

Tappara B2: Start of the competitive season

Ville-Valtteri Reini



Degree programme

<p>Authors Ville-Valtteri Reini</p>	<p>Group DP15</p>
<p>The title of your thesis Tappara B2: Start of the competitive season</p>	<p>Number of pages and appendices 48+1</p>
<p>This thesis was created as a learning diary of an eight-week period, at which point the author works as assistant coach in Tappara B2 (U17) team. The author has been working in Tappara and with this current team since May 2019.</p> <p>The current job is analysed and the different aspects of being an ice-hockey coach specified. The actual diary follows the daily life at the start of the competitive season. The diary is written on a daily basis including all practises, games and other events of the team. The diary includes weekly analysis on the aspects of planning and implementation, communication, goal setting, load management, growth mindset, testing, team cohesion, and the coaches resources.</p> <p>Firstly, the main observations during this 8-week period include my own development as a coach, based on literature and experiences. Secondly, on the basis of constant development of the players and team throughout the observation period. During the 8-week observation period I developed my own skills and working methods regarding delegation, communication, and identifying people's strengths and weaknesses. I also increased my knowledge in physical and on-ice training for this particular age group, by researching new materials.</p> <p>Coaching is a life-long pursue for development and this 8-week observation period is a short period. Analysing learnt skills and new methods are important for the future of my professional career. In the discussion part of the thesis, a conclusion of the season so far is included, and the development needs discussed comprehensively.</p>	
<p>Keywords ice-hockey, coaching, coaching skills, communication, development</p>	

Table of contents

1	Introduction.....	3
1.1	Tappara as a club.....	4
2	Job Description.....	5
2.1	Analysis of current job	5
2.1.1	Vision and strategy.....	5
2.1.2	Planning and implementing physical training	5
2.1.3	Planning and implementing on-ice skills training.....	6
2.1.4	Managing forwards at games and training.....	6
2.1.5	Be in charge of shorthanded plays.....	6
2.1.6	Be in charge of attacking-zone-attacking play tactics.....	6
2.1.7	Professional assessment	7
2.1.8	Professional development.....	7
2.1.9	Communication and staff.....	8
2.2	The Team	9
2.3	Stakeholders	10
2.4	Environment.....	11
3	The Diary	12
3.1	Week 1	12
3.1.1	Week 1 analysis	15
3.2	Week 2	16
3.2.1	Week 2 analysis	18
3.3	Week 3	20
3.3.1	Week 3 analysis	22
3.4	Week 4	23
3.4.1	Week 4 analysis	25
3.5	Week 5	26
3.5.1	Week 5 analysis	29
3.6	Week 6	31
3.6.1	Week 6 analysis	33

3.7	Week 7	37
3.7.1	Week 7 analysis	40
3.8	Week 8	41
3.8.1	Week 8 analysis	44
4	Discussion.....	45
5	Bibliography.....	47
6	Appendices.....	49

1 Introduction

During this diary-based thesis, I worked half-time for Tappara. This diary follows my weekly schedule as the assistant coach for Tappara B2(U17) at the beginning of the competitive phase of the season. The diary starts 2.9.2019 and ends 26.10.2019, lasting 8 weeks altogether. During that time period, our team practises 3 to 5 times a week and plays 13 games. All team events and their contents are described, days off left unmentioned. At the end of each week, is an in-depth analysis of the past week based on literature and my own thoughts.

As part of my work for Tappara, I also work as a sports instructor at various schools around the Tampere area. The sport instruction part of my job is left out of the diary, as they are not essential to my working and development as a hockey coach.

I have left out all names, not to identify any players or other personnel around the team, so I would not inadvertently cause any harm to them in the future.

Within the coaching staff, we work as a team and I will refer to most of the decisions and actions to be done by “we”, meaning the head-coach, assistant coach(me) and the goalie coach. Within the coaching process, I have certain responsibilities, which are more closely described later.

