

Breaking News

Shiv Jagday, well-known FIH coach, has agreed to sending us a monthly coaching article, starting with the one below "Developing a Young Athlete". A former Canadian and USA National team coach, Shiv learned the art of playing hockey in Punjab, India, imitating the all time great hockey players from the Olympic and World cup champion teams - India and Pakistan - in the 60's and 70's. He moved to Canada in 1977 and learned the science of hockey and the secrets of success of the European and Oceanic hockey teams, while attending the FIH coaching seminars and closely observing the top teams and coaches.

His coaching philosophy:

- Athlete centered and coach driven
- Treat athletes the way you would like to be treated ... with love & respect
- Keep the things simple
- There is no substitute for Basic skills and the correct technique to execute them
- Habits - good or bad - make and break the player
- Athletes have to have fun and learn in every practice
- Motto: Coach field hockey the correct way

Shiv welcomes feedback - you may reach him at coachshiv@aol.com.

"Developing a Young Athlete" by Shiv Jagday ****NEW****

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Introduction:

Study after study has indicated that the most influential coach in the development of a young athlete and his career is **his first coach**. The first coach is the one who will lay a solid foundation for the athlete. If the foundation is rock solid, the athlete will have the ability to scale the world's tallest mountains, whether it is Mount Everest, K2 or Kanchenjunga not just the insignificant hills that can be taken on with easy steps.

As the athlete grows, it is up to them - coach and athlete - to decide what they would like to climb . a mountain or a hill? But, it is with that first coach that their path is decided. It is this first coach that has the power to sow the seeds of greatness in the athlete, to inspire them to challenge themselves beyond the ordinary.

Some difficult truths:

It is sad to note that most young athletes are offered unskilled coaches in their earliest years. Many times, parents often opt for affordable beginner programs that have teens, moms or dads as the coaches.

Unfortunately, inexperienced coaches do more harm than good to the long term development of the young athlete.

Scientific Truth:

Dr Istvan Balyi, the world leader in planning, periodization, short and long term training and performance programs, says, "The most knowledgeable coaches work at the high

performance level rather than at the fundamental, learning to train, and training to train stages."

According to Nicole Sperekas, PhD, a former competitive swimmer, child psychologist and author of *A Sport For Every Kid*, "Youth sports coaches are often volunteers, even parents themselves - not professionals trained in sports physiology. Kids' training habits are not being overseen by someone really knowledgeable and this can be dangerous, leading to injuries, stress and burnout that might have been prevented otherwise."

What is the solution?

As these experts note, it is imperative that parents provide their children with the most knowledgeable and experienced coaches available in their community. Or at the very least, have experienced coaches available to work with young athletes on regular basis, if not regularly. Or at least act as mentors for the coaches at this level and guide them in the right direction.

At Shiv's Coaching Academy (SCA), we are working to provide this critical guidance for new coaches, as well as to develop more experienced coaches.

Short term gains for long term pains:

We usually like to achieve success instantly, by ignoring the consequences and cutting corners. This way we get short term gains for long term pains and wonder why we are not producing world class teams and field hockey players.

With my 35+ years of coaching experience of working at all levels of the athlete development model, I find it harder and harder to change and correct the techniques of athletes in their late teens and 20's compared to the ones who have just started playing in the age group of 9 - 12 years. **It is much easier to learn a new skill correctly the first time, than to correct the one with poor technique, later.**

Common question and answers regarding this vital topic

1. Are world class athletes born or are they developed?

The naked truth is that world class athletes are developed and not born. Nothing could be further than the truth, when we say, "He is a born champion." What we overlook or don't remember are the years of systematic training and daily quality coaching which had been invested in developing this champion athlete from the beginning.

According to Benjamin Bloom, a professor of education at the University of Chicago, in 1985, all the superb performers he investigated had "practiced intensively, had **studied with devoted teachers, and had been supported enthusiastically by their families throughout their developing years**". Later research building on Bloom's pioneering study revealed that "the **amount and quality of practice** were the key factors in the level of expertise people achieved."

2. How long does it take to develop a world class field hockey player?

According to Dr Istvan Balyi, "Scientific research has concluded that it takes eight to ten years of training for a talented athlete to reach elite levels. This is known in the scientific literature as the 10-year or 10,000-hour rule. It translates into **slightly more than three hours of deliberate practice daily for 10 years**. We know that a long-term commitment to

training is required to produce elite athletes in all sports. Unfortunately, coaches and parents in many sports still view training with an attitude best characterized as the 'peaking by Friday' approach."

