



## It Is Not Rocket Science And It Certainly Is Not New

In January 2009 USA Hockey announced a significant partnership arrangement with the National Hockey League that is intended to finance the NTDP program in Ann Arbor, Michigan, increase the numbers of kids playing hockey, and promote what they are calling the American Development Model for youth hockey across the country.

The agreement calls for the NHL to provide \$8 million a year to fund these programs. At the center of this program is the Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) program renamed American Development Model (ADM) and renamed here as the Minnesota Development Model (MDM). We like to have our own names for things.

In reality, Minnesota is light years ahead of many parts of the country with our community based programs which at the heart of each program was the “house” or “city league” programs. In this format hockey was affordable for all kids who wanted to play the game. Travel teams were formed for the top end players who had the desire and skills to compete on a higher level. This was great motivation for the other players to improve so they could play on the travel teams. As the years went by our programs have morphed into all travel teams for better or worse. The better is that more kids can play travel hockey. The worse is the escalating costs and time commitments required by all families in youth hockey. We do have our issues to examine.

The American Development Model program based on the LTAD information sets very different guidelines and recommendations for training, practicing, and playing games than we currently find in Minnesota. Reduced game counts especially at the younger age levels and more opportunities for kids to play locally in cross ice games and skills based practices with multiple teams is what translates for Minnesota. Kids playing other sports are important and taking time away from the rink is also important for development.

There are no secrets about how to best develop a hockey player. There are various approaches that have been developed over the past 40 years as our knowledge has increased and results documented. There are differing opinions on which methods are most effective, and perhaps many of them are right. Athletes that seriously undertake training regimes and programs will be better for it in the long run versus athletes that simply play the game. No right or wrong here, just the way it is.

The research and theories behind the LTAD come from the European countries that have studied the game extensively and tested training methods for the past 30 years. Hockey Canada began adopting the model several years ago in various parts of the country. USA Hockey, with funding from the NHL, is now on the bandwagon.

The most controversial part of the USA Hockey program is their High Performance Club (HPC) concept. According to USA Hockey, These clubs with teams from AAA Midgets down to mites will build the core of the elite players in this country. These players will have access to the USA Hockey programs and camps. Minnesota players will not be included as we will not have HPC clubs like the rest of the country. Hopefully we will find a way for our players to be included ion the opportunities. One way of looking at things, Minnesota has 160 High Performance Clubs (HPC). What we lack however is high level coaching through out the state and we hope to remedy the situation with what we are calling Minnesota HPC (High Performance Coach Program). Stay tuned for more on this project.

The game is the same. The kids that play the game are still kids. But there are some important changes that have crept up on us over the past 10 years and we should address some of these issues. Change is hard and comes slowly. Now is a good time to look at our programs and see if we can take a few steps to improve.

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