Essential skills at my work are interaction and communication skills, as well as coaching knowledge in physical, mental and hockey-specific knowledge.

I chose to reflect my own professional development and coaching methods based on “Coaching Better Every Season” by Gilbert (2016), “Sport Psychology for Coaches” by Burton & Raedeke (2008) and “European Sports Coaching Framework” by Lara-Bercial et al., (2017), among other sources.

Coaching Better Every Season was an easy choice, as it is a comprehensive study of all the phases during the season. Sports Psychology for Coaching I chose because it contains in-depth analysis of communication and its importance. European Sports Coaching Framework was chosen because it identifies the skills and competences required working as a coach. For example, it contains the Long-Term Athlete Development model (Balyi, I, 1995) which is an interesting model to maximise the potential of every individual athlete.

Professional glossary:

On-ice

Off-ice

Drill

Edgework

Skating diversity

U17

1.1 **Tappara as a club**

Tappara's predecessor TBK was founded on the 9th of December 1932. Men's first team was first promoted to national championship level in 1942 and as has been there ever since, apart from the season 1965-1966. TBK was re-branded as Tappara in 1955 to be more appealing for the Finnish speaking players. As of today, TBK and Tappara combined have won 17 national championships and 42 medals all together, which makes it the most successful team in the elite level of Finland.

Tappara's junior department is run by Tappara Ry. which includes the sports of ice-hockey and figure-skating. The main purpose and target of Tappara Ry. is that as many as possible within the club has an opportunity to do these sports at their own level, recreationally or competitively. For the talented and motivated players, Tappara offers quality coaching and conditions in every age group, to pursue the opportunity to play professionally in the Liiga-team.

2 Job Description

2.1 Analysis of current job

2.1.1 Vision and strategy

The coach, in partnership with athletes and teams, creates a vision and a strategy based on the needs and stage of development of the athletes and the organisational and social context of the programme. The coach develops a specific plan that outlines the steps required to bring the strategy to life and realise the vision. (Lara-Bercial et al., 2017, 25-32.)

Vision and strategy withing the team is something that is built together. The process of building a vision and strategy for the team started early in the spring, before the pre-season had started. Having meetings and discussions with the head-coach, I started to comprehend his vision for long-term athlete development and developing a growth mindset, based on hard work. After that I started to consider my own strengths and how could I contribute most for the coaching process.

My strengths being individual skills development, I saw that as a clear route to contribute to the team. Sharing the vision on the importance of the players developing their physical attribute and on-ice skill, he delegated those aspects of the team coaching for me.

The big alignments regarding the training timetable and player transfers came for the club, but we had a great deal of autonomy and could work independently on our development targets and goals. As pre-season started, we had a clear vision on developing the players as humans, athletes and hockey players. Also, providing them with high-quality training, allowing that they could have a fair chance to compete for B1-team next season.

2.1.2 Planning and implementing physical training

I plan our periodization with collaboration with the other coaching staff. I also implement and run most of the off-ice training during the season. I plan every individual practise for the team, taking into consideration their skill and physical level, fatigue, time management and resources we have available.

2.1.3 Planning and implementing on-ice skills training

Teaching individual skills is my strength as a coach. I brought these strengths out early in the season within the coaching staff, and we agreed on me taking most of the responsibility on planning and executing them. I implement Monday ice-sessions entirely, as they are for the players to develop their individual skills, with no tactical skills involved. Our individual skills training sessions consist mainly of skating technique, power skating, use of edges, shooting and puck-handling.

2.1.4 Managing forwards at games and training

Within the coaching staff, we made the decision early in the season, that I would be in charge of managing forwards at games. Meaning that I make the decision on which lines and players go onto the ice at which point. I also make adjustments to the lines if necessary, on the basis of injuries, penalties or exceptional performance. At training, if we have separate drills for forwards and defencemen, I am in charge of executing, and often planning, on the forwards drills. I plan the drills on the basis of their current needs in terms of technical and tactical knowledge.

