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PC: For 7 to 13 year old kids, what do you think are some of the more important aspects for long-term, positive development?

WH: One of the most important things for kids is enjoyment of the game. Are they really looking forward to wanting to go to the rink, wanting to practice and wanting to play? Having them ask themselves and focus on 'how good do I want to be?' Everyone has a potential. But when you look at the Gretzky's and the greatest, they all have that plan.

PC: If you have a talented son, he's nine years old and he wants to be good, what should he do during the spring and summer? Playing tournaments, playing games?

WH: Personally, I like the European model where they train year round, but they train in a lot of different sports. They're playing a lot of soccer and developing a lot of different skills. I think there's probably a saturation point in terms of number of games. For example, I talked to a coach coaching a PeeWee team and they had shirts made saying this is our 250th game this year. They were proud of it,

but I think there's something wrong there. One thing is that the practice to game ratio should be practicing three times and playing once, rather than the reverse. Having practices that are really fun, with a lot of competitive games where they don't even realize that they're working on skills. If you say 'we have to practice and work on our skills', they think it's boring. If the practice is fun and the games are competitively based, then they will enjoy it. Having kids play 3 on 3 in practice, it's incredible. If I could suggest one thing in youth hockey, it would be to get rid of the whistle. Time spent lining up for face-offs is a waste of time. When you play 3 on 3, they've got to give up the puck and the coach wings it to the other end. So, the kids coming off skate hard because they want to be the first back on, so they go to the gate and get back in line. The kids just end up playing hockey at a high pace and enjoying themselves. Passion and memories are extremely important because there has to be something that creates a love for the game.

PC: How do you think that love is created? You have worked with Gretzky, Bourque, Sakic, Lemieux etc, how do you think those guys developed a love for the game?

WH: I'd say they got it growing up and just 'playing' hockey. Many of them had youth coaches that allowed them to be creative and have fun and from a lot of unstructured situations. For example, Gretzky's backyard rink. He said himself that a lot of the times he was out there, he was alone just pretending it was the Stanley Cup. He said he'd have fun with others, but he was out there alone. Those kinds of things are really memorable moments.

PC: For example tennis players and phenoms in other sports, start competing and specializing at a very young age. At what point is the time, in hockey, to increase the intensity level of training and commit yourself to excel?

WH: There's three stages: The first stage is ages 6-12 and it is supposed to be the sampling stage, where they're playing a lot of sports and, finding which sports they truly enjoy. The second stage occurs at ages 13-15, and it's called the specialization stage. Here they start going to extra hockey camps, the off-ice training and all that. The third stage occurs at ages 16 and up is the investing stage, where you really start investing time and money to get better. I think now, specialization is starting too early. When you look at

guys like Gary Roberts and Joe Newendike, you ask yourself 'why are they so good around the net?' It's because they played lacrosse. They were great, high-level lacrosse players. Whether it's playing baseball, soccer or lacrosse, it's doing these other things that develop other skills that can be applied to hockey. That's why the European model is so good, it allows that child to develop hand-eye coordination, athleticism, quickness, agility etc. These are all attributes that are vital as a hockey player.

PC: What is going to happen to a PeeWee team, the kids who have played 120 games per year? What is your prediction? Will they all play at top levels or in the NHL?

WH: I predict one maybe none, would make it. I also believe many of these players will become disenchanted with the game over time.

PC: What would you predict for that 12-year-old on that second line of that team? What would you think his feelings will be when he's 28 years old and he thinks back on his hockey experience?

WH: The kid on that particular team, probably wouldn't think favorably

about his experience. That team would probably shorten the bench and let the kids know pretty clearly who is and who is not going to make it. I think what you want to be doing with these kids is instilling that passion and love of the game. A lot of those kids have fun creating in small game situations. There are two important variables from a motivational point of view. First, who is determining if the kid wants to go to practice or not? Is he being pushed or doing it on his own? Two, is he in an environment where he can develop those skills, feel he's getting better and feeling good about himself? Fun, enjoyment and skill development, all those things are important. Parents should communicate to their kids, unconditional acceptance. This is the feeling that I love you and am proud of you and accept you no matter what, not just because you're doing well and excelling as an athlete. Unconditional acceptance is most important, along with emotional support. Parents need to be involved and show interest without being intrusive. If you want a child at the pinnacle of a triangle, a coach at one end and a parent at the other end and ask them all the same questions, you'll get three different answers.

PC: How long have you been involved with hockey and education?

WH: 25 years, more. I finished my doctoral work in '76, so I've been doing a lot of speaking and research. But even before then I was coaching - midget, college, university - so I was at a number of different levels. Even after my Phd, I went back to coach kids hockey. It's much easier to coach a college or university team than it is a kids team because the parents aren't that prominent. In a Pee Wee league there was a coach the kids didn't like so they signed a boycott to get rid of him. It almost worked, they parents started it and the kids signed it. It's called modeling and reinforcement - what they kids see and learn from their parents and the behaviors the kids begin to practice because of their parents. The kids don't learn sportsmanship. You're trying to teach, at a young level, values. One of those values is respect. Respect your teammates, respect your coach, officials and the game. Those values will be with them forever. When a teammate's down, pick him up.