. This is something that we want to make it continuous. At this age group, we don't have too much chance to practice technical skills, but when we do, we really have to do everything at full speed.

Players at this level must have decent technical skills, which we only have to refine using drills where they have to implement those skills into high speed. In today's case shooting while skating is a big thing to work on for these athletes. They need to coordinate these two aspects to be able to create scoring chances from dangerous areas of the offensive zone.

As I mentioned, today's practice was a success, the goal was definitely achieved. We managed to go through all the drills which we planned, and the execution by the players was excellent. Now we just have to continue this process to reach the maximal potential of the players in terms of skills too.

27.8.2019 Tuesday

Today we move on to the last phase of the tactical plan we designed and wanted for the pre-season but still implementing couple drills from the previous one. Attacking zone attacking play is the main topic, and the goal is to reach the learning objectives with the players. For today, the afternoon's ice practice will not be about intensity, more about understanding the ways how we want to play, and performing it as a unit in about moderate speed levels. Huge focus today on feedback and theory.

The morning academy was not the best, some of the players were arriving 15 minutes late, and they didn't even feel that they are in a hurry. The players always know in advance what do they have to do in these Tuesday mornings since I always remind them by texting. This doesn't mean that they can come into the rink whenever they want. I took some time to have a short meeting with them and explained the importance of being reliable as a human being and told them that even if they have classes later in the morning, they need to text me about it and ask if they can come later. If I dedicate my time and wake up early in the morning, we need to respect each other as much that we remind each other about any possible changes. After the meeting, it was hard to hide my emotions, but if someone, the coach, has to be able to control himself and show an example in these situations. Even though my mood was low, I gave them feedback and tried to push them to work hard.

The afternoon was a disaster too. I think it was just one of those days. The thing that we told them that understanding the key points and trying to implement them is more important than the speed which was supposed to be moderate, confused the players. They used this information as an excuse. They lost their concentration and not that they didn't get the points; they couldn't even perform the simple exercises where the game elements were the main thing. After a while, we said that this is just a waste of time and decided to make them skate a little bit. Now, this is not something that we find as our method, but in today's case, we found this as an only option to wake them up and make them realize the importance of these practices.

Couldn't be satisfied with the whole day at all. It was awful, from the beginning in the morning until the really end of the afternoon's ice session. Goals were not achieved at any point, but now we got to know our team better, and in the future, we know how to handle these situations and how to forward certain messages before the ice practices.

29.8.2019 Thursday

Interesting day ahead. Last night I was just about to finish my plan for today what we will do off the ice together with my suggestions for the ice. Always having a concrete plan in front of me for the upcoming weeks helps me to prepare for every single practice on the ice, even though I'm not the one who is running most of these sessions. I learned the physical, psychological, leadership, and organizational skills in my university, but gaining experience in everyday hockey coaching is part of my journey. Preparing for every practice helps me even to study and to keep up with the things we are going to do. Because I don't have that much experience, for me, it's all about learning and preparation.

When I finished the plan just got the call late night from my boss, the sports manager that would be able to run the U16 team's ice session in the morning since their coach is sick and the sports manager is away. I answered sure, and I was happy for this challenge. So the goal for today apparently totally changed, but the new goal is to run a well-organized, high-intensity practice and make the players excited. I received the information from the sports manager about what topic they wanted to cover this morning and to make it entertaining since they have a not too successful tournament behind.

The practice went well, and I think the players got excited when they saw me, they needed some new impressions. They were working hard, and with the fun drills which I implemented, they had fun too. We were doing high-intensity drills, which were followed by reaction games.

The goal of the day was fulfilled. It was a great feeling to run a successful practice to a different team too. I reached the objectives and the tasks which the sports manager forwarded me. Today I feel like I put a great piece to my own development as a coach.

30.8.2019 Friday

Today's goal is definitely the game preparation and implementing exciting drills to make the athletes feel excited for our first league game trip in the season. I was not present, but based on the feedback from the head coach, the practice yesterday didn't go too well. The plan for the two ice practices of the day is to refine and go through all the zones tactical part which we covered, with at least one drill from each topic, then in the afternoon, we go through a thing like how do we play after faceoffs in both zones and the special units too.

Morning off-ice was performed with good focus by the players. I didn't plan a too hard speed workout, but when they were in the middle of each drill, they performed well. We did small hurdle jumps and quick feet moves. In these kinds of exercises, it's easy to see if they concentrate well or not, because if they don't, they screw up the whole setup of the hurdles. Then stepping on the ice, the overall team feeling seemed to be good. The atmosphere usually is. It shows that the players can't wait to step on the ice every single day. Then the level of performing of the ice has shown improvements. Now the drills were all familiar for the players, and it seems like they kind of got used to the things we were covering. Also, the feedbacks today were mostly about demanding the speed and doing everything while skating fast. There haven't been any bad feedback towards the players. To the end of the practice, based on our plan, we put some short, exciting competitions to make them excited and to encourage our team culture, which is to have fun while performing at your best.

After the ice, in the cool-down sessions, I like to be close to the players, to interact with them, and to show them that I care. Based on these kinds of interactions I get a lot of important messages, I always know how does each player feel, who feels tired, who feels at their best. These are important information when it comes to preparing for a game.

Goal of the day was achieved. I feel satisfied that we were able to end this week well. Even though the beginning of the week was not to good, the environment and the performance felt perfect today. Tomorrow it's time to leave to Helsinki and start our first game trip.

31.8.2019 Saturday

First game of the series against Espoo Blues. The goal for the day is to have a big battle and win the game. We kind of know the opponent's way of playing since they had a game already yesterday, which we downloaded and analyzed their breakouts, forechecks, players, to take care of, their powerplay and we also checked how do they play in a penalty kill. There shouldn't be significant changes in their game from one day to another, so we kind of know what to expect and will let the players know too.

Pre-game meeting was successful, and we managed to pump up the players and get them ready as tactically as mentally for the game. To get them ready physically, too, based on our decision from the last game's successful start, I run the warm-up for the players.