2.1.5 Be in charge of shorthanded plays

As the season progressed and we started to practice special teams units, it became inherently clear that as the head-coach would mainly focus on the powerplay, I would shift my focus on coaching the penalty kill units. As the players are figuring out their roles at the start of the season, all players would get the opportunity to play shorthanded. As the season progressed, clear penalty kill-units started to form, and we would end up being one of the best penalty killing teams in our league.

2.1.6 Be in charge of attacking-zone-attacking play tactics

For the entire season, team tactics were always well discussed within the coaching staff and agreed on together. In these discussions, it became apparent that I had a vision on how we could play an advanced, efficient and developing, attacking-zone-attacking as a team. We built our offensive tactics around this vision. I planned and implemented most of the training and

coaching in games at that sector. This aspect of my job also came inherently, and as I was already managing forwards, it was quite easy to combine.

2.1.7 Professional assessment

In my professional assessment, I'm at the level of a skilled performer. I have the technical, tactical, and pedagogical knowledge to plan and execute my job at practice, games and other aspects of the coaching process. I have not coached this age group of players before, so I had to do some adapting to my previous ways of working in terms of communication and the players physical needs. Doing some research and learning from more experienced coaches, I have found my own style of working effectively during the pre-season and developing throughout the season.

2.1.8 Professional development

The coach evaluates the programme as a whole, as well as each practice and competition, and is continually seeking improvements. In addition, personal evaluation and reflection underpin a process of ongoing learning and professional development. An important element of this process is the coach's efforts to support the education and development of other coaches. (Lara-Bercial et al., 2017, 25-32.)

Identifying your personal strengths and weaknesses is important, to be able to give your full contribution to the team. I feel like I'm going through that process, of identifying them more precisely. I want to keep improving on my weaknesses by doing research and reflecting on my own working, but also developing my strengths to a high level of professionalism. It requires the ability to objectively analyze your own working, and the willingness to develop every day.

Coming to my professional development as coach, I think becoming an assistant coach for a more experienced head-coach is just what I needed. He has been coaching this age-group for the past two seasons to a medal winning position, so he is someone I can greatly learn from. Starting from the organization of the try-outs, team meetings, feedback etc. I can experience different ways on working and in that way challenge myself in a different way than before. Working as an assistant coach is also an experience, that I feel is crucial for the future. It's not something I want to do long-term, but having this experience will help me work more

efficiently as head-coach, in terms of delegating, communication, and exploiting other people's strengths and weaknesses.

This age group is very competitive, so tactical knowledge is something I can put to use and develop my own vision on what style of hockey I want my teams in future to play. I expect to take big steps forwards on the aspect of tactical knowledge of the game.

I'm just on the beginning of my professional career and a lot is left to learn. In the future, I hope I can achieve a level of professionalism that I will be able to coach any age-group or adults. For me to reach a coaching position in a professional team, I need to develop my strengths to level that I'm able to stand out among other professional coaches.

2.1.9 Communication and staff

Our everyday team staff consist of the head-coach, me as assistant coach, goalie coach, team director and two equipment managers. In terms of mentoring and instructing, we also had support from the Tappara B1 head-coach and the director of coaching in the club.

The coaching staff did not know each other prior to the season, but working together since the start of May, we had a lot of time to communicate and discuss prior to the competitive season. Communication and trust is a very important factor within the coaching team. In my opinion communication has to be honest, straightforward and transparent. It takes a while to build a relationship like that, but when each side is professional, committed and determined it can speed up the progress. We were able to build a solid base during the pre-season and didn't have any problems during the competitive season. Most, if not all, of the decisions regarding the team are made together.

One of the main reasons I wanted to become an assistant coach, after two years of being the head-coach, was to learn different ways of working and to get more feedback on my work. I find feedback within the coaching team very important to develop as a coach. I expect feedback from my work, and the more our professional relationship developed during the season, the more I was able to get honest feedback from the other people in the coaching staff.

