

The No. 1 confidence killer in girls' hockey

By Kim McCullough

No two players are the same. So why do we constantly compare ourselves to others? Comparisons are the No. 1 confidence killer in girls' hockey. Here's the problem:

When girls compare themselves to others, they generally focus on what makes others better than they are. That makes them concentrate on their own weaknesses, which hurts their confidence.

I'm not saying that you shouldn't look up to players who are more talented than you are and strive to get up to their level of performance. You absolutely must have that kind of drive to get to the next level.

But I'm not talking about those players who are your role models and signposts for your improvement as an athlete. I'm talking about comparing yourself to your teammates and the players you play against regularly.

There is always going to be someone you play against who skates better than you, or has a better slap shot, or has more points, or more shutouts, or more fancy moves, or more coaches and scouts recruiting them. The truth is that you shouldn't be wasting your time, energy and focus worrying about how much better another player is than you or how you should be the one that is the favorite because you are really the best at skill X, Y and Z.

And I'm not just talking to the players here, either. As a coach, I sometimes catch myself doing this, too. When I am helping a player on a skill or with a concept during the game, I sometimes slip into mentioning how another player does it really well. And while I might think it is a great that they can watch that player execute that skill and learn from it, I also realize that the player I am talking to is probably thinking to herself, "Coach thinks that player is better than me." It's not what I am trying to say at all, of course, but perception is reality.

I can't let the parents off the hook on this one, either. I think we sometimes forget that we can be doing more harm than good by comparing our player's performance directly to someone else. You will certainly never help your daughter's confidence by putting another player down in order to make her feel better about her own performance.

Not every parent does this, but I've seen it done far too many times. I can guarantee you that you are sending a poor message to your daughter – namely that it's OK to put someone else down to make you feel better about yourself. Whether you are legitimately better than that player or not, it is not a constructive comparison.

Directly comparing player to player is unfair and unrealistic. Every single player brings something unique and valuable to the table. We must recognize that as coaches and parents, and communicate that to our daughters and players on a regular basis. Because as we all know, confidence is king in hockey and in life.

If a player is constantly comparing herself to others, she loses her ability to focus on what she does well and what she needs to do to play her best. To be confident, she must own her strengths and know that delivering on those strengths are what make her and her team perform at the highest level.

To get complete access to articles, videos and secrets that addresses the specific needs of female hockey players, visit www.totalfemalehockeyclub.com. Kim McCullough, MSc, YCS, is an expert in the development of aspiring female hockey players. She is a former NCAA Division I captain at Dartmouth and played in the National Women's Hockey League for six years. She is currently the Girls Hockey Director at the PEAC School for Elite Athletes in Toronto and is the Founder of Total Female Hockey.