Game was really even; both teams had good straight attacks, it was kind of an end to end period. After the first, we were down by one, but we tried our best to encourage the players to continue battling. On the second, we tied the game to 1-1, but after a while, we got a little bit tired and started taking penalties. We managed to defend well in the penalty kill, but the sound of the horn was really a help for us. There we got some time to recover and get ready for the last stretch, which we expected to be the hardest one. Players have been told to give everything they have and continue battling because we can win this game. It seems like they got the message because we started the third period with a goal. After a couple of minutes, our turn came for the powerplay. We used the chance and scored our third goal. This was the time when we really had to intervene and tell the players that the game is in our hands, it's up to us if we keep it or let it go. Opponent managed to score again, and then both teams started stressing and losing focus. This was when big mistakes were happening, both sides got penalties, but none of us was able to score. At the last minute we played six against 4, they pulled the goalie. Players were able to manage the stress and battled until the last second.

After all, we can be really proud of our team of not losing their mind and managed to battle all the way. The goal was reached; we made a great start of the series. There were a lot of major mistakes made by both teams, but we covered it with focus and hard work. I hope that this game will have a good impact on the upcoming games too and makes the players realize that we can be a competitive team against anyone.

1.9.2019 Sunday

Second game of the way trip, game against Kiekko Vantaa. Based on the video analysis, a really strong team which can make big surprises during the season. The goal for the day is to see what progress did we make during the pre-season and see it was a waste of time and energy, or the players remained with something, they got something out of it. We really expect a good skating, well-conditioned team with hard pressure and a great work ethic.

Today's game was not really what we expected; our defending was horrible. We didn't take care of the middle as we should, so they had a lot of chances from dangerous zones of the ice. Their way of playing was just how we expected, we couldn't really keep up with their skating, and we lost almost 90% of the one on one situations. We didn't play disciplined, got a lot of penalty minutes. Our team captain got a 5+20 penalty, which had a harmful impact on the other players too. We had a meeting with him afterward, but he recognized that he made a big mistake what he can't afford in his position, and he realized the deepness of the things. Personally, I'm still struggling a little bit to keep up with the speed of the league, but I already feel improvements.

We lost this game 6-3, our player of the game was definitely our goalie. He made 40 saves and did everything we expected him.

In the post-game meeting, we mentioned our team values to the players where it says exactly the opposite things we did today on the game. They were the authors of the values, and now they didn't stick to it. Really tried to make each player think deep inside himself about today's effort and about did they put 100%. We had a good win yesterday, but today we played in exactly the opposite way. I am really disappointed for today, goals were not achieved, but we need to move on, put the mental side in the right place and to start working on our weaknesses because the games will come in a really fast pace and if we are not ready we are going to struggle the whole season long.

Weekly analysis

Another week with good and bad aspects and challenges which helped my individual development as a coach. The same thing applies to our first two games also, the first one was good, the second one was a bad game. The process is going forward, and I believe that the things that we teach on the ice are correct, we just have to be more consistent in the future.

Observations I made this week were about the player's behavior when I let them do the warm-up or the actual workout by themselves. These situations rarely happen, but this week I did. The first reason was to see how they react when they have only the guidelines and timetable set, second because I wanted to continue my individual meetings with the players. I asked the head coach to let them do their thing but to check up on them to see how they work alone. The feedback that I received from the head coach was not too positive. During the warm-up, players were mostly sitting on the stands, talking, and making only the moves which are comfortable. Then on the speed workout, which I set the guidelines was not made at full effort based on the observations of the head coach. Obviously, there are always exceptions; there is a couple of athletes who always work hard. This created the first challenge for this week what I had to solve in the best way possible. My conclusion for this issue was that I realized that most of the players are not mature enough to realize what it takes to become a professional athlete. The reaction I made for this situation was that I run an emergency meeting. I came up hard, questioned them, and tried to explain how important it is becoming to be able to work hard on their own at this age. This age group is really critical, and if they don't work hard now every single day, they will drop off. The decision that I made after today's happenings was that I would stay with the command, guided discovery, or reciprocal teaching style, and I never let them do any off-ice session without keeping my eyes on them. Today's issue and my reaction to it showed me that I am growing into a good leader, and I started to learn how to handle these kinds of situations in the best way possible.

The second challenge was on Thursday when I had to back up the U16 coach in the morning practice. This situation has taught me how it is actually working in real life working environment. I believe that these situations will happen a lot of times in my future career, and I have to get used to it how to handle and make the best out of it. I think I managed to adapt well to the situation and managed to run a successful practice for the younger team. High-performing coaches are continually making decisions, which later they put in action in order to stimulate, challenge, and to ease the meaningful development of the participants towards the goals which are identified. (Stafford, 2011)

3.8 Report week 8

30.9.2019 Monday

Goal for today is to organize a meeting with our sports manager and discuss with him about my coaching so far and my future development. He is following the happenings in and around our team intensively, he watches our practices, games and he is in daily contact with the head coach who provides information about the players, feeling inside our team, other coaches duties and so on.

Decent weekend behind. We made 5 points in two games. Beating Assat on Saturday was a big thing for us and was kind of a good revenge after losing both games against them in the pre-season. Beating HPK on Sunday only in overtime was a little bit of a disappointment and made a little bad taste in our mouth on the long way back home.

Meeting with the sports manager was positive; he gave me some good ideas on how to do my responsibilities at my best. He gave feedback on the on-ice session run by me. He shared his ideas on how to use the short ice time properly with good enough feedback and instructions provided for the players. He encouraged me to be brave in organizing, giving duties for my “assistants” while I am in charge of the practice. He observed that because of my age, I’m not brave enough to take the lead on my colleagues when I have to. He was asking about probably one of my biggest challenges this season and did I manage to overcome it. This challenge was to build authority in the eyes of my players since first of all I am only 4-5 years older than them, second I am Hungarian, and this thing might cause confusion in their head if I have good enough knowledge about the sport as a Finnish person has, the third thing is that I didn’t have a big player past which would automatically build my authority. I answered that I feel like I overcome already this challenge during the summer, where with the help of my athleticism and knowledge about the off-ice practices, I was able first to explain clearly, then to show them the proper execution of the exercises, drills. I made them believe in me by showing good interest in their performance and development, the preparation what I did for every single session and the interactions what I made with them as a normal human being. When the on-ice practices has started with the final team, I had to go over the same process with the players to prove them I am capable of helping them reach their maximal performance. This was a little bit harder task for me since, in most of the ice practices I my responsibility is just to assist the head coach. From this, I tried to bring out the maximum and do the “background” things good as I can by encouraging the players and reminding them to basic key points such as skating during a drill. Next to this, I tried to observe and really go into the details of each drill so I could provide something new for them with

my feedback. A big chance for me to build authority in sports specific knowledge was when I run practices.

