"Teams that have strong leadership from the players and the coaches are much stronger than than teams with only strong leadership from the coaches"

COACHING LEADERSHIP – TEAM CAPTAIN AND ASSISTANTS/ALTERNATES

Every team needs strong leadership from the players themselves. After all it's the players who perform or don't perform on the ice together, are motivated or not, try their hardest or not, and so on. It's not enough that the coaches are great leaders and motivators, although that is very important too. Players look to their peers for leadership, motivation and strength, and when it comes, it is very effective in helping a team reach its highest goals.

So, the election of the players' team captain or leader and the assistants or alternates is an important event for the players and the team.

Some coaches at all player age levels believe the captain of the team should be appointed by them, not the players. Perhaps when the players are under 12 years old or so this may be acceptable but I believe players should learn the criteria for being a captain, the procedure for electing one and live with the results of their choices at all ages where they actually understand election events. Let the players know these elections are an important responsibility and why this is so. Give examples of teams with strong captains and how successful they have been.

The election process is a great learning lesson for the players. They will understand the process and get better at it the more they experience it, and remember later in life when they have more important elections to participate in.

So, let the players choose their captain and assistants/alternates at a very young age but give them leadership criteria for guidance and discussion like:

- Leads by example on and off the ice and is very respected as a player and as a person – a role model for the team
    - Works hard all the time in games and practices – prepares himself physically and mentally to play before the game
    - High energy and focused
    - Confident and tenacious
    - Very competitive within the rules
    - Never quits
    - Tries to be the best he can be

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  - Finds solutions not excuses
  - Willing to try new ideas, line combinations, systems, and tactics
  - Would never expect any player to contribute more than he would try to contribute himself
  - Disciplined – keeps his cool
  - Demonstrates sportsmanship
  - Understands smart body checking is part of the game – doesn't shy away
  - Unselfish - puts the team ahead of himself
  - Performs well under pressure
- Liked by the players
- Thinks, talks and acts positively about overcoming the team's challenges
- Stands up for his teammates on and off the ice
- Communicates well
  - When he says something to the team it means something
  - Is listened to by the players
  - Is easy to talk to
  - Encourages his team mates
  - Is a liaison among the players and the coaches
  - Can talk with the refs on the ice in a respectful and direct manner

Go over these points with the players and ask them for their ideas and input.

Then allow the players to elect their captain and assistants/alternates by secret written ballot, and announce the results to the team.

During the course of the season make sure you communicate with the team captain and the assistants/alternates frequently about any important aspect concerning the team. Obtain their input, and give them yours. Ask them to come to you about issues of concern to the players. This will help you deal with the team issues in a timely way.

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