Coaching isn't all about Xs and Os. It's not all about line juggling or in-game management. Being an effective coach has a lot to do with communication. (Meloni, J., 2015.)

You might understand the game at a very high level, but if you don't know how to pass that knowledge along to an 8-year-old (or whatever age group you're coaching), skill development, success and enjoyment are all at risk. (Meloni, J., 2015.)

There are a number of lessons every coach can learn to improve communication with his or her players. Two focus areas frequently stand out more than others: praising the process and erasing the generational gap. (Meloni, J., 2015.)

A big part of coaching is communication and interaction with the players. Its an important coaching tool to help the players grow mentally, and to motivate them in the right way. First things we did to start building a trusting and open relationship with the individual players was to have one-on-one chats. Asking simple questions and carefully listening what they have to say, is a good start on getting to know the players. In addition to everyday interactions, later in the season we would have players individual meetings with the players to discuss their strengths, weaknesses and goals. The aim of these meeting was to help the players achieve their goals, and also make them more aware on how to use their strengths and what they need to develop to get to next level.

With the entire team we would start building the relationship on common values, habits and team identity. This was done by team-meetings, captaincy selections and player meetings. This process lasted the entire season and kept progressing along the way.

2.2 The Team

Our team consists of 20 players and 3 goalkeepers. Players are 16- or 17-years old 2003 born boys. The team was selected in try-outs in late April. Many of our players came from different clubs around the Tampere region, so our first task was to introduce them to Tappara's values and procedures.

Our objectives for the season was as a team to win games and get the best result in terms of standings as possible. Individually the objective was to develop the players as humans, athletes and hockey players, and also to give as many as possible the chance on competing for the Tappara B1 team next season.

To assure long-term athlete development, even as the players move on to different clubs and teams in the future. We are using a progressive long-term athlete development model. (Figure 1). Our goal being that the athletes to commit to training and achieving a high-level of performance, by building their physical and mental capability. (Balyi, I., and Hamilton, A. 1995.)

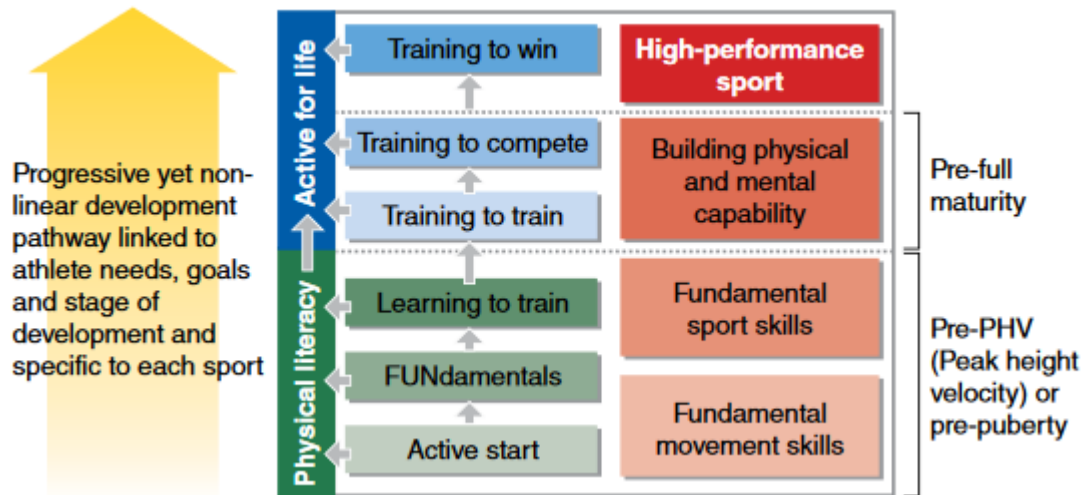


Figure 1. Long-term athlete development model (Balyi, I., and Hamilton, A.)