The atmosphere inside the team feels good. For us coaches it's really important to create an atmosphere where the players are happy to come every single day. It's easier for the athletes to go to a place where they have fun, and they can perform and work hard while they enjoy the ride. Ice practice of the day was followed by our weekly plan, which we have skating and skill to be as main topics for almost every Monday. These practices are run by me. Before the ice, I reminded the players that from now on, just try to look forward, work hard, and enjoy it.

To wrap up the day, meeting with the sports manager has given me a lot of good new ideas, and I'm happy about the positive feedback what he gave and that he understands my point, understands that this is a process for me and he helps for me reaching my goals. Receiving the information now, I just have to implement these things into my real-life coaching.

1.10.2019 Tuesday

Academy starts today, this is going to be held every Tuesday morning, and it's part of the player's school. Goals for today are to get to meet the players who are classified to my groups and explain to them the plans I designed to maximize their weaknesses. Another goal is to make a good intensity on-ice practice in the afternoon.

Players are split into groups based on their most significant weaknesses. Tests were already made in August for each age group, which is involved in this academy (U15-U20). Some groups go on the ice for skating technique, shooting, or power skating. I'm personally in charge of some of the off-ice groups, which are speed, endurance. Based on their test results, I designed long-term physical development plans for each of my groups.

The morning started with a little bit of a mess; it took some time until each player found which coach's group is he/she in. This took a short time, but then I met my groups, I wanted to take 10 minutes with each of my group to describe and explain what we are going to do and how so until that I sent all the other groups for a little jogging and set a time in advance for the next group I want to talk.

Players looked interested in working on their weaknesses, all listened carefully and asked questions. Since there is only one topic/group to work on and only one day per week, my plans are really simple but progressive.

Hypertrophy workout went pretty well in the afternoon, players were working hard, but I still had to encourage them some times to increase the weight or just to work harder. On the ice practice, the main topic was battling. Simple small area games were practiced with short shifts but high demand for fighting hard and winning the battles. The intensity was okay but same thing as in the off-ice we could clearly observe that our leading players are practicing with the U20 team today. Especially in these type of practices we really need those players to push and encourage the others to go forward and work harder and harder.

At the end of the day, I managed to reach only one part of my goals. I went through my academy plans with each group, and I feel like they got the point, now they know exactly what they are going to do and why, now they just have to work hard and make some progress in their work. I did not reach my second goal since the ice practice was not exactly what I expected; players with leadership skills are playing a big role in our team, and we definitely missed them. The conclusion from this is that if these situations happens again, we need to encourage the non-leader players more to take the role and help each other pushing the limits.

3.10.2019 Thursday

The goal for today is to prepare video material for the last weekend's fourth line, give them feedback about their performance, and explain what do we expect from them in the future.

The fourth line in the last weekend had a big role in the team. They were able to defend well, keep the score, and to put hard pressure to the opponent. This is a little bit of a non-usual case, but all three players in this unit are leaders inside the team, one of them being the actual team captain. All three players are strong characters, and maybe this is one reason that this role on the ice matches them. They always give 100% and try to put everything on the ice that they have.

The purpose of organizing the video meeting with them was to show them positive feedback about their weekend performance, and with this making them understand that for them, it doesn't mean that they played bad if they have 0+0 after the game. I mentioned that if there is anything that they want to consider from their stats is their +/- since their number one role is to defend well. I also tried to encourage them to keep the hard-working culture going and bring the other players with themselves on the hard-working road. After this period of time since the season started, we are able to see a more clear picture of which players in what roles we are going to use. In the videos that we showed, the focus was on their defensive play, their hard forecheck, and sometimes even when they just had to clear the zone smartly after a hard shift by the opponent.

In the video meetings, my objective is to make the players also think and not just to perform. I perform this by asking them questions and listening to their opinions too in a given game situation. Trying to make game sense for the players means not only explaining to them what to do better, they need to be way more involved in this process.

I think I reached my goal for the day; players went off the office with understanding their situation, and based on their feedback, positive feedback helps them to get motivation and helps them to keep working hard.

4.10.2019 Friday

Last morning practice before a hard weekend. Since we have a lot of players to choose the lineup from, we always consider the previous games and their weekly performance to create the roster for the upcoming days. Because of this, we always have a couple of players who are without a game at the weekend. The goal is to have a good game preparation practice with the final lineup and to pay attention and have a good on and off-ice practice with the athletes who didn't make the team.

Since we had a tough week on and off the ice and considering the hard weekend ahead, we decided to keep the morning ice only and leave the guys some free time in the afternoon to be able to rest before the weekend.

Multiple tasks to do today at the same time where I need some organizational skills which I gained during my studies. I forwarded the schedule for both groups last night and prepared the practice plans. The first group came earlier, so I was able to run warm-up for them and give instructions about their workout before the second group arrives. It went well, and I now had a chance to show them some special moves for mobility and some good dynamic stretches, which takes more time, and I can't really implement it when the full team is practicing. After that, I showed the moves and gave the instructions for their workout. At this time, the weekend's lineup arrived, so I had to take my notes and run another variation of warm-up which was followed by a not too heavy speed and agility workout which I gave the instructions together with the plan to our goalie coach since I had to go on the ice with the first group. We were using the small hurdles to do some single leg jumps over and some short sprints with full recovery.

For the ice practice, I was preparing a skating workout with the resistance shadow fixed on their waist. I made it quite heavy for the purpose of on-ice conditioning. Players did a good job pushing their limits and realizing by themselves that they really need to work hard if they want to keep up

with the other players and make the lineup for the upcoming games. This took 30 minutes, and right away, the team came, at this time we didn't have time to go through the practice plan with the head coach, but we usually do the same drills for game preparation, so it was enough to just mention in words which drill is the upcoming. In these situations, when the head coach is explaining the drills and key points, my responsibility is to "translate" it to our import players and make the information go through. When I'm taking part in giving feedback for a drill, they are in a lucky situation since I do it in English. When the head coach tells the feedback only, I try my best and use my language skills to understand his points and translate it for the players.

The feeling was great on the ice. We usually implement some short fun drills too in the game preparation practice such as 1vs1 competitions to make a good environment and to build on team cohesion. Drills went well; passes were hard on blade, skating level was full speed. Also, the powerplay went well; units were able to score some goals.

I think the goals that I set for today were realistic, and I reached them all. Both groups were working hard and having fun, and I was able to organize and design the practices so that I didn't have any difficulties. Skills of planning and organizing were also gained during my studies in Vierumäki. When these two skills are combined, everything is under control, and you avoid chaos when running a practice.

