Optimal Times For Training Girls *(vs. boys)*

(info taken from or paraphrased from: OMHA Player Development Guidelines and Programs Version 3 and Hockey Canada Long Term Player Development Plan)

Info provided shows girls compared to boys in order to show that there are differences in optimal training times between sexes.

Puberty/growth spurt for girls occurs around 12 years of age. Keep in mind that some girls my experience their growth spurt as much as 2 years early or later than the norm. *(FYI: puberty for males is about 14 years of age; again plus or minus 2 years)*

Stamina (endurance): at the onset of puberty/growth spurt. Aerobic capacity training is recommended before athletes reach puberty/growth spurt. Aerobic power should be introduced progressively after growth rate decelerates. *(ie. girls at about 12 years of age and boys at about 14 years of age)*

Strength: The optimal window of trainability for girls is immediately after puberty/growth spurt or at the onset of the menarche ("period"). *Boys: 12-18 months after puberty or at about ages 15-16 years old.*

Speed: For girls the first "speed training window occurs between the ages of 6 and 8 years and the second window occurs between the ages of 11 and 13 years.
Boys: The first "speed training window occurs between the ages of 7 and 9 years and the second window occurs between the ages of 13 and 16 years

Skill: The optimal window for training girls is between the ages of 8 and 11 years.
Boys: The optimal window for training boys is between the ages of 9 and 12 years

Suppleness (Flexibility): The optimal window is between the ages of 6 and 10 years. Special attention should be paid to flexibility again, during puberty/growth spurt. *(ie. girls at about 12 years of age and boys at about 14 years of age)*

Girls windows of optimal trainability times for the above items are very different than boys. You can see how this poses a problem to coaches of boys teams on which they have female players.

This is key for FLHA and coaches to start discussing with the parent's of these girls. Yes, part of you can understand that on one hand if you have a daughter that excels at hockey, you want her to play on a more "competitive" team. But knowing the info we just discussed, do you want it to come at the expense of possibly missing key times for specific training?

Skills are best introduced and refined prior to the growth spurt. Delaying this will mean much more work further down the road when the player is attempting to play at higher levels. Following puberty/growth spurt emphasis on strength and stamina during practices will show greater amounts of improvement than focusing on these aspects prior to puberty. It should be noted that all of the aspects of the game can be trained before, during and after puberty. However, giving equal emphasis will not be the best long term strategy to maximize the potential of the athletes.

For both boys and girls, the speed of a child's growth has significant implications for athletic training because children who mature at an early age have a major advantage during the Training to Train stage compared to average or late matures. However, after all players have gone through their growth spurt, it is often later matures who have greater potential to become top players provided that they experience quality coaching throughout that period.

Because trainability varies between players (based on where they are developmentally) it is the coaches job to decide what skills/drills will best work for the team. The general rule of thumb is try and train where about 80% of your kids fall developmentally. It is ok to have a coach/asst coach spend some practice time (5-10 min/occasionally at practices) with the kids that are less/more advanced skill wise working on skills appropriate to where these children are at developmentally. This will avoid frustration at the lower skill level and boredom at the higher skill level.