2.3 Stakeholders

Stakeholders at my workplace (Figure 2) consist of three different groups; my team, internal stakeholders, and external stakeholders. With my team I'm obviously in everyday interaction in form of practice, games and other events. Internal stakeholders consist of the Tappara ry-staff. This staff is responsible for the main economics, usage of facilities, formation of teams, disciplinary within the club, and club values. The Head of Coaching is responsible for the main key points of coaching at our club and is my main boss. In everyday activities, I'm also in contact with the head coach of Tappara B1-team, who acts as the mentor of B2-team coaches. External stakeholders consist of the governing body of our league, sponsors and agents, who I have very seldom contact with.

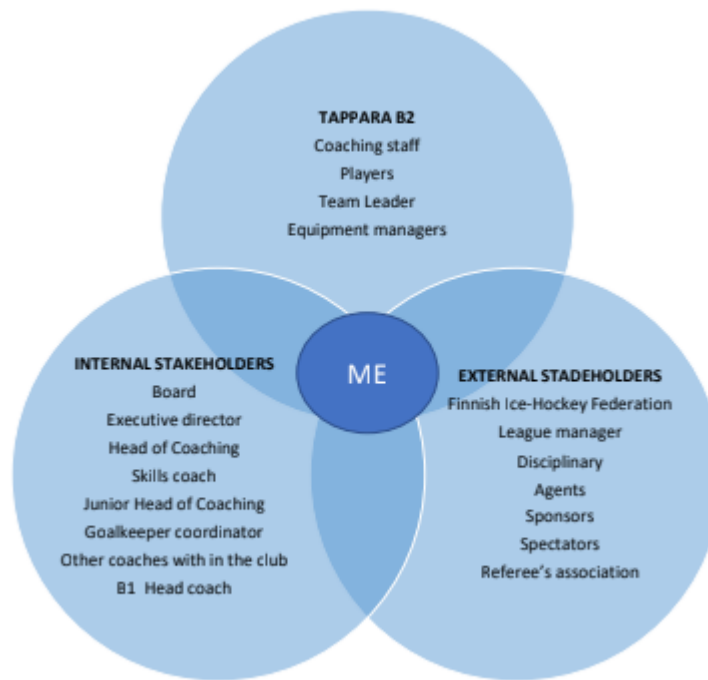


Figure 2. Internal and external stakeholders

2.4 Environment

The environment that we practice in is provided to us by the club, while the maintenance of our facilities is up to the city of Tampere. During the season our team practices at Hakametsä. In addition to the ice-rink, we have access to the gym, sports field and stairs. We also have a dryer, equipment office and the coaches office. When I'm not running practice, I spend most of my time in the coaches office watching film from games, discussing with the other coaches or planning future training sessions. Our working and training environment offers great conditions for high quality coaching and player development.

Hakametsä-area has three rinks, with many other teams practicing and playing nearby. It gives the opportunity to monitor their events and to take notice on their style of working, which is also a great way to learn and develop as a coach.

3 The Diary

3.1 Week 1

Monday 2.9.19

It's the first day of the first week we start playing SM-qualification. We had the Sunday before free of practice or games, so after the warm-up we started the training with a speed and agility off-ice. We did some sprints with reactions to the movement of other players. Sprints were done in sets of three, with a full recovery (3-5 minutes) in between. After three sets I was starting to notice some fatigue among the players, so we started to do elasticity jumps and hops. After the physical training we had an hour-long ice-practice.

On Monday we have usually had a "skills-ice" type of training where players can fully concentrate developing their individual skills in skating, shooting and puck-handling. In the first half of the ice-session we did edgework with the puck, including some speed skills with shooting. When I'm running edgework training, players are told that they can and should always do them with the puck, if they are able to execute the movements successfully. Some players have a hard time motivating themselves for skating practice, but the aspect of having a puck and including shooting at the same time makes the training more meaningful for them.

Second half of the ice we practiced position specific skills including skating diversity, passing, and scoring. At the end of the ice session we played a small-area game, which required quick decision-making, making plays in tight spaces and a high tempo. After the ice, the players are trusted to do an independent cool-down with the instructions given to them at the start of the season.