5.10.2019 Saturday

Home game against Tappara today. Personal goal for the day is to keep the bench management under control, make the shifts going smooth while considering the flow of the game. The goal for team level is to battle hard and give everything that you have on the ice. Let's see what is that enough for.

Stepping in to the locker room, the feeling was not really what we expected. Players seemed to be unfocused and felt like they gave up this game already in their heads. The head coach's speech was on point, explained that the number one thing that we demand today is hard work. We tried to make the players excited about the game, tried to share positive energy, they showed some signs of that, but it didn't look honest. During the game, feedbacks were hard. Coaching wise, we tried everything, but it just didn't work that day. During the intermissions, we were looking for answers with the team staff. Stepping into the locker room, we had a funeral feeling. The battling level was way too low for what we expected. We spent most of the game in our end, our defensive game was not going well, our goalie received a lot of shots, but thankfully he did everything that he could.

The game ended 1-7 for the opponent. In the locker room, we tried to explain the thing that you get what you give. They didn't give their best, they didn't work hard in this game, and the final score shows that very well. Now it's time for the players to make some conclusions on their own from this game and to start focusing on tomorrow since we are going to have an at least as a good opponent as today's Tappara.

Personally, I didn't really reach my goal. Forward units were staying on ice too much; they were mostly gliding instead of giving full effort. Mixing up the lines didn't help much either. I tried everything to be able to control the game and encourage the players to work hard, but I was just a day where nothing worked out. Time to analyze the game using video material, move on, and focus on the tomorrow's game.

6.10.2019 Sunday

Second home game in the weekend, today against KalPa. Goal for today is to encourage the players to give 100% and correct yesterday's work ethic since we don't want yesterday's game feeling to be a habit in the future.

Way better feeling in the locker room than yesterday. Even though the feeling was good, the head coach had a great, motivating game speech before the game started. Guys were encouraging each other from the bench, but the readiness to battle hard was still lacking. It felt like they were ready mentally today but not physically. We were not competitive enough, but still, we defended well the middle, so the score was 1-1 after the first period. The second period we came out stronger, started to battle, started to win some 1on1's but then we received a goal from an odd-man rush which broke again this work which we started. It broke so badly that after a couple of minutes, we had to get a time out and come up hard to the players and trying to make them realize that we have half of the game left; it's 1-2, and nothing is lost yet. The third period was quite even, and the game was going on end to end. They made mistakes, and we made mistakes too. They had a lot of shots on our net, but most of them were from not dangerous zones. Then ten minutes before the end, they scored their third, which really closed to doors in the player's mind to get out of this. Two minutes before the end, we took our goalie off, but there was almost no point in doing it since the players have already given up this game in their heads.

Overall, it was a bad day and a bad weekend, didn't reach the team goal of the day. We had a couple of good moments in today's game when we played ice hockey and worked hard, but this is not enough. We have to find some ways to win these games and really put the player's mindset

to place. Hard-working and battling is probably our only way to win these games, but if we gave these things up, we have no chance against teams as we played against today.

Weekly analysis

Long week behind with lots of happenings. Now I can say that we got into a stage where the players know our teaching methods; they know what to expect in the practice sessions. Thanks to the preparation, we don't spend time organizing during the practices. Without planning, coaches tend to spend too much time organizing and making decisions about what to do during the training. (Crisfield, 2003) We always try to focus on planning quality practices and use the short ice times as useful as we can. It was seen that if coaches spend a lot of time organizing during a particular session, the players have less time to perform the activities, which leads to less quality practice time. (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011)

Even though there were a lot of happenings, I didn't face any special cases or conflicts this week.

Creating the environment inside the team was not that big challenge as I expected, almost all the players are open, and they pay respect towards each other. It's not easy to define a successful learning environment, but it is the coaches' responsibility to create an encouraging environment that gives the opportunity for the athletes for optimal learning. (Kidman & Hanrahan, 2011) One of our main values is to create an environment for the athletes what they enjoy being at, and they are performing while having fun. Practice sessions and other activities are designed based on this value of ours. These athletes dedicate almost all of their daily time for this sport, and if the ice rink is a place where they don't come with a good feeling, it's really hard for them to stay motivated, perform and work hard every day.

There is maybe one thing that needs to be mentioned as a small challenge for me this week. The situation was on Friday when I had to run a different off-ice practice for the players who did not make the lineup for the weekend. In those kinds of practices, the environment is way more different. I really had to pay attention to how do I approach them, I didn't want them to feel that they are not handled equally. I tried to start conversations with them, tried to create a good environment. I really tried my best to provide valuable feedback on their performance and to encourage them to perform better. The competitive level inside the team is high; if an athlete doesn't perform at his best, he might get out from the lineup quickly. They demand perfection from themselves, and it is really hard to accept when they hear the final roster. My job as a coach is to encourage them to perform better in the next week so they can reach their objectives. I need to help them to set realistic individual goals. I think I reacted and handled the situation well, I had a good impact

on them, and they did the workout at their best, now they just have to set their mindset, set new goals and keep going towards them.

3.9 Report week 9

7.10.2019 Monday

The goal for today is to have a fun off- and on-ice session after the bad weekend. As described already, games didn't go too well, and the players look disappointed more than angry. We don't want the players to lose their motivation, belief, so we design fun off-ice and on-ice sessions with a lot of competition included.

This week is also kind of a recovery week for the players. After each four-block period, I planned one recovery week, which still includes all the off- ice sessions but with way different topics. The main focus of these weeks is prehab training, injury prevention, and mobility. Important to mention that ice topics are staying the same with similar but more competitive and fun practices. Players need this week so that they can start the four-week long-term physical plan again without fatigue. While they are in their four-week block, it's easier for them to work hard and push everything they have if they know that there is a recovery week coming soon instead of just expecting that they start the first week right away.

Warm-up was with some fun elements; competitive high intensity game was implemented. Players had fun and competed hard to win. These games help the players to give full effort while performing the game. On the ice, we started with hard skating for 20 minutes without the puck, then we just wanted to focus more on skill, so we divided the defensemen and forwards and run specific, short but game-like drills. I took the defensemen, and the head coach took the forwards. Another advice from Kari Savolainen, which I recognized here, was to prepare a couple of simple game-like drills before the season for the defensemen, which I can always take out from my pocket. Keeping the same basic drills with demanding more and more technical and tactical details will lead to the development of the players.

