

High Performance Hockey Development: Developing the Complete Player

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When you think of the word HOCKEY, what comes to mind? For many in today's game, responses such as dangle, snipe, bardown, silky mitts, cheddar, twig, clappers, sauce, biscuit, apple, geno and flow are commonplace. This terminology has ingrained itself into the culture of hockey and often reflects much of the banter within the dressing room and on the ice.

My list would look more like this: Explosiveness, Strength, Speed, Agility, 1st Step Quickness, Change of Direction, Rotational Power, Body Angles, Weight Transfers and Reactivity. The ability to separate the culture of hockey and the game of hockey from the technical and athletic skills of hockey is the key to long term player development on and off the ice.

Hockey is a complex system of body mechanics, situational and environmental conditions that are constantly changing and evolving at high rates of speed. It is called the fastest game on earth for good reason. More than ever before, players have developed an innate ability to produce explosive force on the ice and they continue to

improve strength, power and agility that subsequently transfers into harder shots, bigger hits, quicker acceleration & transitions and exceptional puck control at top end speeds.

Analyzing all facets of the game and addressing a player's responsiveness to each component is a critical building block to prospective development. Players may naturally display instinctive qualities that allow them to excel in certain aspects of the game but lack consistency or proficiency in others.

Coaches Champion Development

Fostering environments that promote learning and development are major aspects to potential player advancement. The goal of any coach whether on or off ice, should be to create a positive recipe for success within team and/or individual frameworks. Encouraging progression, challenging players outside of their comfort zones, communicating and correcting inefficiencies, and supporting team and individual goal outcomes are paramount to successful coaching. When it comes to individual player development, everyone is different. No one player is the same as the next and therefore should be treated with a personalized approach. Goalies, defensemen and forwards all require different skill-sets and their individual roles on a team may not be the same. Consequently, players need to be coached in a specified context that challenges individual weaknesses, builds off strengths and supports the player's role on the team.

At TWIST, our philosophy is rooted in coaching. We don't train; We coach. Individualization is our prime concern, whether in a group or 1 on 1 scenario. We believe in providing 1 on 1 error detection, feedback and 360° active coaching that is meant to facilitate athletic development along with physical and mental maturation. Creating a sense of accountability is paramount and our coaches always strive to push the athlete to learn and grow as a hockey player both on and off the ice. This may include ensuring attendance and showing up on time to regularly scheduled workouts or on-ice sessions, encouraging healthy nutrition practices and/or adequate rest and hydration. We are always there to guide you along your path.

Our philosophy is simple:

- Training is repetitive; Coaching is progressive
- Training is for someone who wants to be pushed through a workout; Coaching is for someone who wants to learn, evolve and be better
- Training is being told what to do; Coaching is the collaboration, communication and correction to do it well

Our High Performance Development Camps are based on these principles. They are innovative, developed with a long term athlete development focus in mind and customized to match the unique needs of each player based on age (Pewee to Pro),

skill level, and specific goals.

High Performance Off-Ice Training

Hockey strength and conditioning has advanced significantly in the past 10+ years. An assessment of the sport from a physiological and biomechanical point of view identifies the need for a multi-dimensional approach to off-ice training. Skaters rely heavily on single leg sequencing, weight transfers and explosive movements. Off-season dryland training should reflect these movement and energy system requirements to foster the best possible return on the ice for the upcoming season.

We focus is on six pillars of hockey conditioning that aim to create a balanced approach and help build the COMPLETE player:

- 1 Balance/Posture and Joint Mobility
- 2 Explosive Speed, Deceleration & Acceleration
- 3 Multi-Directional Movement Skills and Reactivity
- 4 Linked System Athletic Strength and Power
- 5 Core Strength & Rotary Power
- 6 Anaerobic Energy Systems

The importance of these segments of training is not something that can be ranked. Each is important, in its own way, and provides support to the next. The biggest and most critical point to understand is that these pillars are intertwined and create a linked system that contributes to on-ice performance. For example, without adequate joint mobility our ability to generate explosive speed and power would suffer. Creating a balance within each of these divisions is vital to off-season development within the training facility.

High Performance On-Ice Development

Quality on-Ice instruction is essential to individual development during off-season months. It is not just about time spent on the ice but about time spent getting better on the ice. Players are constantly looking to improve their on-ice skill-set and find new ways to gain competitive advantages against their opposition. This ultimately shapes player performance and aids in overall team success, the most fundamental goal in hockey.

The transferability of our 6 pillars to on-ice instruction and player development is a critical step in the development process:

- 1 Balance/Posture and Joint Mobility = **Efficient Skating Mechanics, Deep & Long Stride, Edge Control**
- 2 Explosive Speed, Deceleration & Acceleration = **1st Step Quickness, Stop & Start, Change of Speed & Building Top End Speed**
- 3 Multi-Directional Movement Skills and Reactivity = **Efficient & Quick Change of**

- Direction, Offensive Creativity, Full Ice Reactive Ability & Vision
- 4 Linked System Strength and Power = Strength On & Off Puck, Combative Strength, Explosive Stride Power
 - 5 Core Strength & Rotary Power = Strength on Skates, Skating & Pivoting Speed, Torso Control & Shooting Power
 - 6 Anaerobic Energy Systems = Hockey Specific Anaerobic (Alactic & Lactic) Systems, Skill Execution under fatigue and the ability to recover quickly between shifts

We Identify the need for skill (shooting, passing, puck control, offensive creativity & small space scrimmaging), speed (linear & lateral takeoffs, 1st step quickness, quick feet crossovers and straight line explosiveness), battle & change of direction (multidirectional sequencing, quick stop and go's, body angling & 1 on 1, 2 on 2 tight battles), and game specific development (tactical focus, 1 on 1s, 2 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 1, 3 on 2, large ice scrimmaging) as foundational segments of on-ice instruction. Subsequently transferring movement patterns from off-ice instruction to on-ice sessions provides repetition and motor development that continue to promote mastery of specific skills.

The TWIST High Performance Difference

If I have one word to identify why our off-season development programs are successful I would have to choose 'balance'. Our philosophy is rooted in coaching and our aim is to provide as many tools as possible for individual players to translate off-ice workouts into on-ice performance. We create a balance in our programming and incorporate all aspects of hockey specific skill-sets that encourage heightened maturation. You can have the sickest FLOW in the league, but going BARDOWN or DANGLING a defender doesn't happen unless players put in the work to develop skill-sets that will produce results. Look for a development program that incorporates the 6 pillars of hockey conditioning and a coach that can uncover weak links and customize a program to help you become a COMPLETE player.