

# Training For Youth Hockey

By Mike Boyle

This is the answer to my most frequently asked question. What should I do with my son/daughter this summer he/she is less than 13?

Ten to twelve year olds do not need to train, they need to play! Children should first and foremost be allowed to be children. They should be encouraged to play other sports, have friends, and have a normal childhood. I have seen zero correlation between early training and success in hockey. I have seen a high correlation between general athletic development and high achievement. As most hockey parents know Chris Drury (1999 NHL Rookie of the Year) was pitching in the Little League World Series at 12. He had never weight trained prior to his freshman year at BU. This seems to be the case with most of our NHL players (Tkachuk, Amonte, Bates, McEachern etc.). Don't try to build a little robot. Encourage the development of a young athlete.

I am shocked that so much of the mail and phone calls that I receive are from parents of children ages 8-12. Most often these are well-meaning parents who sincerely want to do what is best for their child. Unfortunately as adults we have a tendency to force our value system on to children. The most destructive force that I have encountered in youth sports is well-meaning parents. We don't want to let kids be kids anymore. We are working to get them a competitive advantage such as a better school, a better program, a better coach. I also know the response that I always get: "It's not me pushing him (or her), the child really wants to do this". What kids really want to do is please their parents. Encourage your child to be a normal well-adjusted person and hope that the athletic development comes. I would recommend Stephan Coveys book entitled, "First Things First" and look for an essay entitled " Making Champions of Your Children".

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