

Tryout Camp Tips for Young Players, their Parents and Coaches ...

Here are your complimentary tips from "*Hockey Made Easy*"
Canada's Premier Minor Hockey Instruction Manual
www.HockeyMadeEasy.com

As requested by many of you, here are some Rep./Travel tryout camp tips for young players, boys and girls 7-14 years of age, their parents and Rep. coaches.

I'm trying to answer as many of your tryout concerns as possible before the 2008/09 season gets under way in a few weeks time.

I realize this is a long e-mail, so I'm suggesting you save it, then read it when you have more time as it will explain what should go on at most Minor/Youth Hockey Rep. tryout camps.

This information is primarily for coaches, players and parents of players in the Novice/Mite to Bantam age categories who are trying out for Rep./Travel Teams. It will also benefit those players who choose to remain in a House League program.

With the Minor/Youth Hockey season just around the corner, many Canadian teams will start holding tryout camps in late Aug. and many American teams won't be far behind starting in Sept.

Some of the larger cities and Associations have already held their tryouts in the spring (April.) I don't understand why so early but they must have a very good reason for doing so.

But for those who still hold tryouts in late August or early Sept. here are some important Tryout Tips to help young players and their parents understand what to expect, and some important information so their child will have their best chance at making the Travel/Rep team if so inclined.

Travel, Representative, Competitive or All Star Programs

No matter what this is called in your local Association, these are the first travel hockey programs to hold tryouts. The "AAA", followed by "AA", "A", "B" and "C" programs in that order. The House League or Recreational programs will hold an on ice tryout draft of all players after the Rep Teams have been selected.

The local Hockey Association has selected the Travel or Rep Coaches and the players are anxious to don their skates to show their hockey skills and ability at the tryout camp.

The coaches and selection committee members will evaluate their hockey skills using a number of specific drills and scrimmages then choose the best 12 to 15 or so players to make their Travel/Rep. Team.

Many parents get nervous wondering if their child will be selected and make the Rep. Team. A lot is at stake for both player & parents.

From my experience, 92% of the players who make the Rep/Travel Team deserve to be there. Your child will confirm this if you ask them. It's the final 8% or 1-2 selections that are sometimes controversial and upset some parents and players.

It is rare for everyone to agree on, or select the same 12-15 players. The Head Coach usually has the final say as to who makes the team.

I doubt if the legendary NHL Stanley Cup Champion and Hall of Fame coach Scotty Bowman, would pick the same 15 players that **everyone** would agree on. It's a very difficult process and every Head coach has his/her own selection process and criteria.

Tips for Players trying out for Rep Teams

If players really want to make the Rep/Travel All Star Team this year, they must strive to be in the top 6 forwards, the top 3 defencemen or the best goaltender as the 14th and 15th picks are sometimes unexpected.

The best way to make the team is to **leave** a positive lasting impression on the Selection committee members & the Head Coach, based on the execution of every single drill & every scrimmage shift at the tryout camp.

You must come to tryout camp in excellent shape and demonstrate you can skate hard and fast without tiring.

Start doing aerobic and anaerobic exercises **now** by running short and long distances alternating days. Do some biking to get your legs and breathing/wind/stamina conditioned for the big challenge ahead. Don't leave this too late or your slowness; tiredness and lack of aerobic and anaerobic conditioning will be evident to those evaluating you.

When on the ice, execute every drill to the best of your ability and give a 110% effort during every shift of the scrimmages. Get involved in the play and do not just play on the outside perimeter of the rink where getting hit is rare. Show the evaluators you are prepared to go to the net, get your nose dirty in front of the net and will go into the corners to get the puck.

If you really want to make the team, you must show them you'll fight for the puck. Win the 1 on 1 battles and finish your check every time the puck is in your area. Or if it's your responsibility to be first into the corner to regain possession of a loose puck. Show everyone that you play like an aggressive tiger not a pussycat.

Also these basic skills: Skating speed & agility, Puckhandling & Stickhandling, Passing & Receiving, Shooting & Scoring and Checking (Forechecking, Backchecking, Stickchecking and Bodychecking if allowed) will be evaluated by the selection committee and coaches. Make them remember your name or sweater number by your fine execution of these hockey skills.

Other personal qualities they will be looking for include teamwork, overall hard work at both ends of the ice, leadership, team chemistry, hockey intelligence and a positive winning attitude. Winning is still very important at the Rep Team level as your Team could miss the playoffs if you lose too many games.

It's really up to you if you want to make the club or not, and how hard you are

prepared to work for it. Remember nothing worthwhile in life comes easy, it takes very hard work to become both a successful player and a winning team.

If fun & enjoyment is your number 1 hockey priority and you're **not** prepared to work hard, perhaps the House League program is better suited to your needs as most Rep Team coaches are very serious and demanding trying to improve player skills & team skills to end up in the top half of the League standings. The House League on the other hand is less stressful, less demanding, more Recreational like and everyone makes the Playoffs.

