1. THE IMPORTANCE OF SKATING PRACTICE TO HOCKEY PLAYERS:
   Who should practice skating and why?
   Skating is comprised of a series of motions, many of which are un-natural to the normal motions of the human body. Hockey players must therefore learn/be taught to execute these skating motions correctly. Since they are so unnatural, this is not an easy process. Once learned and understood, they must then be practiced repetitively over the long-term. It takes many years to perfect skating maneuvers to the point where they are ingrained and seemingly natural.

2. IS THERE A RIGHT AND A WRONG WAY TO TEACH HOCKEY SKATING?
   I believe that the right way to teach hockey skating is to break down each maneuver into its many parts. Students should learn each part separately and perform drills designed specifically to work on each part. The parts must then be put together into the “whole” maneuver. The goal is for the "whole" maneuver to be performed correctly.

3. THREE ASPECTS OF TEACHING HOCKEY SKATING MANEUVERS.
   I follow this sequence in my teaching methodology:
   a. correctly, b. powerfully, and c. quickly.
   At first, correctly is the most important aspect to technique development. After players can execute a maneuver correctly, then they must learn to execute it correctly and powerfully. Then, quickly. Then, correctly, powerfully, and quickly. Finally, correctly, powerfully, and quickly, with the puck, and under lots of pressure.
   It takes a many years for young players to achieve the ultimate combination. More elite players can achieve the ultimate combination much more quickly.
   Note to coaches: Each maneuver should first be practiced without the puck, and as players improve, with the puck.
4. COMMUNICATING WITH PLAYERS WHILE TEACHING SKATING TECHNIQUES:

I believe that telling players to "do this" or "do that" or to "follow me" doesn't work. Most players won’t know what you are trying to teach them. Also, they will think that they're following you whereas that may not be so. Everyone’s idea of following you may be different because everyone sees, hears, feels and thinks differently. Note to Coaches: We should not rely just on the senses for learning - the brain must understand what and why. The senses should be incorporated into this process.

5. THE “FAST” METHOD:

The teaching method that I use stresses understanding (at all ages). I try to utilize all the senses. I want students to see (visualize), feel, hear, and think. I call it the FAST method - FEEL, ACT, SEE, THINK. All of my skating drills are designed with this philosophy in mind.

6. SKATING POSITION, BALANCE AND POWER.

Skating position and balance are critical to power. Skating is such a precise and intricate activity that any loss of position and balance creates problems – the result is that power and speed are negatively affected.

Forward crossovers – the second - “X” - push

7. HOW MUCH SKATING? WITH OR WITHOUT THE PUCK?

I believe that skating should be incorporated into every practice. Not just skating for endurance but skating for technique. Even if there's only enough time to practice skating for a few minutes out of every hour, this is better than no time at all. A good approach is to teach skating skills early in the season, to review them often (remind players) and practice skating skills (even for short periods) as often as possible as the season progresses. As players get more adept at maneuvers they should practice the skating maneuvers with pucks.

Youngsters get bored if they don't use the puck, so we sometimes let them practice with pucks even if they're not ready for them. Elite players often prefer to learn and practice without the puck, because they realize the importance of perfecting techniques before incorporating the puck.

It's a great idea to have short scrimmages that include "skating rules" – for example, how many times players have to crossover (or turn, or pivot, or stride, or skate backward) before shooting or passing, etc. Kids love to "play by the rules" and they learn well when playing fun games.

8. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES:

There are always differences - some because of the way people are built (physique, or structure), what they're comfortable with, how they learn, what works best for them. I've seen players who skate fast but do not skate the way I would teach them to skate if I were teaching them. However, it works for them. And if it works, why try to change it? I always say, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it". Also, there is no substitute for talent! People used to say that Gretzky could have been better if his posture was better. However, I never saw anyone catch him when he wanted to turn on the speed! Had I taught him from the time he was a child, I would have worked on posture but at his level I wouldn't have tried to change his style because it worked for him.

Because people learn in different ways, we have to use many different methods of teaching. Some ways of explaining things work for some people but not for others. Some visualizations work for some but not for
others. Some drills work for some but not for others. Therefore we must have many different ways of both explaining things and we must use many different drills to teach the same thing.

For a detailed explanation of how to execute each hockey skating push correctly and powerfully, refer to LAURA STAMM’S POWER SKATING, fourth edition. Also check for an upcoming Laura Stamm Power Skating Clinic in your area.

SKATE GREAT HOCKEY!

Laura Stamm
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