

OBSERVATIONS FROM THE RINK: SO YOU DON'T WANT TO PASS THE PUCK!

November 17, 2019 Craig Eagles @Eags37 InFocus with Craig Eagles 3 comments

So You Don't Want to Pass the Puck? Does it start in IP or Novice when parents put money down for goals?

Does it start because they are head and shoulders better than everyone else and no one can keep up with them?

Does it continue in Pee Wee and Bantam because they are head and shoulders bigger than everyone else?

OR

Is it just plain old selfishness? You can be the judge, but I know where I stand.

I was taught along time ago to pass the puck. If you didn't pass the puck you were told.

That's right there was actually feedback given when a player or players didn't move the puck.

We didn't have iPads or fancy technology, we had coaches that held us accountable.

Funny, my longtime coach and mentor Dale Turner's son Ryan played with us all the way up through.

Dale God rest his soul was equally hard if not harder on Ryan than all of us.

Ryan was a special player, he had elite level skill and it seemed like Ryan always had the puck on his stick like many skilled players do.

You see Ryan felt the wrath of his father on a few occasions when he didn't move it quick enough.

The yell/command reigned down from the bench it.

"Move it up"

"For crying out loud, pass the puck"

By the time any of us who held on to the puck or took an ill-advised shot on net when we should of passed it Dale would meet us as soon as we came off the ice.

I'm not seeing that coaching style anymore.

It's gone and it would appear the urgency to move the puck has gone along with it.

I don't give a rats ass how good you are or think you are, pass the damn puck.

I realize that as a scout, I'm supposed to be invisible, file my reports and keep my thoughts to myself, but this is an epidemic. It's ruining the game.

It's like I'm watching NBA basketball and there's a set play for isolation. That's not hockey. For the last three years, I've written several articles and made several "Observations from the Rink" on this very topic.

I tried to make them sound as original as I could every time, but to be brutally honest I just shake my head.

I just want to scream at the top of my lungs "Pass the damn puck."

So many players these days feel compelled to over handle the puck.

Overhandling the puck sure as hell isn't creativity and it is sure as hell not offensive upside.

It's selfishness. I'll tell you right now it won't float at the next level.

You better believe people that know the game, see it.

Your subtle selfishness is as clear as day.

There are some people out there that assume the problem will fix itself when they make the jump to the next level.

Let me be the first, because coaches aren't, that doesn't translate to the next level. It just doesn't.

You will get rocked, you won't see the ice and maybe the worst of all is being called out not by the coach, but by the players.

At the next level, you will get "freezed out."

When you get called out by your line mates for not passing that's the ultimate insult.

You see more and more players are trying to implement the "look off or look away" move to their repertoire.

Trust me, it's not working.

Those same players that tried all the dekes, toe drags, head fakes then shoot from a brutal angle or turn the puck over.

What really gets me and is the most perplexing of all of this is their teammates reaction.

They don't say anything. Trust me their body language says it all.

Puck movement during the Prospects game was outstanding!

What boggles my mind even more is the lack of feedback from the bench.

Coaches these days seem oblivious to selfish play.

So you don't want to pass the puck? Oh well, maybe the player doesn't think it very well. Oh that's horseshit to.

They know damn well they could have moved it, but maybe I'll get noticed more if I have the puck on my stick the most.

WRONG.

I notice the kid that moves it quick, jumps into the play, doesn't over handle it. You see friends, that translates to the next level.

The best players at the Midget level don't have the puck on their stick a long time because they move it.

Don't believe me just watch the game. Oh if you're an analytics person, look at the numbers, do your thing.

Quality shots, oh so and so had 12 shots in the game yeah how many goals could his/her winger have if they would have passed the puck.

The old adage "the puck moves faster than the man" rang true this past weekend or did it?

Game after game you begin to notice a team's culture.

Do they share the wealth or are they a bunch of puck hogs?

You don't have to look any farther than the power play. It's a perfect indicator.

Do they look for option four or five hell no, they just try to create offence for themselves, it's sad really.

The same old play time and time again, let me do my thing and try to get my shot through, let me take over the game with my skill.

I'll let you in on a little secret your skill will only translate to the next level if you pass the puck.

All the time and space that they might have had while being the "best" player at the Bantam level drastically reduces in Midget, that's why first year kids struggle so much for the first few games.

Oh does it seem more physical.

Why yes it does. Why would that be? Maybe because your overhanding of the puck causes you to skate into trouble and get hit.

Seriously maybe the iPad or video will tell you that if you need more convincing.

Look at the film.

These days every team has access to video.

The absolute worst aspect of all of this, is the lack puck movement and willingness to share the wealth spreads, it becomes a pandemic.

A form of hockey greed takes over, and you get players thinking they are more skilled than the other teammates and then that's when the freezing out starts.

It's subtle, but you can see it, especially on the power play.

"Yeah I saw you open, but that guy was closing in on you and had his stick in the passing lane."

Listen, I've heard all the excuses.

Just pass the damn puck.

Culture.

You want to talk about culture, I'm convinced one of largest reasons for conflict on highly skilled teams is an unwillingness to play as a team.

Everyone talks about personalities or ego, that should all go away when they step on the ice, but it doesn't. When teams and organizations become fixated on offensive numbers and stats that throws team chemistry for a loop.

To be honest it ruins it.

Stat driven teams never fully grasp the concept of growth and development, it cultivates "an all about me" mentality.

Good luck trying to win with that atmosphere and team culture.

Don't believe me.

Just watch after that kind of team scores you can see all the players looking at each other trying to figure if they got the secondary assists and see how everything worked out before heading down the bench for handshakes.

So you don't want to pass the puck?

Pretty simple response to that from my perspective.

Sit your ass down here for awhile and figure shit out, or you will develop a really bad case of "Splintericitis" a condition that arises in some hockey players that are selfish puck-hogs.

"Splintericitis" has one known cure, passing the puck and gaining back the trust of your coach and teammates.

That's what I'm seeing. Trust me it's hard to watch, but one can only imagine playing with someone like that on your team.

Quick Hits

1. To the player that moves the puck, I see you, I appreciate you more than ever before.
2. Quick puck moving teams are hard to play against, because they are unpredictable.
3. To the selfish puckhog, I see you and I really hope someone shares this with you and by the way pass the damn puck.