At the end of the practice, we organized a fun scoring competition; the loser team had to collect the pucks.

I feel like I reached the goal of the day; there were no complications during the sessions. Players seemed to be having fun, but at the same time, they were focused and worked hard in the skating session and on improving their skills.

8.10.2019 Tuesday

The goal for the day is to monitor my group's performance so far in the Tuesday morning academy.

Sometimes stopping the process and monitoring the player's performance is indispensable. Since I have multiple groups to be in charge of, I gave a mobility/flexibility workout for each group for the day and set a time for all in which time they have to come and talk with me.

In the discussions, I asked all the different groups how do they feel, do they feel improvements in their on-ice performance since they are doing it.

From the endurance group, which mostly stands from U20 players, I got really good feedback that they lost some weight already, and they are not getting that tired early in the game or practice. They will continue doing the same workout what they did so far but always increasing the number of sets in every four weeks.

The other endurance group, which is mostly U15 and U16 players were choosing running instead of cycling; they always go outside, so I'm not really able to pay attention to them. This is why I set a rule that always after their workout, they need to find me or text me about how did they feel and how did the session go. I decided to join them next Tuesday morning and do the whole session with them, so they feel also that I care about them too and help their performance.

The third group of mine is the speed group. This is the group that I spent most of the time since they are mostly U16 and U18 players, and they do more specific workout than the others because of the topic of the group which they are. I spent less time with these players with discussions since I see their progress. They always provide me feedback and tell them how they feel during the progress. I trust more the U20 players that they work hard since they are mature enough to understand what hard work takes.

The afternoon off-ice practice topic was core with weights. I planned some shooting specific and core stability exercises with moderate load. Ice practice was quite good; we did team structure drills. Players looked pretty sharp today, right intensity, good concentration, hard work, and good finishing (scoring) was there today.

I feel like I managed to fulfill the goal of the day by having a successful meeting with my academy groups. The conclusion from that is that the process works so far and if we keep progressing in the same way that leads to really work up the player's weaknesses in the long run. Since we have this academy only once a week, the training plan what I designed might be a little bit dull for the players since we can't build progress if we always alternate the workouts/exercises. This is why I decided to insert some challenging mobility sessions for every second week to cause them some excitement and competition.

10.10.2019 Thursday

On-ice practice run by me today. The head coach is not coming on the ice; he is only running off-ice strength workout for two players who really lack of strength at the moment. We decided that it's more clever if they use this morning to work on their weakness since we will have normal team practice in the afternoon too. Great way to gain experience while being all alone in charge. The main topic is reactive games. The goal is now to show them something new, make them some new impact.

A couple of players are sick, and couple went to practice with the U20, so we have the best players from the U16 team present too. Drills were entirely new, and it really demanded focus and effort from the player's side to be able to adjust to new things in that early morning. The plan was to run mostly games, which we focus on reacting to the changes in the game situation roles. Players were not focused at all for some reason. I had to interrupt the practice a handful of times. U16 players were probably the best on the ice since they wanted to show and prove that they are able to battle against the older athletes do, and they did. I feel like one of the effects of today's bad performance on the ice was that the leading players were missing because of sickness and practicing with the U20. They are the ones who are having a big role in pushing the other forward and paying a big role inside the team in terms of team cohesion and winning culture.

Afternoon ice was a little bit better, but still way far from good. When it came to making the lines for the weekend, we had a little challenge too since four of our players plus one goalie are sick. We decided not to make the lines yet and wait for tomorrow and let's see how players feel since there is two or three of them who have been sick the whole week so they might be able to come back. We are talking about key players here.

I did not reach my goal of the day. Maybe one of the reasons was me, I really tried to come up with something unique, and it might be turned off too fancy considering the drills that I used. I made sure to prepare really well for this practice, but unfortunately, players cut these plans off.

Players have one more chance before the weekend's games to be concentrated and hit the weekend with good feeling behind.

11.10.2019 Friday

Last day before gameday. Situation is still unsure because of the sick players, the miss of those players has an impact on the whole team environment, but we can't afford to have the same mindset a non-focus as they had yesterday. If they are not recovering until the afternoon, we have to find out the final lines and special units for the weekend and practice like that in the afternoon. The goal for the day is to get these players excited and make them compete in the morning ice. This is why we came up with high-intensity flow drills and some battles in the end.

Off-ice was just about some quick feet work using ladders and the small hurdles to get their feet moving. On the ice intensity was okay, the battle was really good, we had a real competitive environment. Two players even got into a fight during the battle. Emotions are part of this sport, and sometimes it's hard to handle them for the players, especially in this age group where they are in the late adolescence phase. We let them deduce their anger all the way until they fell on the ice, then we stepped in and interrupted the fight. This was the first time that something like this happens, but I think we managed the situation well as coaches. After the session, we went to the locker room and asked both players is everything fine, and they were just laughing and said sure. It seems like these boys are mature enough, and they understand that what happens on the ice stays on the ice in this sport, and they don't continue this situation in any way.

After the practice, we had a discussion about this with the head coach; we agreed that both of us made a good decision, and if things like this happen in the future we will process in the same way. If the players fight like real man, face to face, and they avoid "cheap shots," we let them do it, as soon as they start using dirty moves, we interact right away. I enjoyed the way how other players handled this situation too, they were hitting the ice, and they didn't cause any bad feeling, the understand really well that this is part of the sport.

Before we started the afternoon's practice, the head coach informed me that we have a total of seven players who are sick and not able to play at the weekend. This meant that we need to use the whole roster what we have, and we are still going to have only six defensemen and eleven forwards. We decided to keep the off-ice light and the on-ice practice only about thirty minutes. Off-ice main topic was joint mobilization, and some improved dynamic stretches, which was followed by a couple of quick feet stair runs to get them ready for the ice. On the ice, we only had a continuous full ice drill with fast-paced skating, passing, and scoring, and then we used about 10

minutes for the special units. This part was a little bit challenging since almost all the units stood from new players in this role. We took some time to explain everyone's role, positioning, and some things to consider.

Overall, the team managed to come out from the deepness of yesterday and had a good intensity practice in the morning with great feeling and a good environment, so I can say we reached the team goal for the day. The afternoon was a little bit more challenging since it was supposed to be a game preparation practice, but I think we made the best out of the situation.

