



ARTICLE OF THE MONTH

APRIL

The Toughest Time of the Year

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I thought this would be the perfect time for this article. Many hockey people think that Managers, Coaches and Boards of Directors toughest time of the year is losing the District Playdowns, the State Championship, that tournament, it is not.

Tryout and evaluation time gives me, and many others in my position the opportunity to test the latest anti-depressant medications. I know that the majority of evaluators do not let politics enter into their decisions and I am smart enough to know that very few, thank God, do. Having said that let me cut to the quick.

I personally detest this time of the year as all the others mentioned above do. After all we are dealing with children and parents emotions. I am a parent. Every year it becomes a lose, lose proposition.

Our society places too much emphasis on winning, being the best and absolutely nothing on having fun. No one accepts responsibility for anything, it is always somebody else's fault, or, there is a conspiracy, or it's all politics. How many parents are willing to admit their child is not, Tony Amonte, Pedro Matinez, or Drew Bledsoe? You get the point. A hand full at best. Most parents say nothing, but some have to place their proverbial foot in their proverbial mouths.

Believe this, or not I don't sleep very well during this time of the year and know many others who do not as well. I don't like cutting players in my Select program and in my hometown program, parents perceive the "B" team as the kiss of death. Sound familiar?

I get hate mail; hate e-mail, phone calls and threats over evaluations and tryouts. I get called every conceivable position in fornication placed in front of my name and in the back of my name. Yet, each year I go back for more, as others do.

Why? I know that I have never cut a player, or chose a player for the "B" team because of a parent. God knows I could have, most of you would have. I don't!

I believe 99.9% of the evaluators are trying to do the best they can.

My son tried out for an Elite team almost a lifetime ago, but I remember it vividly. Now I could have taken the route of blaming my son's deficiency on the politics, or those &%\$#\$& don't know anything about hockey, or my favorite, the team was already picked and they just want my tryout money. If you have been involved in any of the youth sports for as long as I have, believe me you get to hear them all.

I chose a different approach; first, I looked at the picked team list. I never allowed my son to see the list, and after seeing my son was not picked. I took him out for a cheeseburger and I told him he didn't make the team and that means you have a choice. I can get you more training if you want to tryout again next year, or you can play at the town level. I explained to him that not everybody is going to be a good hockey player but everybody has the opportunity to be good at something. Hockey players depend on good people for things that they are not good at. He said "like what Dad?" I said, "Do you remember when you got injured and needed a doctor? How about the coach, teachers." Well, once again you get my point. My son was over his disappointment in a short period of time but not before I agreed to get him better prepared for next years tryout. He wanted so much to be as good a hockey player, as he could be.

When the time came I sent him to a hockey camp for 8 weeks and he got a lot better. Not a Ray Bourque better, but a lot better. The following season he tried out for another Elite Club and I remember walking up to the posted list, fearful, querying myself, if he didn't make it this time, what was I going to say. He made it! Understanding that this was not one of the dominant teams in that league, he still made it.

Over the years I have learned as a parent not to place un-real expectations on my child. He/she doesn't have to be a hockey star for you to love them. Love and enjoy your children for who they are because they grow up in a blink of an eye. Unless there is real injustice don't make a fool of yourself. The "B" team means your child needs more work or that is the level of play your child should play at. There really are not vast conspiracies against children. Almost all of the time, evaluators are trying to do the best they can. Wait a couple of days after a tryout and if you feel that the evaluation was still wrong then speak to someone about it. Don't yell, threaten, or verbally abuse any of the evaluators or your point will be lost and you will be labeled one of those parents. Visualize your presentation as if it were on videotape to be played back in front of an audience. I find my presentation and point get across much better if I do this.

Why speak about this now?

I'm not sleeping very well these days.....