Wednesday 4.9.19

Tuesday was a day off from practice, so the players were well-rested and fresh for the practice on Wednesday. From Wednesday onwards, we start to concentrate more on the different aspects of the game we need to successfully execute at the games on weekend. This week our main areas of development are attacking-zone-defense and defensive-zone-attacking, based on our previous exhibition games.

We started with off-ice training at the gym, our main theme was lower-body power and core strength. The practice plan included quite basic movements for hockey-players e.g. squats, lunges and jumps with weights adjusted to the individual players strength level. Core strength was done with bodyweight movements with a lot of repetitions.

Our-ice session started with a high-speed passing drill to get the intensity high and warm-up the goalies. After that we started working our themes. At first, attacking-zone-defense with the co-operation of three forwards providing pressure to the defensemen. This went well and we moved on to the defensive-zone-attacking, in other words break-out plays. This we implemented also with the co-operation of three players, now two forwards and one defensemen. After some feedback we went on the last drill of the ice, which was a full-ice game situation combining our themes. Especially in the end, the execution of attacking zone defense improved a lot and was quite good.

Thursday 5.9.19

Thursday practice started with an off-ice session. Today's topics being coordination, body control and mobility. After a quick warm-up we started doing some body weight movements that also required balance and core stability. For coordination we used a combination of footwork on the ladders and throwing tennis balls at the same time with a pair. It was quite challenging for most of the players due to lack of hand-eye coordination. We will have to do the same drills some other time to get better results. We ended the off-ice session with dynamic mobility using familiar chain movements.

On-ice our themes for today were once again defensive-zone-attacking and attacking-zone-defense plays using a coaction of two to three players. We had done some small adjustments to the drills implemented yesterday to get them to be more game-like and more challenging. Players adapted well and were able to use their skills also in an advantage for the coaction of the other players.

Friday 6.9.19

My day started with a lecture and clinic held by Hämeen Liikunta ja Urheilu organization. Tappara had requested me to attend along with a few other coaches from the club. The lecture was intended for experienced coaches and sport instructors around the Tampere-area and the

topic was physical education for children. I was eager to get some new information and practical examples for my coaching tools. The lecture and clinic was all-around good, with some great communication and discussion about the role of the coach in a child's life. The clinic after the lecture gave some great practical tips on organization and instructing aspect.

In the evening, I went to the rink to prepare for our pre-game practice session. We are playing our season opener on Saturday, so today's plan was a meeting with the whole team to watch video, meeting with the powerplay-units, warm-up and a light ice-session. In the team meeting we watched specific clips from our exhibition games, including attacking-zone-defensive and defensive-zone-attacking plays. Some clips were chosen for the players to understand the importance of communication with all five players on the ice, and a few clips were shown as good examples of what can be achieved when everyone is playing according to team tactics. After the clips the introductory lineups for the game were shown to the players, and the two power play units asked to stay for an own meeting, to shortly go through the positions and tactics of both lines, before going to warm-up.

Ice-session today included a high-speed passing drill, five-on-five situations that had been went through at the team meeting, powerplay and penalty kill, a small area game and some own time for the players to develop their skills, or prepare and get a good feeling for the game. In my opinion, the players seemed extra-focused and eager in today's practice, as did the coaches and other staff ahead of the first game of the regular season.

Saturday 7.9.19 Gameday home Viikingit/Jovi

The first game of the regular season is always exciting, and I could feel the players being a little tense. We had a short time meeting before warm-up too loosen things up, and just to remind the players of the things we practiced during the week.

The game started and being the better side, we won Viikingit in a shootout 4-3. We should have won the game on regular time, shots on net being 60-34. So not completely satisfied with the result but an important win nevertheless. Very shortly after the game, we started preparing to tomorrow's game with players going to cool-down and the coaching team watching the game on film and preparing a few clips for tomorrow. We weren't too happy in our discipline as we took 26 minutes of penalties, and Viikingit could use it to their advantage to keep up in

the game. Also, some of our players weren't playing according to our system, which led to confusion and misread situations during the game.

