

Bio and Coaching Philosophy



My name is Joseph Occhino and I have been coaching youth hockey for over 15 years from running learn to skate clinics and mini mite programs through coaching midget level hockey. I have also coached a number of other sports and have worked as a teacher for 15 years in a variety of different learning environments. This experience gives me a solid understanding of how learning and understanding, which when mixed with skill and talent is the key formula for improvement, learning and reaching one's personal goals and potential.

Like many, I grew up in an ice rink and have been involved in the sport throughout most of my life. I played house hockey as a mite and moved to travel up to midget level. I also played 2 years of JV hockey and 3 season of Varsity hockey as well as club hockey at the collegiate level – although I am a huge believer that great playing certainly does not always translate to great coaching.

There are millions of coaches around the world in hundreds of sports and activities and each one brings a unique style, system and goal to the team or player they are coaching. A coaching philosophy is a snapshot into that style and the best coaches have a clear, vivid understanding of their coaching philosophy and how it shapes the journey towards the end goal.

My personal coaching philosophy has been developed over my various years of coaching a number of sports, my experiences working in the classroom with students for both academics and athletics as well as the college degrees and certifications I have earned in education. My philosophy is perfectly in line with who I am as a person and my personal morals and beliefs about sports, children and life.

My coaching philosophy can be broken down into three parts and each is essential to the success of my team or players. It is important to understand that success does not mean winning it means growth. I find that winning is often a positive byproduct of me achieving these three parts but success can occur without winning.

The first of the parts of my coaching philosophy is to have fun. When kids are taking part in an activity or sport they should be having fun and enjoying themselves. Learning, growth and improvement can all be achieved when having fun and players are more likely to learn and retain information when in a comfortable learning environment. It is important to note that fun can and should be competitive, intense and difficult at times or else the sport or activity becomes boring. Players should be pushed and challenged to achieve goals that are within their personal abilities which is not the same for every player.

The second of these parts is to teach the fundamentals of the game. I believe that the team that makes the least mistakes, executes the basics of the game and has each player do the role they are assigned will win more often than not. I don't worry about winning when I coach, I worry about coaching the players to do the basics of the game and making the correct play in each situation because winning will come as a result of this execution.

Finally, the third part is team play. I stand strongly by the saying that we win as a team and lose as a team. Team play is something I always push and encompasses many things. It includes parental involvement, off ice activities, giving 100% for your teammates, picking teammates up when a mistake is made, celebrating their successes, teaching each other and more.

I feel I have been super successful in coaching both in record and parent/player satisfaction because I am so comfortable with my coaching philosophy and surrounding myself with parents/players that are in line with my coaching style and expectations. My teams have reached the championship game in each of the last 4 seasons at both the house and travel level (won 3) and have 9 tournament championships over those 4 years, yet despite that success on the ice I am more proud of the teamwork and families I have coached and that many have stayed together with me to enjoy the journey, continued success and growth. I work hard to build team chemistry and the idea that the result for the team is more important than the result of any one player.

Season Layout

Head Coach – Joe Occhino

Pee Wee Major

Pee Wee Major is a critical season for travel youth hockey. Tournament bound status is now available and teams/organizations start to settle in with rosters and teams for the remaining levels of youth hockey.



- 1) Summer Sessions – This is where the foundation is put in place for this very important first year of tournament bound eligibility season. These will include a parent meeting for introductions, contact exchange and an opportunity for me to review the season plan. This gives the parents to know the increased expectations for the upcoming TB season and to voice concerns or questions they may have and for me to provide an honest answer with my reasoning.

Every offseason I try to create a minimum of 3-5 team building activities for the players to get to know each other and this season it will be ramped up with summer ice sessions. It gives the returning players a chance to meet the new players (parents as well) and to do a fun activity so the players have a relationship before we ever even hit the ice. These have included – street hockey/hockey activity, bowling, attending sporting events of last year's players that have moved up (shows continued support of teammates), pool parties, birthday parties etc....

- 2) Early Season – this is the time we get a lot of practices and I get a chance to evaluate each player on their personal skill set and to develop a plan to place each player into a role that fits that skill set for them to be successful. A player's role must be in line with that player's skills and abilities or that player is setup to fail. EVERY role is equally important and the understanding that who get the goals or assists does not matter – it is the team effort and play that counts. This includes discussion with my coaches and often with the parents so they have an understanding of their son or daughter's role and expectations for the season. Communication and understanding is key.

We will also hold 1-2 video sessions at the rink which will occur directly before or after a practice and we will try to keep them to 45 minutes. They will be added to the practice calendar and planned well in advance.

- 3) On Ice – My on ice practices are a blend of USA hockey offerings, drills from coaching websites and forums, personal drills I have created and assistant coach input drills. I run some drills geared towards players with a specific need while some other players work on a drill that meets a need for them. I also implement team concepts/positional concepts so that each player knows what their role or expectation is in their position so they can have a clear understanding of what is expected and where they should be on ice. This often takes some time for younger players or for mastery level for older players - but is essential if they are going to be able to be successful. I will push players to work hard and to push themselves but always in a respectful and appropriate way – my experience as a teacher has helped me develop various strategies and methods to motivate and encourage students of all different learning styles.

“It is impossible to be successful if you don’t know what you are trying to accomplish.”

- 4) Tournaments and Travel – I understand family is first and many team members have other family commitments besides hockey – but this is also a very important year which will build the strength and competitiveness for the next 7 years of youth hockey with this group. Depending on circumstances, I expect a minimum of 2-4 tournaments with 1-2 being out of town. I am planning to have an out of town tournament early in the season and late in the season and hopefully two local ones in the mid-season.
- 5) Fundraising – With the added training, ice time and summer ice – parents will be expected to contribute a minimal amount of funds before the season but as always our fundraisers will be a major portion of the team budget. I understand some parents prefer their Saturday morning over a chance to raise \$100 for the team so we carefully select the fundraising activities that are most successful.

We are planning to have 2-3 large fundraisers and to raise funds through sponsorships as well.

The funds are used for team meals, holiday party, tournaments, hotel room rentals, player awards, team banquets and family gifts during hardships.