



## Training a Young Athlete

There are many ways to develop young hockey players. In Part 1 of a 2-part article SST will discuss some of what we believe to be important in the development of young athletes.

### 1. Play Lots of Different Sports

Many people believe playing hockey, and only hockey, will make their son or daughter an excellent player. This may happen for some, but those athletes are in a minority. If you ask any pro athlete whether they played a wide range of sports when they were young, they will, more often than not, reply in the affirmative. By taking part in a wide variety of sports an athlete develops a huge range of physical skills, which ultimately improves hand, foot, and eye coordination, resulting in improved performance in their sport. SST highly recommends sports such as soccer, lacrosse and martial arts for all young hockey players. Don't get me wrong, there is a time to concentrate on a specialization, but this shouldn't occur until the teen years for a hockey player.

### 2. Train the Core

Training the core feels like hard work but it is a necessity for the prevention of injuries and to improve the overall strength of the body. The core region includes the abs, lower back and all the surrounding muscles of the hip. Remember you are only as strong as your weakest link. If an athlete's core area is weak there will be a susceptibility to groin injuries which will interfere with the ability to reach potential strength optimum. A good way to develop core strength is to perform exercises on a Swiss Ball. In the upcoming weeks SST will provide information about Swiss Ball exercises.

### 3. Develop your Posterior Chain

I don't mean just sitting on your butt. The posterior chain includes your lower back, hamstrings, glutes and calves. These muscles are responsible for up to 80% of speed and power development. Most people will do a few sets of hamstring curls and believe this to be enough. Wrong! Train the chain as a unit with a Reverse Hyper or a Glute Ham Raise. If suitable equipment is not available, try partner glute ham raises or do Swiss ball reverse hypers. In the upcoming weeks SST will provide information on these different exercises.

### 4. Train for Speed and Agility

Many studies have shown that the ages of 9 to 14 are crucial for the strong development of speed and agility. Performing an assortment of drills or taking part in a wide variety of sports enhances agility. When developing speed, SST stresses proper technique. Just recently, SST tested 400 teenage football athletes and found that only about 1% had correct technique. As sprint coaches would say, 'Learn the A, B's and C's of running'. You may be wondering how sprinting would make your son/daughter skate faster. Just last summer SST athletes were involved in a study comparing on-ice and off-ice speed. SST's findings showed the fastest athletes off-ice were the fastest skaters on-ice. How does this happen? Sprinting develops fast twitch fibers and these same fibers are responsible for the power and acceleration involved in skating.

### 5. Stress Form Not Weight

SST laughs when one of our athletes comes in and says their friend is benching 300 lbs at the age of 15. First we tell them "Unless you see it, don't believe it." We want you to train using proper form and trust that the increases in weight lifting ability will come. Incorrect form is the main reason young athletes get injured in the weight room. You would be doing yourself and your child a favor by making sure a professional trainer shows your child the safe, correct form to use when lifting weights.

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