

Dear players and parents,

We are well into our season, but most of our games are still before us. I am very happy with the progress we have shown to date, and especially proud of the effort, "heart", and sportsmanship demonstrated by you all (players and parents both) during our tournament in Vail.

Parents, please take time to review the following concepts with your player. These are the basic ideas that I stress at every game and practice and form the basis for the advanced play and systems your player will learn in the future.

First and foremost:

If we have possession of the puck, we are on OFFENSE, no matter where we are on the ice. And visa-versa, if our opponent has the puck, we are on DEFENSE.

There are three zones on the ice:

1. Offensive zone

- This is where we want to keep the puck, whether we are in control of it or we are hassling our opponents. The GO-GO zone (triangle formed by goal posts and face off dots) is the prime goal scoring area and must be occupied by at least one of our players every time we are in the O-zone. The job of this player is to SCREEN, TIP, or REBOUND. All players have specific places to be (depending on their position and the location of the puck) and should make every effort to win and maintain possession of the puck, get open for a pass and shot, work to keep the puck in the zone, or delay our opponent from leaving with the puck.

2. Neutral zone

- Our goal here is to break up the opposition's rush to our zone or to enter their zone with possession and speed. If we are carrying the puck through the neutral zone and there is any contest by the opposition for entry into their zone, we want to DUMP and CHASE the puck. NEVER puck handle near either blue line since this is the most dangerous place to give up a turn-over.

3. Defensive zone

- This is where we do not want the puck, whether we are in control of it or we are battling our opponents. The NO-NO zone (triangle formed by goal posts and face off dots) is the prime goal scoring area and must be occupied by at least one of our players every time we are in the D-zone. The job of this player is to PREVENT the opposition from making a SCREEN, TIP, or REBOUND. It is imperative that we clear ALL REBOUNDS to a corner or behind our goal. All players have specific places to be (depending on their position and the location of the puck) and should make every effort to win and maintain possession of the puck, get open for a breakout pass, work to get the puck out of the zone, or keep our opponent from receiving a pass or making a shot.

The 5 keys to winning hockey are:

1. FORECHECK

- This is where we play defense in the offensive zone. Our goal is to gain possession of the puck and get it to the net. Our team's forechecking system is that the nearest forward goes to the puck and battles for possession, the second player approaches and supports this battle, and the third is in front of the net ready for action.

2. BACKCHECK

- This is where we play defense in the neutral and defensive zones. Our goal is to pick up an "OPEN" opponent or attack the opposing puck carrier.

3. SKATE

- Keep moving always. Win every race to loose pucks. Move to open ice to create opportunities. Move to take open ice and opportunities away from our opponents.

4. PASS

- No matter how fast a skater or how good a puck handler they might be, the fastest way to move the puck is to pass it. We need to always move to open ice to create passing lanes and opportunities. Communication is key; call for the puck, make eye contact with your team mate, keep your stick on the ice for a target. And remember, make a clean crisp pass to where your team mate is going, not where he has been!

5. SHOOT

- Good things happen when we put the puck on net. Wayne Gretzky used to say he missed every shot he didn't take, so take every shot you can. When ever we are in the GO-GO zone, take the shot. Low hard shots from the perimeter lead to screen, tip, and rebound opportunities for the player in front of the net. Backhand shots work as well as forehand shots, that's why we put tape on both sides of our blade!

And last, but not least, remember we are all representatives of Summit Hockey and Summit County. Play hard, but play fair, but mostly, play to have fun.

Thanks,
Coach Mike