3. Does it matter that at what age the athlete starts training?

Yes, it matters and is very important and plays a key role in an athlete's development and will decide what level the athlete will achieve. In other words, whether the athlete will be just a good hockey player or a great one. From my experience, an athlete should be introduced to the game at the age of 5 - 8, but not forced to play. Nurture the love of the game, allow them to float through the fundamental stage, having fun and laughing. As one grows older, so does their devotion to the game. The critical years for the athletes to develop the correct technique - good habits - to execute the basic skills and learn to play the game smartly, are during the years of 10 - 12. This is the learn to train stage. This is when the foundation for the style of play is laid. This also depends upon the individual athlete and their growth and whether they are early developers, average developers or late developers. During the years of 13 - 14, this foundation is made stronger and is polished and refined as the athlete grows older.

Another scientific concept we have to keep in mind is whether field hockey is an early or late specialization sport? Of course field hockey is a late specialization sport, compared to artistic and acrobatic sports like Gymnastics.

At the same time one has to remember that field hockey has very complex skills and they need to be learned and mastered to a certain degree, before the maturation stage. In girls this is under 12 and boys under 14.

4. How important is the first coach in the life of a young athlete, when he starts playing hockey?

In my opinion he is the most important coach, he is the one who will make or break the athlete's hockey playing career. He is the one, with his expertise, who will guide the young athlete in the right direction, with good habits, which will further dictate in determining whether the athlete will be just a good or a great one! The naked truth is that, usually at this stage of the athletic development model, the coaches with the vast experience and knowledge don't work with the beginners, as they are too busy with their high performance athletes and teams, those who are in their late teens and early 20's. In most cases, correcting the technique and improving upon the bad habits which were engraved in the athlete's style of play, due to the malnutrition in coaching at the beginner stage. It is an uphill battle. We in North America - and in some other parts of the world - keep doing this same thing and expect different - improved - results. **We ignore the law of cause and effect and on top of this do not want to face the reality.** This is a tragedy!

Commenting upon Canada's 2004 Olympic team performance, which had slipped from the 11th to 19th in country rankings, and confirmed a drastic weakening of the sport system since 1996, Dr Istvan Balyi, quoted, one of the reasons for this happening was that the most knowledgeable coaches worked at the high performance level, rather than at the fundamental, "learning to train", and the "train to train" stages of the athletes development. Here he was speaking about all the high profile sports, where Canada had previously excelled on the world scene.

5. Should the young athlete play field hockey only or play multiple sports and if yes, until what age?

Young athletes should play other sports too. This is a must. One has to be thoughtful of when to start focusing on single sport and master it, rather than playing multiple sports and become Jack of all trades and master of none. I would strongly recommend playing soccer, basketball and tennis, up till a child is 10, as these sports are very complementary to field hockey. The knowledge gained from these sports can easily be translated to field hockey. The question is when - at what age - should a child start focusing single mindedly on field hockey? The optimum time is when the child is 13 - 14 years of age.

Case Study:

Please allow me to share this example, to further elaborate this point. Ronnie Jagday, my son, played multiple sports when he was young and I never forced him to play field hockey, in fact, I discouraged him. Looking back, not a good idea on my part.

Ronnie represented Canada in the Olympic Games, World Cup and the Pan Am games. A good hockey player!

The following is a brief sketch of his development as an athlete and a hockey player:

Age	Activity	Representation	Comments
4 - 6	Playing in the back yard and streets	None	Just being physically active
6 - 8	soccer & soft ball	Organized club	Develop ABC's of Athleticism: agility, balance, coordination, and speed
8 -10	Soccer, basketball, tennis, ice hockey, street field hockey	Organized club	Please note there is no field hockey, introduced yet, except on street, in front of the house, once in a while, with dad.
10 - 12	Focus on tennis and soccer	Organized club	Ronnie ranked top 3, in Tennis BC U - 14 age group
12 - 14	Little bit field hockey	Joins Hawks club & plays in Cal Cup	This was Ronnie's first experience of field hockey tournament
14 - 16	Focus on Soccer & field hockey	Club and local tournaments	Please note Ronnie is focusing on 2 organized sports only, now
16 - 18	Field hockey	Canadian Jr nat. team U -21	Ronnie competes in the 1996 Barbados Jr. Pan am tournament
18 - 20	Field hockey	Canadian Sr. nat. team	Ronnie competes in the 1998 Utrecht world cup
20 - 22	Field hockey	Canadian Sr nat. team	Ronnie competes in the 2000 Sydney Olympics
22 - 24	Field hockey	Canadian Sr. Nat. team	2003 Pan Am games, 2004 Madrid Olympic qualifier
24 - 25			Ronnie retires from international hockey and focuses on studies & career