12.10.2019 Saturday

Home game against Porin Assat today. Team, which we already know from the pre-season and from the game we played against them already in the season. We have a quite good experience from the last game since we managed to beat them 3-5 in a really hard game but where our players showed probably one of the biggest willingness and battle so far in the season. Surely Assat wants to give a revenge for the last game, so they are surely preparing hard.

Team managers facial expressions said a lot when he inserted our lineup to the webpage of the game. This is what we got today; we need to bring the most out of this. The main goal of the day is more mental, objectives for today's game is for every single player to get ready in the head, get ready as a team when the puck drops and work until the last second of the game. Obviously, game elements were mentioned, but the mental is the main thing today, that will bring the game with itself if the mind is in the right place.

When we arrived at the rink, we named new leader players inside the team and had a short meeting with them. We explained their roles and responsibilities for this day. The head coach had a good pump pre-game speech in the locker room, and they reacted well. I secretly checked their off-ice warm-up to see how they look, they were surprisingly sharp, and they all looked focused on their own. When the puck dropped, players were ready. We won the first period with one goal. In the second period, the opponent came out hard too, and the game was really even. There was one long period where we were pressuring really hard, played in their zone, I put back our first line, and we continued that, we had a couple of great chances, but we just couldn't score. The players got tired. The thing that I was worried about, it happened at the end of the second period. In the last three minutes, we received two goals. Players couldn't live with the scoring chances, and they got tired when it came to defending. These players who played big roles today, they are not used to this high level of pressure. They couldn't handle the situation well, but it was a great

experience for them. The second period ended 2-3 for them. For the third period, we couldn't get the players back on track, and we lost 2-5.

Today's game was a great learning experience for us coaches and the players too. I can't say that we reached our goal of the day but the preparation, first and half of the second period's effort shows that we are on a good road for developing as a team and as individuals.

13.10.2019 Sunday

Long trip ahead for today to Oulu. Wake up this morning with the feeling that my head will explode. I didn't think about it yet that it's because of the virus what some player has, I thought it's just a normal migraine headache. Seven key players are out of the game because of the virus. My headache didn't ease when we were about to leave, but then I just got the info that the other assistant is sick too, and he is not coming. Then I just hoped that my headache would go away on the road, but I can't let the head coach run the team all alone. The goal for the team was to battle until the last second of the game, and let's see what is enough for, but we don't want to go back home with a bad taste in the mouth that we didn't put all on the game what we got.

On the road, I tried to sleep, but I started freezing, the head coach already knew then that I got the virus too. I was kind of sleeping but mostly struggling. I think I have never experienced this kind of headache. It was horrible. When we arrived there and had the pre-game meeting, I decided to tell honestly how I feel, told them that although I feel bad, I will be on the bench and help them as much as I can, but I might not be at my best when it comes to give feedback and so on.

After the pre-game meeting, players went to warm-up while I lay down in a free locker room and just tried to get myself together for the game start. We had a really really bad start; we received the first goal in less than one minute. It seemed like players already gave up this game even before it started. First period 9-0. To be honest, I was feeling that bad during the game that I don't even remember most of the things. I remember that our goalie did everything he could; he had 60 saves in the game. In a game that ended 15-1 for the opponent. Really big shame. Obviously, the opponent has a great team, one of the best, if not the best team in the league. But there is not this big difference between them and us if everyone gives 100% and doesn't give up the game in mind. Not even with seven of our key players missing.

I can easily say that this trip and game together were my worst experience so far in my coaching career. Horrible game. We have to make the conclusions and try to move on. Obviously, the goal of the day was not reached at any point.

Weekly analysis

A week which I will probably never forget. Players were not performing at their best the whole week. Even though there were a couple of “highlights”, those were things that are considered as normal in a practice session when everyone performs at their best. We faced a lot of difficulties missing the sick players, and we had to re-arrange a lot of things.

I can say the academy process on Tuesday morning was successful, at least. I had good discussions, provided, and received feedback on the process that is heading in a good direction. I took my time when designing the workouts for each group, did good research, and used my knowledge of the physical skills. When designing the plan, coaches need to ask themselves how the material will be presented or, even better, how the athletes will learn the content in the realistic setting of the sport. (Stafford, 2011)

The big challenge and difficulty this week was to re-arrange the practice plans and the roster for the weekend. Those unsure situations when we didn't know who will be able to play at the weekend were hard to deal with. We had to show the players who attended the practices that even though most of the leaders are out, it doesn't change on anything. We had to explain to them that this is a good opportunity for them to show that they are capable of encouraging themselves and perform at their best to have good quality practices. In this case, we had to intervene more to help them create a positive environment.

Meanwhile, I feel like I really started to grow as a human. I learned how to solve problems under stress factors, how to interact with different people, and learned how to adapt to a different culture. Obviously, there is a lot of cultural changes between my culture and the one which I experience here. Another aspect which needs to be mentioned considering my individual development and well-being is that I learned here to be more relaxed, not that stiff while coaching, I needed to realize that I am really doing what I love the most is probably in the best environment I can be. I still do believe that the decision that I made to come here was the right one. In teams like mine, where the skill level is not that high as in other teams in the league, I face more and more difficulties, challenges that I can learn from, and helps me in shaping myself into a good coach. It both good and bad parts but I enjoy the ride and develop at the same time.

3.10 Report week 10

10.03.2020 Tuesday

Last weekend of the season which is the hardest and most stressful at the same time. On this weekend depends if we can keep the league spot for next season or we drop down to Mestis. Because of this, we finished the long-term physical development plan last week, and we focus only on the ice practices and to keep the players fresh for the weekend. The goal for the morning is to have a light off-ice workout followed by a 30-minute jogging outside as a team. We don't run on-ice practice in the morning. For the afternoon, the main goal is to have a good intensity practice on the ice with battling as the main topic.

Morning practice was okay, but we had a little challenge before. The warm-up and workout plan was written in advance by me to the team group last night, so players knew when and what to start with. I was late from the warm-up since my car didn't turn on in the morning. Afterward, when the head coach stepped into the locker room 10 minutes after the warm-up starting time, he observed that one injured player and one of our top players are still laying on the bench wearing jeans and hanging on their phone. This thing made the head coach really angry since this is not the first time having similar kinds of issues with this player. He already sat down with him couple weeks ago and said that this behavior has a bad effect on the other players and we built up a great team cohesion from the beginning of the season while he was with the U20, and now in this critical period of the season this shouldn't be destroyed. After discussions with the head coach, we most likely will leave him out from the weekends lineup.