Sunday 8.9.19 Gameday away Blues

On Sunday we were playing an away game at Espoo and we had to leave quite early which wasn't optimal for recovery. We watched some clips from yesterday's game with some individual players on the bus. At the rink we had a short team meeting, for which we had prepared a few key points to the game. Lineups were same as day yesterday.

We had a terrible start to the game being 2-0 down after two minutes. Timeout helped and we got back in the game, but it was just a little too late, the final result being 5-3. After the game we analyzed our observations and had a discussion first with the whole team and then the captains separately. The warm-up had failed, and the players hadn't recovered properly and were not mentally ready at the start of the game. With the coaching staff we discussed the possibility to run a supervised warm-up for our next game, but decided not to, as the players openly discussed being more thorough in the future. In other aspects of the game, we were improving our game as a five-men unit and I still felt confident for the upcoming games.

3.1.1 Week 1 analysis

Designing quality practice sessions is the most basic of all coaching activities. According to five-time national collegiate baseball championship coach Augie Garrido "Games and championships are won in practice first" How a coach designs practices determines how much athletes will learn because practice design directly influences athlete commitment to practice. (Gilbert, W., 2017, 143-149.)

Agreeing on the importance of everyday quality practice, I'm reflecting my work this week on practice planning and implementation. This week I planned and executed three off-ice sessions and one on-ice session. Planning of individual sessions started the previous week, with a discussion with the coaching staff on what attributes we want to develop. These being agreed on, I started to plan the week, on the basis of what day would be optimal for each attribute.

This week's off-ice themes, speed, strength and coordination, all require a very different approach. To plan and implement these sessions accordingly, one must have a good

understanding on the basics of physical training. For the training to be as effective as possible, one has to also take into consideration the warm-up, number of repetitions, rest time, equipment, number of players etc. Sometimes even have a secondary back-up plan, on what to do if the equipment is not available, or there's an injured player in the team who needs alternative movements.

For the planning of individual movements or drills within these sessions, as sources I use my own previous sessions, and reflect on them if some adjustments need to be done. Sometimes I also use the IIHF material bank, the club's material bank or individual sources online. If I'm planning a session that I have never implemented before, I like to try it out myself beforehand and try to find some key points on how to instruct.

Two out of three of this week's off-ice sessions were familiar and conventional to the players. All of the sessions were well planned considering the environment and equipment we have available. I also felt I did a good job noticing on what point the players were getting fatigue, and I was able to adapt the training.

Thursday's off-ice session had room for improvement, as this way of practicing coordination with the combination of ladder work and throwing tennis balls was a bit too difficult for most of the players. I think it's a good drill, also a quite hockey specific movement as you have to keep your legs moving, while keeping your head up for a pass, but it has to be made a little more easy by reducing the foot work and adjusting the throwing distance.

3.2 **Week 2**

Monday 9.9.19

After two hard games on weekend, we discussed with the coaching staff on making the Monday practice optional, but then we decided to have just a light recovery practice. On off-ice we did some dynamic mobility movements. On-ice we worked on the players individual skills. First drills were edgework with the puck, and after that forwards worked on scoring and defencemen on puck retrieval and skating diversity. In general, the effort of the players was better than expected, considering the two hard games on weekend.

This week we started to have our second round of individual meetings this season with the players. In the meetings we discuss the players strengths, weaknesses on and off-ice, and how they could develop them. With some players watching clips of the previous games can also help. The players have also set short, medium ja long-range goals at the start of the season and we get an update on them. The basic structure of the meeting is planned, but any possible worries or sorrows in or outside the rink are also discussed, and we as coaches try to help on them also.