Comments:

- In my opinion Ronnie's participation in soccer and tennis helped him tremendously in becoming a good hockey player.
- During the training in stage of 14 - 16, his focus was tilting more and more towards field hockey. A single sport theory.
- During the training to compete stage 16 - 19 he single mindedly focused only on field hockey
- Another key factor which played a major role in Ronnie making the Canadian national team, was that the senior members of the team, whom I had coached when they were juniors, had a very good athlete-coach relationship with me. They wanted to thank me and went out of the way to take Ronnie under their wings, and mentor him. On top of this Shiaz Veergi, the national coach and myself had been working together for decades. Yes, these things matter and cannot be seen, but only felt. One has to win the heart of their teammates.
- During the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, Ronnie was the second youngest member of the team and was the only athlete on the team who did not sub for the whole tournament and played every second of the Olympics for the Canadian team. This was a rare honor which says something about his outstanding performance in the Olympics!

6. How important is it to practice with mind - intense focus - and the game situated simulation approach?

This is very important and is one of the key factors in the young athlete's over all development. When I see some athletes warming up or practicing without being mentally present and just going through the motions, and on top of this hear them talking of things other than hockey, I feel that they are not doing justice to themselves and their teammates. By the way, this affects the individual and the team's development and ultimately their performance. This is a challenge and a distraction. I politely advise them to think of a specific game situation related to their specific position and practice that situation accordingly, with their heart, mind and soul, being focused intensely.

This is true, whether I am preparing the national team athletes for international competition or developing young athletes. Some things never change.

The famous violinist Nathan Milstein wrote, "Practice as much as you feel you can accomplish with concentration. Once when I became concerned because others around me practiced all day long, I asked my mentor, Professor Auer, how many hours I should practice, and he said, 'It really doesn't matter how long. **If you practice with your fingers, no amount is enough. If you practice with your head, two hours is plenty.**'"

Translating this to hockey, if a young athlete in their mid teens does individual training for 30 - 45 minutes in the morning and regular 2 hour practice in the evening, 5 times a week, he can become the Michael Jordan of field hockey, presuming all the other areas of the game preparation are covered.

7. How do kids learn their skills?

They learn their skills by imitation and being corrected - positive feedback - at the optimum time. This is why it is so critical to have a knowledgeable and an experienced coach when the athlete starts playing hockey. Do it right the first time.

8. Does the correct technique to execute the basic skills matter?

Yes, of course it matters. The key question to ask ourselves is, do our coaches know the difference between executing the skill correctly and incorrectly? This is especially true for the coaches who are involved at the level when this sport is being introduced to the young athlete. If we know this, than there is no problem. But if this is not the case, we are not being true to ourselves. Unfortunately, this is often not the case in reality.

According to Michael Jordan "It comes down to a very simple saying: **There is a right way and a wrong way to do things. You can practice shooting eight hours a day, but if your technique is wrong, than all you become is very good at shooting the wrong way. Get the fundamentals down and the level of everything you do will rise**".

9. What role does positive feedback, healthy criticism and expectations play in the development of a young athlete?

All of the above are critical in developing the confidence and self image of a young field hockey player!!!

One thing which I always deliberately did with Ronnie when I used to give him ride from his soccer practices or games - which was only once in a blue moon as I had my field hockey coaching sessions at the same time with the Canadian national team - **was to provide positive feedback regarding his game and always mention that I liked, the way he played first time and made quality passes**. This resulted in his development into an unselfish player and a playmaker for the Canadian team at the Sydney Olympic Games.

The message here is for the parents to please observe their kids during the match or practice and always see what they are excelling at and provide positive feedback in that regard. The optimum timing is just when they sit in the car and the sports events are fresh in their memory.

10. What should the training to competition ratio be?

This is an important element in the athletic development model. One thing which I have observed over and over, is that we coaches make the young developing athlete over-compete and under-train. This becomes detrimental in the athletes optimum development.

Please refer to the table below. Its source is Canadian long term athlete development model.

Development Stage	Recommended Ratio
Learning to train	70% training to 30% competition
Training to train	60% training to 40% actual competition and competition-specific training
Training to compete	40% training to 60% actual competition and competition-specific training
Training to win	25 % training to 75% actual competition and competition-specific training

Conclusion:

There is a difference between knowing and doing. We tend to take an easy path, without realizing the negative consequences of it, in the long term. This is human nature. And this is where the great high performing athletes / teams and good performing athletes / teams separate. Good is the enemy of great, as good gives us a false sense of security.