Afternoon warm-up, core workout in the gym went smoothly, guys worked well, and made all the moves in time. Ice practice was a little bit heavier since we have a free day on Wednesday. Battling and willingness looked good; we had a good, solid practice. The overaged goalie made big saves, most likely he is going to be the starting goalie in the weekends game. This made us feel a little bit calmer, but we still can't sit back. After the practice, we told them to try to rest, get some proper sleep, and balanced nutrition in order to keep themselves fresh for the weekend. For me, it's time to download the opponents last game and check their powerplay to be able to show it to my penalty kill players and prepare them on what to expect.

Overall, since both morning and afternoon practices went smoothly, I have to say that I reached my goals, both morning and afternoon practices were how we expected and planned. Core was the main focus already in the warm-up, so I slowly implemented the off-ice topic to the warm-up, I made some competitive high tempo exercises to the last phase of the warm-up which was followed with some sports specific core strength and stability moves in the gym. We tried to plan the

ice too so that we had a purpose behind every drill, small area games were game-like, and key points were short but clear. The demanding level of battling was high. Happy for this day.

12.03.2020 Thursday

Feeling that it's last week the season, and I can feel that this step was really challenging for me. It was a really deep water when I got here, and I had to keep up with the level in a short period of time to be able to be useful for the development of the players. Anyways, two days left until the weekend, the same idea works to keep the players fresh and make them feel good. The goal for the day is to analyze the opponent's game, which I downloaded on Tuesday and have a meeting with our penalty kill units in the afternoon. Another goal is to make the players excited about the weekend and get some pressure off their shoulders; thus, we are going to have competitive, fun elements in the ice practice but still focusing on practicing the game elements too.

Morning warm-up was held together as a team, but players got the chance to choose the mobility and dynamic stretching moves by themselves. Off-ice topic was speed/agility, so we did ladder drills with the same approach that they choose the drills, then we made some small hurdle moves for quick feet work and some short sprints. One of the ice focus was on puck control and full-ice skating, scoring drills to get their feet moving. We reached the main objectives of the practice; players got a lot of repetitions practicing the topics listed.

In the afternoon, as the first phase of the warm-up, I sent the athletes outside to have a light 25-minute long jogging. The weather was not too cold but a little bit rainy. I saw in the player's eyes that they are not too happy to go outside because we always do the jogging sessions inside the rink. The purpose of this was to remind them that even if it's one of the last practices, it doesn't mean that we can lay back since we have probably the hardest weekend ahead. Warm-up included even more mobility exercises than it normally does. I came up with some new moves, I try everything to design exercises which always moves more and from different angles the player's joints to reach the full range of motion. Warm-up was followed by a "light" but a more fun core workout. They made all the moves in pairs and pushed each other forward to work hard while having fun. Since one player didn't have a pair, I joined him and did the workout together with them. The team enjoyed it, and it made their time even more exciting. We still try to create and keep our team culture as a place and as a group where it's fun to belong, and it's fun to come every single day. On the ice, we were practicing five-man units, and we were still focusing on controlling the puck and breaking out from the zone as a unit to get all the five guys to start the attack together. Passes were on the blade, and players understood what do they have to do in different roles. The only thing which was a little bit bad to watch was our overaged goalkeeper's

performance. For some reason, it was just not his day. Hopefully, this is not going to make an impact on the weekend's games since he has our trust. After the practice, using the video data which I already analyzed in the morning, we made the meeting with the penalty kill units. First explaining them mentally what to expect, such as making them understand that they will have big responsibility during the weekend even though we want to play clean and without penalties. This was followed by explaining to them that we want to have the same penalty kill structure what we had so far, which is aggressive, and showing the data which I collected and making them understand how is the opponent's power-play setup and how are they actually trying to score. Letting them check the videos by themselves, we just gave some extra tips on how to avoid dangerous passes, how and where to position themselves, what to consider and when and how to give hard pressure and gain possession of the puck.

After this day I can say that the first goal was reached, I do think that the players are going to be well prepared when their time comes in the penalty kill. The second goal was reached too since the feeling inside the team felt really great, and it seems like the fun off-ice and fun elements on the ice practice served their purpose.

13.03.2020 Friday

Yesterday late night the Finnish Ice Hockey Association cancelled all the junior leagues and practices because of the coronavirus. At the moment, it seems like it's only for the weekend, on Monday, they will have an update about the future. This is a little bit scary and stressful for two reasons; one is because we don't have an answer if we drop down to Mestis for the next season or not. Based on the FIHA's article, we will get a final solution for that at the end of the month. Right now, we are under the line, but we were really preparing for the weekend. I hope that they make a fair decision. The second thing is that now my situation is a question mark too. Since we don't have practices and in case if all the shops close, I don't want to get stuck here all alone.

16.03.2020 update: The ice rink will be closed by the end of this month. This is the decision for now, but this period most likely will be extended. This puts a big question mark for the try-out period for the next season too and the whole preparation period. My own situation at the moment looks like so that I fly home tomorrow night for an undetermined period. Thankfully for the professionalism of my university, teaching will move into online, and they already sent an e-mail that one of their priorities is that they want to ensure that we, who want to graduate this spring, we can accomplish that. These are great news now in this whole uncertain situation. Since the season suddenly ended, we organized a get together with the players and staff members. It was a perfect feeling to be able to meet the players again and talk about our experiences in the season.

It made me feel good also that a lot of players came to me and gave some small presents and they were thankful for the work I did for them.

26.03.2020. update: The Finnish Ice Hockey Association just posted the news about the next season. Based on that, they offered the B SM spot for us. Obviously, we will accept it and will apply for the next seasons regular season. This news made the current situation a little bit better from my point of view. Now that we know which league are we going to be at, we can start planning forward a little bit. We already have the summer group of players who are going to practice together if the conditions let us. We will make discussions with the players and see who can make the final roster. Try-out situation is still unsure; most likely, it will be held in august if the things will go in a good way until then with the pandemic. For me and my development now, I need to finish my thesis work, and I need to start preparing the summer preparation phase period plan and the actual workouts for the players.

Weekly analysis

The season got finished in a way that we did not expect. Unfortunately, we couldn't finish the season because of the COVID-19 virus and the decision made by the Finnish Ice Hockey Association. Since we are under the line in the standings, our situation is really unsure at the moment, and it makes me finish the season with a little bad taste in my mouth. I'm really fortunate that we were organizing one last team activity where I could share the experiences and have a "last word" with the players who are leaving for the higher age group. I'm really glad to see that they shaped into real adults during this season, they made improvements in almost every aspect, and I'm really happy that I was part of this process.