Tips for Coaches of Rep Teams

Head Coaches must come to the tryout camp with an open mind and evaluate the skills they see on the ice, not what someone told you about a player last season. Keep this information in mind, but look at the entire picture on the ice.

Don't rule out a so-called problem player who has exceptional skills but a different personality, as you may be that one special coach that can turn him/her around. It may be worth a try, but it's your call to make.

Make sure you come to the tryout camp **organized** with a list of specific drills you want to do. Have a start and finish time to evaluate specific skills. Drills like 1 on 1's, and 2 on 1's, will show you who can play defence and which forwards can get the puck to the net by beating a defenceman. Shooting, passing & scoring drills are also important to evaluate young talent. However, drills alone will not tell you who the real hockey players are. You need scrimmages with game like conditions to separate the very skilled players from the rest of the group.

When scrimmaging, made up balanced teams and lines so you can evaluate skill against skill, player against player.

Ensure you have the required staff on hand to run the scrimmage segment: assistant coaches on the bench to change lines, a trainer available in case of an injury, and a referee and linesmen to run the scrimmage and to call off-sides, icings and penalties.

Selection committee members should be up in the stands observing, evaluating and making notes on all the players' skills and deficiencies. This gives them a great view of the entire ice surface to evaluate talent. The coach should then sit down with them after each tryout session to receive their feedback and evaluation comments or take their written notes about every player's offensive and defensive skills or liabilities.

The Head coach can remain at ice level to do his/her evaluation, or go up into the stands to get a better birds eye view of the on ice proceedings.

Communication is a vital part of running a successful tryout camp. The staff must know what the head coach wants done and when. Be specific about the drills you want executed with start and finish times and when you want to start and finish the scrimmage.

Prior to going on the ice for the first time, make sure the players know what skills and attitude you are looking for and wish them all the best of luck in making the team.

When you have to release someone at tryout camp, I suggest you do it personally and professionally by explaining to them what skills you think need to be improved upon in order to play at this level.

Thank them for trying out and ask them to come out again next season. I have seen too many coaches just put a list on the dressing room door or on their team's website stating who or what numbers made the team. This is very cold and it does not give the players released any feedback as to why they didn't make the club and I believe they should know.

Tips for Parents of Players trying out for Rep Teams

The tryout camp is a very stressful time for most hockey parents because they are not sure if their son or daughter will be selected or not. And if they are released, it is very upsetting for many players & parents.

At the start of tryout camp some parents bring the coach a coffee, others volunteer their services to help with the tryout camp. Others will ask for feedback about their child's play, while others keep their distance and respect the coaches decision. It's an individual's choice as to what interaction you have with the Head coach.

The one universal quality parents must supply is encouragement and support for their child no matter what happens.

Making or not making the Rep/Travel Team is very important to your child, otherwise they wouldn't have tried out in the first place. If your son or daughter is released at tryout camp it is a very traumatic experience especially if they believed they were good enough to make the team and were better than certain players chosen.

There are other options for them if they are released. You can ask your Minor/Youth Hockey Association President for permission to try out with **another** Association's Rep/Travel Team. Or you can try out with the next lower team in your own local Youth/Minor Hockey Association and possibly become an "Affiliate Player" being called up for sickness or injury.

I want to wish Good luck to all Players, Coaches and Parents at this year's Rep. tryout camp and have an exciting and enjoyable hockey season.

NB. Players, don't forget to **re-read** parts of your "Hockey Made Easy" Instruction Manual prior to tryout Camp to refresh your memory about "the skills, systems and strategy used to play hockey skillfully, correctly and safely."

And **Parents** if you don't have a copy and desire one, call toll fr*ee 1-877-292-3555 between 9:00 am and 10:00 pm EST, to receive your copy for just 19.75 CDN. Or you can go to www.HockeyMadeEasy.com for our on line service to get your own personal copy as it can be e-mailed in minutes to your computer. This could be your smallest hockey investment this year that will bring the biggest skill development results for years to come and could help teach your young child how to reach their hockey goal.

It contains over 220 instructional pages, has more than 2000 tips on how to improve your hockey skills and knowledge and has 200 illustrations and drills to help you understand basic skills, systems, strategies and scoring plays.

The revised 8th edition is now available in both e-Book and CD format to help you play and understand this great game.

We also have 2 videos available to help develop young defensemen.

If you are no longer involved in Youth/Minor hockey programs or would like your name and e-mail address taken off our hockey tips contact list simply reply (top left corner) with your wishes stated in the subject line and it will be dealt with immediately

Have a great hockey season.

Yours in hockey,
John Shorey,
Author- Hockey Made Easy
www.HockeyMadeEasy.com