

Hockey Made Easy –Tryout Camp Tips for Young Players, Coaches and Parents

To: Minor and Youth Hockey players, coaches, parents, executives, webmasters and other e-mail recipients.

Another new and exciting Youth/Minor Hockey season is about to begin in much of the hockey world and here are some important Tryout Tips to help young players make the Travel team.

Travel, Representative, or All Star Programs

No matter what you call it in your part of the world, these are the first hockey programs to get started. The local Hockey Association has selected the Travel or Representative All Star coaches and the players are anxious to don their skates to demonstrate their hockey skills at the tryout camp. The coaches and selection committee members will evaluate their hockey skills using a number of specific drills and scrimmages then choose the best 15 or so players to make their Travel/Rep. Team.

Parents during this tryout period are very nervous wondering if their child is good enough to make the All Star Team, whether it's the "AAA", "AA", "A", "B" or "C" Team. From my experience, 90% of the players who make the Rep/Travel Team deserve to be there. Your child will confirm this if you ask them. It's the final 10% or 1-2 selections that are sometimes controversial and upset some parents and players. Remember, it is rare for everyone to agree or select the same 15 + players and the Head Coach usually has the final decision as to who makes the team.

I doubt if the legendary NHL and Hall of Fame coach, Scotty Bowman, could pick the 15 players that **everyone** would agree on. It's a very difficult process and every Head coach has his/her own selection process and criteria.

Tips for Players

If players really want to make the Rep/Travel All Star Team this year, they must strive to be in the top 6 forwards, the top 3 defensemen and the best goaltender as the 14th and 15th picks are sometimes unexpected.

One sure way to make the team is to leave a positive lasting impression on the Selection committee members and the Head Coach, based on the execution of every single drill and every scrimmage shift at the tryout camp.

You must come to tryout camp in excellent shape and demonstrate you can skate hard and fast without tiring. Start doing aerobic and anaerobic exercises now by running and biking, to get ready for the big challenge ahead. Don't leave it too late or your slowness; tiredness and lack of aerobic and anaerobic conditioning will be evident!

When on the ice, execute every drill to the best of your ability and give 110% every shift during the scrimmages. Get involved in the play and do not play on the outside perimeter of the rink. Show the evaluators you are prepared to get your nose dirty in front of the net and in the corners. If you really want to make the team, you must show them you will fight for the puck, win the 1 on 1 battles and finish your check every time the puck is in your area or it is your responsibility to regain possession of the loose puck.

The following basic skills: Skating speed, Puckhandling & Stickhandling, Passing & Receiving, Shooting & Scoring and Checking (Forechecking, Backchecking, Stickchecking and Bodychecking if allowed) will be evaluated by the selection committee and coaches. Make them remember your name and sweater number by your fine execution of these skills.

Other personal qualities they will be looking for include teamwork, overall hard work at both ends of the ice, leadership, team chemistry, hockey intelligence and a positive winning attitude.

It's really up to you if you want to make the club or not and how hard you are prepared to work for it. Remember nothing worthwhile in life comes easy; it takes hard work to become both successful and a winner.

Tips for Coaches

Head Coaches must come to the tryout camp with an open mind and evaluate the skills they see on the ice, not what someone told you about a player last season. Keep this in mind of course, but look at the entire picture.

Don't rule out a so-called problem player who has exceptional skills but a different personality, as you may be that special coach that can turn him/her around. It may be worth a try, but it's your decision!

Make sure you come to the tryout camp **organized** with a list of specific drills you want to do. Have a start and finish time to evaluate specific skills. Drills like 1 on 1, and 2 on 1, will show you who can play defense and which forwards can get to the net by beating a defenseman. Shooting, passing and scoring drills are also important to evaluate talent.

When scrimmaging, made up balanced teams and lines so you can evaluate skill against skill, player against player. Ensure you have the staff you require to run the on ice segment: assistant coaches on the bench to change lines, trainer in case of an injury, and a referee and linesmen to run the scrimmage and call off sides, icings and penalties.

Selection committee members should be in the stands observing and evaluating all the players' skills. This gives them a better view of the entire ice surface. The coach should then sit down with them after each tryout session to receive their feedback and their evaluation comments or written notes about every player's offensive and defensive skills.

The Head coach can remain at ice level to watch, or go up into the stands to get a **better birds eye view** of the on ice proceedings.

Communication is a vital part of running a successful tryout camp. The staff must know what you want done and when. Be specific about the drills you want executed with start and finish times and when you want to scrimmage.

Prior to going on the ice for the first time, make sure the players know what skills and attitude you are looking for and wish them all the best of luck in making the team.

When you have to cut/release some one at tryout camp, I suggest you do it personally and professionally by explaining to them what skills you think need to be improved upon in order to play at this level. Thank them for trying out and ask them to come out again next season. I have seen too many coaches just put a list on the dressing room door or on their website stating who made the team. This is very cold and it does not give the players cut any feedback as to why they were cut and I believe they should know.

Tips for Parents

Tryout camp is a very stressful time for most hockey parents because they are not sure if their son or daughter will be selected or not. And if they are cut, it is very upsetting for both the player and the parents.

Some parents bring the coach a coffee or volunteer their services to help with the tryout camp. Others ask for feedback about their child's play, while others keep their distance and hope for the best. It's an individual's choice as to what interaction you have with the coach.

The one universal quality parents must supply is encouragement and support for their child no matter what happens.

Making or not making the Rep/Travel Team is very important to your child, otherwise they wouldn't have tried out in the first place. If your son or daughter is released at tryout camp it is a very traumatic experience especially if they believed they were good enough to make the team and were better than certain players chosen.

There are other options for them if they get cut. You can ask your Association President for permission to try out with **another** Association's Rep/Travel Team, or you can try out with the next lower team in your own local Youth/ Minor Hockey Association.

Good luck to all Players, Coaches and Parents at this year's tryout camp and have an exciting and enjoyable hockey season.

NB. Players, don't forget to **re-read** parts of your **Hockey Made Easy Instruction Manual** prior to training Camp to refresh your "how to play hockey" memory. And, if you don't have a copy, check out www.HockeyMadeEasy.com to get one as it will help your child/player reach their hockey goal.

It contains over 200 pages, has more than 2000 tips on how to improve your skills and knowledge and has 200 illustrations to help you understand basic skills, systems, strategies and scoring plays.

The revised 2007/08, 8th edition is now available in both e-Book and CD format to help you play and understand this great game. We also have 2 videos available to help develop young defensemen.

If you are no longer involved in Youth/Minor hockey programs or would like your name and e-mail address taken off our hockey tips list please indicate by returning the e-mail address this was sent to. Send your remove request to jshorey@hockeymadeeasy.com and it will be dealt with immediately.

Have a great hockey season.

Yours in hockey,
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