It was a short week since we gave the athletes free day on Monday, and we had the usual free day, too, on Wednesday. We decided to keep the Monday free for the players to be able to rest, think about the week which is ahead of them, and be ready both mentally and physically when we start on Tuesday. Team-wise, both practices were successful, and I had a feeling that we are on a good way to win the games on the weekends, which would have lead us to stay in the league. Unfortunately, this didn't happen, but the health is over everything, and we needed to accept that.

Since it was a short week, it was not developmental for me at all. All the things we have done were things the players and I were familiar with. I didn't face any challenge this week other than trying to keep the players in track and make their enjoyment and mental health at high levels. Mental toughness and natural talent are at the same level of importance. (Sheard & Michael, 2012) At the highest level of any sport, all the athletes have the necessary technical skills, but it

requires mental toughness to use that talent consistently to become a top athlete. (Sheard & Michael, 2012) I feel like now to the end of the season, tasks which I felt as big challenges at the beginning of the season become tasks that I solve way more easier and confidently.

4 Discussion and conclusions

A season with a handful of ups and downs behind my back, but both good and bad things contributed to my and my team's development. Before mentioning any specific challenges during this season, I need to tell that for me, almost the whole season was a big challenge.

If I think about my own development as a coach, first of all, I need to say that implementing the first time the things which I learned during my university studies in real-life coaching gave me a lot. Coaching without specific studies behind gives experience also, but for me, this one year gave me way more than the seasons before. Without having a professional player background, experiencing a professional culture was quite deep water for me. With touching almost all the areas of coaching during my studies, I recognized, handled, and solved every situation way more confidently than I did before. I feel like I could be satisfied with the way I handled this challenge, but there is still a lot of possibilities for improvement in the future.

Writing this diary helped my current coaching a lot by setting goals, analyzing, thinking back to each day's practice sessions, challenges. On the other hand, it helped me with my future coaching a lot too. I believe that these challenges will fade a little bit with the time and the experience I will get, but I have a written, well-analyzed diary that I can look at every time during my future coaching if I get into similar challenges.

Diary type of thesis has helped me a lot throughout the whole season. Even though I had to report only ten weeks, I used the same method in the other weeks too. I feel like it really helped my own and team's development.

If I consider my own development during this season, there are multiple aspects and skills.

Physical skills and knowledge about strength & conditioning were learned by doing fitness courses, taking part in all the lessons in my university studies, and it was fulfilled while implementing it during this season. Using the long-term physical development model, players made proven improvements during the season using the guidelines, training programs delivered by myself. While designing the practices and doing in-depth research about them, I learned during my coaching process about speed, mobility, agility, injury prevention, and conditioning topics. While implementing these topics, I made observations about players physical reactions, which helped me to re-arrange or -design the workouts. This again helped me to see how the process goes in real life coaching.

Leadership skills were gained during the season. Slow by slow, I become a decent leader, which the players could trust and respect. Big challenges were faced during the season in this manner.

I had no professional background as a player, being only four to five years older than my players was one of the significant challenges. Preparation, honesty, and reliability helped me to shape myself into a leader in front of the team. This skill was reached in a slower process, but it gave me good feedback, which I could make conclusions which I will consider in my future career.

I developed a lot in communication skills, being in a foreign culture, with non-familiar traditions and habits while having to coach and live an everyday life in a foreign language was not easy at all. With the communication, I developed my social interaction skills, too, when being forced to ask questions and interact with other coaches and co-workers to fulfill different tasks.

Throughout trying different teaching styles, I gained experience, and this year I had a chance to try them in a high-performance environment. While trying and implementing them, my teaching skills have developed tremendously. I found the teaching style and approach, which fits me as a coach best, and I will use in my future career. With players I had, it was not that challenging to make them pay attention. Most of the players were mature enough to realize how important stage they are at in their development.

I developed in the goal-setting aspect while writing the thesis, setting multiple goals daily, and weekly kept my process in high demand. Setting multiple, challenging goals and reaching just a few of them is better than setting less challenging goals in the long run. This process really demanded hard work and proper preparation in my everyday job to work hard to reach the goals.

Using the source materials, I learned new methods, ways how to improve myself as a coach. While reflecting my weekly analyses, I found plenty of new models to implement into my coaching and to help solve issues.

Learning how to solve problems using source materials and using my own thoughts has helped me to grow as a human. I learned how to handle crisis situations, how to react to them the best way, and what outcome or solution should I come up with to solve them.

From a team development standpoint, even though the results did not show the players made big development during the season. With the morning sessions, they had a great chance to work on their weaknesses, which included skills such as strength, shooting/scoring, skating technique, power skating, endurance, and speed. One of the big goals for the team development was to build a culture that is really competitive, and it demands hard work every single day from the players. At this stage, players already had core skills which we had to refine during the season and, players decision making skills, faster thinking in real game situations was one thing to work

on. Really big focus was on preparation for the games and finding ways, team structure to be able to overcome the opponent. The volume of the on-ice sessions was usually high, and the intensity was from moderate to high levels since the readiness for the games had to be considered. I feel like we were able to deliver quality practices with valuable key points in order to create a team that plays with structure. This year's experiences on the ice gave me a lot in order to be able to take bigger responsibilities in the future. Mental coaching took a big role this season; individual meetings which I made with the players were one of the tools which I used in this manner. It helped them to speak everything up for a person who they trusted, and it helped both the players and me to set goals for them and talk about reaching them realistically.

Daily reports helped me to look back, see what we reached, see what needs to be reached in the future. Not a single time, the head coach asked about the previous week's analyses, which was again a great tool to use while we set new goals and design new practice plans.

Signing a new contract to work with the same age group for the next season was a good feedback for myself, and I found it as a really good thing that I can go on and continue developing together with the players I know together with the players who will join us soon. I believe that in the upcoming season, I can reach more challenging goals, and I can put my coaching and team development skills into another level. This is my plan for the next season, together with gaining more and more responsibilities inside the team to develop myself into a stage where I can take a head coach position, which is one of my long-term goals.

In the future, I consider using a similar type of diary during my coaching process, where I set goals and analyze the outcome of them since I found it a really good tool to use as coaches.

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