

## Chalk Talk



SHANE BOWLER

# A Coach's Advice to Players... "Be Coachable!"

Every player wants to play on a good team and play for respected and talented coaches throughout their career. The best way for this to be accomplished is for the player to be coachable. For the player to be coachable, both parent and child have responsibilities for this to happen. Being coachable means different things at different levels of hockey, but the bottom line is that players who are coachable get to move on to the higher levels of hockey. Scouts and coaches are always looking for players who are coachable as well as skilled.

There are different factors both in the arena and away from the arena that families can help with, and individual players must be aware of, in order to be seen as coachable. It goes without saying that playing ability is most important in moving up the hockey ladder. But, the game is also made up of a multitude of personalities and, assuming the basic skill levels are at least equal to those a player is competing against for a spot on a team, being coachable is of particular importance in winning the support of scouts and coaches.

For the player to be coachable, he or she must make the commitment to the coach and the team. After this decision is made, the player must be prepared to learn and adapt to the new coach and

his or her techniques. The player is then responsible for simple demonstrations of commitment to the team. Such things as being on time for practice and games are very important in any coach's eyes, which is the shared responsibility of both the player and the parent. Not only be on time, but make sure that you have all your equipment and that it is in proper playing condition. By this I mean make sure skates are sharp and sticks are ready for play. A player has no value to any team if they can't even get dressed to come out and play. These responsibilities are simply good habits. As a player, get into proper habits at a young age so they eventually are not a concern.

From a coach's perspective, it is very important to see players supporting and encouraging one another rather than tearing each other down verbally. For young players it is important not to be negative towards your teammates. All players know when they make a mistake. It is not necessary to be told again by another player. This is the coach's and his staff's job. The coach is responsible for pointing out and correcting mistakes, as well as putting an end to the negativity as soon as it starts. Players who support teammates are considered coachable. Player's should be concerned with their own effort and game rather than their teammates' performance. On the ice,

for a player to stay in any coach's "good books", the player must bring a solid effort and work ethic to every practice and game. Coaches like reliable players who are consistent in both stats and effort.

As in everything in life, the player's parents are most influential in determining how coachable he or she will be. It is important that the parents encourage and instill a proper attitude toward the coach and his staff. As a family you have made a commitment to the coach and to the team, so respect your decision and allow the coach to do his job. One thing coaches and scouts hate to see, are parents coaching their children from the stands. This is detrimental to the relationship of the coach and player. It is very hard to coach when everything being taught is being doubted and ridiculed aloud from the stands and on the drive home. As a parent, one does not want to be responsible for their child to be released or refused from a desired team.

Again, speaking with coaches and scouts, a concern of theirs are players who seem to be on a new team every year, with a new coach. Players who do this are frowned upon because of lack of commitment or loyalty to a team or coach. Players must learn to adapt. Continued on page 32....

...continued from page 25.

to negative or tough situations. Players must learn that when things are not going their way, they can't react by just leaving. These are times when parents must let their child go through some adversity and let the child grow and mature. A player must learn to work through different situations and make them better. Allow the player to learn and adapt instead of leaving and hoping a new team will adapt to you. A young player could apply this experience to life in general and not just hockey. As we know, when things don't work out in life or work, the answer is not to just walk away.

The competition in hockey for roster spots at most levels is extremely high, so it is important that as a player you are not only skilled but coachable. The most important trait in a coachable player is that the player competes.

Players who compete "show up" every time they put on their equipment and bring the same effort and work ethic win or lose. Players who compete learn that winning along with losing is part of the game and that you should take something positive and improve no matter whether you win or lose. Players who are coachable know how to win humbly and lose graciously. Players who compete also learn that

one earns everything they get in hockey. There is no sense of entitlement with these types of players. They demand nothing but earn everything. This type of player is most coachable. As explained, being coachable is a skill that along with physical skills, such as skating and shooting will enable a player to play on desired teams and elite levels in hockey throughout their career.

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