We must do the things right for our young and upcoming athletes, as they are our future.

Every kid can win . Terry Orlick

References and acknowledgement:

Most of the information in the above article has been drawn from the Canadian Athlete development model designed by Dr Istvan Balyi, And of course tit bits have also been stolen from other authors, whose names have been recognized.

[Close Article](#)

"The 7 laws of field hockey to play it effectively" by Shiv Jagday

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Everything in the universe is governed by one law or another, and so is field hockey. Here are 7 core laws of the game, to play it smartly and effectively. Whenever any individual athlete, or the team as a whole, steps away from it, it affects - diminishes - its effectiveness. Of course, there are times when there is an exception to every law, during the run of play. These laws also govern the game of soccer and basketball. In my opinion, these sports employ some, if not all, the laws to a higher degree and effectiveness, than compared to field hockey. Here are the 7 laws.

1. Ball travels faster than the player:

This is a pure and simple law and does not need much explanation. At the same time, during the heat - run - of the game, one so often sees it under-employed and misused and even abused. This hurts even the most skillful teams when they do not abide by it.

2. Play first time - one touch - field hockey:

In other words, play a passing game as it keeps the individuals and the team on their toes and keeps them moving. It also makes it harder for the opponents to keep up. Yes, there may come an opportunity to run with a ball, a few yards, and end up with a shot on a goal. Go for it when the timing is optimum.

For example: the Brazilian soccer team are the masters of this law, as their winning record shows.

3. The player who passes you the ball is free 9 out of 10 times:

Please observe this law during the next game or practice. You will be pleasantly surprised how true it is. It is surprising how many teams don't take maximum advantage of it and get into trouble time and time again.

4. Play the right side to build the attack and the left side to score the field goals:

This is a powerful concept and employed diligently by the top teams. The key field goals, in the very critical matches, have been scored from a pass of a right inner floating in the play-making space to the leading center forward. There is always some room for flexibility in this law, as some teams prefer to attack from the left, as they have a strong left inner, for example Pakistan with Shabaz Ahmed in the 1994 Sydney World Cup and Holland with Teun de Nooijer, in recent times, when he plays in this position.

Shining example: While observing and correlating the video tapes from the men's 1962 and 1990 soccer World Cup finals, the winning goals came from this same situation, using the above law and so did in the women's 2007 China soccer World Cup final, where Germany scored the winning field goal against Brazil.

5. Play in triangles maintaining the width and depth of it:

The law - concept - is to divide the whole team in to mini departments, namely right-side triangle, left-side triangle, midfield triangle, etc, to employ offensive or defensive strategies, during the run of play. Just a tip: while building an attack employ the right and left side, attack, with the ratio of 60% to 40%, respectively.

Please also refer to the flexibility example mentioned in Law #4. Looking at the big picture this triangle play also complements the Law of using the width and depth of the whole field, to create and exploit space.

6. Change the focus of play from the left to the right and vice versa:

When the ball comes from the left side (left inner), pass it to the right side (right inner or right winger), thus getting the opponents shifting from one side of the field to the other, and in case they are not fast enough to recover or react, they can be caught in the middle, which will leave wide open gaps to be exploited.

This concept is employed to a high degree by the top teams in the world, by moving the ball in the back, employing the services of the back four defensive players. They are very effective.

7. Center half and sweeper back are the base - axle - of the team, on which the whole team rotates and functions:

Before the no off-side rule came into play in 1996, the center half was the key player and with the combination of the midfield triangle of centre half, right inner and left inner, formed the base on which the whole team rotated and functioned. Now this is mostly governed by the sweeper back / right full-back with the combination of the back four defensive players namely, right half, right full back, left full back and left half back, to form the base on which the team functions effectively.

Conclusion:

As coaches, we all think a lot. A zillion thoughts dance in our mind, they come and go. We like to let go most of them and capture some key ones. It is always beneficial to jot down the thoughts on a piece of paper or your notebook, especially the ones which come to your mind while in the shower - where one is in the state of mind which is most serene - to give them a format for future reference, particularly if they are as important as the above laws of the game.

By the way, Jack Nicklaus, the legendary golfer's most creative thoughts came to his mind, when he was in the shower. The question is how will one jot them down, while one is taking a shower? This is a dilemma which one needs to solve creatively and gracefully.

Cheers, your comments and feed back will be most appreciated. My email address is coachshiv@aol.com.

With Best Regards,

Shiv Jagday

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