

## **Section 1 - School and Life**

No person, parent, or child should start out with a plan to make a career out of hockey. Hockey is a game. It should be fun, healthy, and full of great life lessons. It may become a passion for many, but it should never define the person. If, as a player ages and matures, and his abilities and potential create more opportunities in the game, let it take you as far as you can go. However, it should never be at the expense of their education and a well-rounded young life. It should be a part of it.

### **Top 10 Tips**

#### ***1. Do your best, don't settle for mediocracy.***

- People who do their best are always in high demand and are often given the benefit of the doubt if things are close or they need a break. Whether it be in school, applying for jobs, looking for promotions, working to make a team, or wanting to get noticed by coaches, hard workers who consistently give their best effort stand out. With school one never knows what the future will bring but you can be certain that establishing a positive reputation is always an advantage. Giving everything your best shot eliminates regrets and potential disappointments. If you can achieve 80% in a course, set that target and then some. Don't be lazy or find excuses like you didn't like the teacher or settle for less than you are capable of. I have seen many students fall short on applications or university admission requirements because they settled for 75% only to learn that in that year the university required 80% and they could have achieved that.

#### ***2. Establish good work habits early.***

- The sooner you learn and acquire good work habits the faster you will improve in any endeavor. Don't fall into the trap of getting by with poor work habits only to find out that next year or in high school or when it comes time for post-secondary you can't cut it. Don't expect to be able to turn a switch and you'll miraculously be able to meet requirements. The habits you get in are not easy to change and the longer you have them the more difficult it is to change. Seek help early and don't wait for a crisis. This is true in school, higher education, sports, music, jobs etc. There will always be those that seek to get better but don't know how. Establish the traits and habits that will allow you to improve and get ahead when the road becomes more challenging, the competition is tougher, and the stakes are higher.

#### ***3. Be known for your character.***

- Character is the difference maker, in school, in hockey and in life. Character is how you conduct your life, how you treat others, and how you contribute. Character is who you really are, not what mask you are wearing or what act you put on. Character is revealed by the decisions you make and how you behave when no one is watching. Students must realize that coaches and employers often look to your teachers and administrators as one of their first unbiased references when doing their research on you. Sure, they like hearing that you are a good student but what they really want to find out is something about your character. Observations on your leadership, your humility, your kindness and caring, your integrity and your work ethic are critical when they are making decisions on the people they want to hire or play for their team.

#### **4. Get involved in your school.**

- High school is a great time in a young person's life, and you only get to do it once. Don't let your passion and dedication for hockey blind you to other activities and opportunities. Get involved in your school, get to know other people and be open to new experiences. If you are feeling happy with life you will become a better hockey player as well. Coaches and employers are looking for well-rounded individuals, not people with tunnel vision and limited personal skills and talents. If you are looking at hockey academies, find ones that focus on the whole person not just the hockey player. Make sure there is time to play other sports, develop your leadership skills, enhance your ability to communicate, problem solve, and connect with students outside of hockey. You're preparing for life, not just a few years of hockey.

#### **5. Play other sports.**

- Apart from the rationale discussed above about getting involved in your school there is plenty of evidence and research behind young athletes playing multiple sports. First the medical and physiological evidence that playing one sport all year has detrimental effects on the developing young body. To put it bluntly playing hockey from September to March, playing on multiple teams, searching out every available extra ice time, hiring skills coaches, joining a spring league, attending every ID camp around and going to multiple summer hockey schools is **NOT GOOD** for you mentally, physically, or developmentally. For every player who follows this regime and has success there are dozens of casualties. The skills and attributes gained by playing other sports, the physiological and psychological advantages and the pure enjoyment and fun far outweigh any benefits of focusing on just one sport.

#### **6. Don't make excuses, take responsibility.**

- Always take responsibility for your own actions. Never pass the buck, point fingers at others or make excuses. These traits say a lot about a person and none of them is flattering. If you are not happy with an outcome the first place to look is in the mirror. If your marks are not what you want don't blame the teacher, you're the one with the most control of these results. Make changes, perhaps your study skills need work, you need to put in extra time, seek help, manage your time, and look for solutions, not excuses. The same is true for hockey. Own your responsibility and be a good teammate. Support others and work on your weaknesses.

#### **7. Ask for help and be an advocate for yourself.**

- Don't hide your struggles, ask questions, and find help. Everyone has challenges in school and in life and you are no different. You must find ways of meeting these hurdles and most often you can't do it alone. Communicate with your parents or other adults in your life. Get to know your counsellor and teachers. Do it soon and don't put it off until the issue is too big and difficult. Stick up for yourself and advocate for the help you need. Don't look for the faults in others but also don't expect that you can do it all on your own. Successful people work as a team, solve problems with others and communicate with one another.

#### **8. Be kind, cherish good friends but learn to make your own decisions.**

- Treat other people with kindness and compassion, you never know what they are going through. Don't judge people and always try to understand. Foster good friendships and let them know they are important to you. Stay away from cliques and remember to be your own person. Be defined not by what you do but who you are. Help others but make your own decisions even if they are not popular. Hold true to your values and morals as these should guide your decision making.

## ***9. Do it now, don't get in the habit of putting things off.***

- Learn to manage your time. Develop the discipline needed to follow through with priorities. Some things are more enjoyable or easier but know the things that are most important. It is a dangerous habit to put things off, to procrastinate. Get in the habit of doing the things that matter the most before the other stuff. All successful people have learned time management skills. Again, if you aspire to go to college or university and pursue hockey, there you will be a rude awakening if you haven't acquired an ability to manage your time and set priorities.

## ***10. A few suggestions for course selection and getting the most out of school.***

- Get a solid foundation in English and Math. They may not be your favorite subjects, but they are critical to success in school and to any post-secondary aspirations you may have. Try to avoid dropping to a lower level of English or math because it is easier. Work hard to maintain at least a C+ or B in these subjects as they are always set as priorities for university or college admission.
- Take electives you will enjoy and have interest in. Sometimes you may want or be encouraged to take less courses or perhaps a spare. If you can, avoid this temptation. School is an opportunity to explore your interests or discover new ones. Don't look at electives as something unimportant or frivolous. One of them may involve a field you pursue a career in.
- Don't shy away from the tougher subjects. It is never a good idea just to take the easiest route. Challenge yourself in high school and prepare to meet the challenges of post-secondary. Too many athletes take the easiest path only to find out they are ill-prepared to meet the rigor and possibly even the admission standards required for college or university.