

COACHES CORNER:



Louis St. Laurent High School BARONS Hockey Academy February Coaches Message (Rick SWAN)

I would first of all like to take the opportunity on behalf of Larry, Jaret, Dave, Jamie, Barry and myself to thank the parents for raising such great young men who have been a pleasure to work with. They have been extremely coachable, hard working and respectful over the first month of our hockey academy. Your boys are simply great kids.

While getting to know each other over the first month on the ice, as a group we have been concentrating on defensive concepts including individual responsibilities in all three zones, defensive zone awareness, breaking the puck out of the zone and angling which include puck support, reading and reacting to pressure, containment, stick purpose and back checking responsibilities. We have also worked on technical skill development focusing on skating, passing, shooting, puck handling and checking while Dave and Jamie have been improving goaltender technique. **Habits, detail and purpose** have been the communication focus by Larry and myself to ensure that the boys maintain quality repetition during the sessions. Our objective on the ice continues to be on 'learning and teaching' so that every player improved their game.

Over the first two days every player completed the National Skills Standards and Testing Program which was developed for minor hockey players during Hockey Canada's Open Ice Summit and was formed to foster the improvement of the fundamental skills required to play the game at the minor hockey level. The tests measured the skill level of every athlete in our academy to help establish their current levels of performance as well as demonstrate the amount of improvement that we believe will take place over the course of the hockey academy this semester.

Larry and I fully understand that developing skills in athletes is a process much like the quote that *"A journey of a thousand miles begins with but a single step."* This is the same approach we are taking with the Louis St. Laurent Hockey Academy which is unlike the world of professional sports, where there is only one goal: which is only to have the most points at the end of the game. Anything less than a "win" is generally considered to be a failure at that level. The journey is non-existent and the focus is the outcome.

When we focus solely on "winning now" as an outcome goal and look at development only in a 'black and white' perspective, than we are more likely viewing youth athletics as we would professional sports where there is the belief that anything other than *"winning today"* means no success. There is obviously always a huge danger having the mind-set of not being able to separate youth from professional sports because it can force us to lose sight of the big picture of what we are trying to accomplish at the minor hockey level. The same mindset has to be detached with hockey academies because our focus is on development.

Over the years I have learned that the game of hockey involving impressionable young teens (and I stress impressionable and young), has an important goal way beyond the wins and losses and that is to produce 'winners in life' which is why the Louis St. Laurent Barons Hockey Academy stretches beyond only the lessons taught on the ice. Even when the "scoreboard result of winning" is not achieved what young players require is the right mix of direction and correction in order to impose accountability towards achieving both personal and team goals while keeping their self-esteem in tact at all times. Consistent, positive messages from both parents and coaches can keep the *'growing processes of a young hockey player moving in the right direction.'* I believe that we all have to constantly remember that the game of hockey is an amazing way for young people to develop both physically and mentally during the important years of their lives beyond those 'wins and losses' and the development of *pride, self-esteem, lasting friendships, commitment, respect, accountability, responsibility, proper values and setting goals* are a few of the many attributes the BARONS will gain from being with this hockey academy. Passion, value, interest, integrity, and the ability to accept criticism and praise graciously, in addition to individual and team skills will also be exposed to the boys every time they are at the rink.

All of these qualities take some people a lifetime to attain. We understand that the students are only 15 years old and by always keeping a proper 'life perspective' in mind Larry and myself can strive to *transform this great game that they love to play so that the game can transform them to be winners in life.*

Perspective on Losing

A few parents can sometimes lose sight of what is really important for their son while they participate in competitive hockey. Positive growth and development physically and mentally as well as life skill preparation for the future should always be the number one priority for coaches and parents. Parents and kids should regularly discuss realistic values in both hockey and life.

Knowing who we are, what is important in life and how sports fit in is all part of achieving a proper perspective. By always keeping the "big picture" in focus, both you and your son are less prone to the political part of participating in youth hockey. Ultimately it is their journey no matter how hard we as adults want them to succeed and we have to remember that we are all lucky to be a part of that experience.

Perspective on 'Over Coaching'

A mother was making a breakfast of fried eggs for her teenage son. Suddenly, the boy bursts into the kitchen.

"Careful! CAREFUL! Put in some more butter! Oh my goodness! You're cooking too many at once. TOO MANY! Turn them! TURN THEM NOW! We need more butter. Oh my! WHERE are we going to get MORE BUTTER? They're going to STICK! Careful! CAREFUL! I said be CAREFUL! You NEVER listen to me when you're cooking! Never! Turn them! Hurry up! Are you CRAZY? Have you LOST your mind? Don't forget to salt them. You know you always forget to salt them. Use the salt. USE THE SALT! THE SALT!!"

The mother stared at him and asked: "What's wrong with you? You think I don't know how to fry a couple of eggs?"

The son calmly replied.... "Mom I just wanted to show you what it feels like when I'm trying to play hockey....."

Practice Themes

- Defensive play concepts
- Individual Defensive responsibilities in all three zones
- Defensive Zone awareness, knowledge and responsibilities
- Defensive Coverage and 'Middle Ice Protection'
- Breaking the puck out of the zone / 'Peeking'
- Angling and 'Influencing'
- Puck support
- Reading and Responding to pressure / Pressure Awareness
- Containment and Gap
- Stick purpose / "Load Position - 5 Star Ready"
- Back checking / Tracking responsibilities
- Repetitions: Skating, Passing, Shooting, Puck handling and Checking

February 03rd	<i>NSSTP (Technical Skill Testing) Clare DRAKE's "The Agony of Repetition" The WOLF Story</i>
February 05th	<i>"Puck Handling / Angling / Defensive Zone" "Game Face On" "Habits and Details"</i>
February 08th	<i>"Break-outs / Defensive Play / Pressure / Contain / Support" "The Mountain Story" "Purpose"</i>
February 10th	<i>"Shooting / Tracking" "The Warrior's Eyes" "The Friendly Reminder"</i>
February 12th	<i>"Checking / Angling / Great Stick / Tracking" "Defensive Zone Homework" "Overtime" / "Garbage In = Garbage Out"</i>
February 16th	<i>"Skating / Break-outs / Support / Gap" "Knock the "T" Off Can't" "Challenging Your Own Standard of Excellence"</i>
February 18th	<i>"Puck Handling / Contain / Slot and Point Positioning" "The Story of Michael" "Caring About Improving"</i>
February 22nd	<i>"Passing / Receiving / Shot Blocking/ Defensive Side Positioning" "The Science of Scoring Goals" "It Is OK To Make Mistakes for Improvement"</i>
February 23rd	<i>"Shooting / Breakouts / Angling" "It's Your Program and you'll get Out What You Put In To It" "It Is About Being a Good Person That Matters Most"</i>

Thanks for allowing us to work with your kids,

*Rick Swan
LSL Head Coach*