

Hockey teaches important lessons to young players

If you spend a fair amount of time in hockey arenas as a player, parent, coach, or fan, you've probably seen young players arriving for a game wearing a shirt and tie before heading to the dressing room.

Players are taught that dressing up while representing the team shows respect for the sport, your opponent, your teammates, and the fans.

Many young players thrive on the responsibilities on the ice and that translates to a sense of independence off the ice as well.

You can help players develop a sense of responsibility by using the sport as an example.

For example, a young player complains that their equipment smells bad. Instead of taking over, teach them to take the initiative to properly air it out so they can realize that things don't get done on their own.

Asking young players to help out with hockey related tasks, something they are already familiar with, is a good starting point to teaching responsibility.

The same strategy can be used to teach players respect, time management, healthy eating, and how to stay organized.

As kids move up the ranks in hockey, they can be taught ways to be responsible and they will soon start learning something on their own.

At the U9 level, kids should know how to say 'please and thank you' to arena staff and coaches. They should be carrying their own stick and putting on much of their equipment themselves.

By U13, they should be packing their own equipment and making sure they have everything they need. They can start learning about leadership on the team, such as leading stretches in warm-ups. At the end of the season they should personally thank their coaches for the effort they have put into the season.

At U15, players should be setting goals at the start of the season. They should learn how to speak to the coach at a one-to-one level when taking instruction. They should also be cleaning their equipment and doing their own laundry for sports jerseys, socks, etc.

U17 players who are taking the sport seriously, should be learning healthy eating to keep fit on the ice. They should also try to work with others to organize a community volunteer event for the team. By this age they can also find a part-time job to help pay some equipment.

They can also volunteer at the rink or within the association. This not only provides for good experience on a resumé, it can possibly go towards volunteer hours needed for a high school graduation.

Hockey is a great sport and a fun experience for players who enjoy it.

Using hockey as a foundation can teach players many more valuable life lessons.

With notes from the OMHA.