Wednesday 11.9.19

Wednesday practice started with a speed and agility off-ice session including fast changes of direction and reactions to different stimulus. The stimulus sometimes being a sound, observation or a touch. The main target was the to get a maximum effort on every repetition, as the number of repetitions was kept low and the recovery time was high. We have a game on Friday so the nervous system would have to recover quite fast.

On-ice we started to prepare for our game by practicing attacking-zone-defense as a two-to-three men coaction drills. The drills went well, and we could follow our plan and shift the main focus on scoring. At the end we played a high intensity small area game, in which you were rewarded for shooting a lot, especially on one-timers.

Thursday 12.9.19

The day started with some bad news, as two of our important forwards reported to be sick, and not able to practice. Those players missing the pre-game practice meant also that they weren't going to be able to play tomorrow. We had to make the mandatory changes to our special team units and lineups.

Some clips from the previous week's games were prepared and we had a team meeting before warm-up to watch them and go through the line-ups. Power play units had an own meeting to go through the ideas and possible aims on the power play. After that all the players went to warm-up. On-ice our theme was once again attacking-zone-defence, now as a five-men unit, and also scoring on attacking-zone-attacking plays. After that, the special team units practiced at one end of the ice, as the other players practiced scoring in the other end. At the end, we

played a few shifts of small area two-on-two before giving the players a few minutes of free time to practice individually and prepare for the game.

Friday 13.9.19 Gameday away Viikingit/Jovi

We got to Helsinki in the afternoon and had a short team-meeting. First of all to remind the players of the lesson we learned last week, about the importance of a proper warm-up to be ready to play right when the puck drops. Secondly, to remind of the things we had practiced during the week leading to the game. I was a bit worried before the game about the impact of two of our key players missing, but yet still hopeful that some of the other players would rise to the occasion.

We ended up winning 4-7, two of our last goals scored after Viikingit had pulled their goalie trying to get even. Shots on goal were 24-45, meaning we were the dominant side. Positive result and we got the points, but in general still a lot to improve. Our four lines are still not working on the same level for the whole 60 minutes, and we are too dependent on certain players to score. Gives us something to work on the following weeks as the opponents will get better, but now is a time for the players and coaches to enjoy a weekend off team events.

3.2.1 Week 2 analysis

Communication skills may be the best predictor of coaching success. The life of a coach is filled with a steady flow of communication: Coaches talk, read, write, gesture, listen, teach, console, persuade, demonstrate, and observe. Beyond their interaction with athletes, they spend a great deal of time communicating with parents, administrators, officials, other coaches, the media, booster club member, and support staff. So, it is no secret that your success as a coach will depend on your ability to communicate effectively. You need strong communication skills to instruct your athletes clearly, motivate them, and inspire confidence. Communication skills are the foundation for creating rapport with your athletes and developing team harmony. Being a good communicator can pave the way to a rewarding coaching experience, while communication breakdowns can lead to conflict, frustration, stress, and job dissatisfaction. Indeed, effective communication skills transcend sport. They are important in every area of life, and improving them will make your life richer and more fulfilling. (Burton, D., & Raedeke, T., 2008, 15-35.)

Despite their importance, communication skills are often taken for granted. In the face of communication breakdowns, we tend to believe that our communication efforts are fine and that the problem lies with the people we are trying to communicate with. The reality is that we are not always effective communicators. Have you ever made a comment you regretted? Do you sometimes unintentionally expect other to be able to read your mind? Do you find yourself talking more than you listen? Have you ever expected athletes to respond well to constructive criticism while not being open to feedback yourself? (Burton, D., & Raedeke, T., 2008, 15-35.)

Individual meetings with the players this week started me considering my own communication skills, and how I could improve on them. Such a big part of coaching is communication with all the people around you. To have open communication with the players you have to be open-minded and not to categorize them at that moment on the basis of their ability or characteristic on-ice. In my case, it can be sometimes difficult to understand a 16-year old boy's mental landscape, especially if they are not very talkative and open by nature. In a situation like that, I feel like giving direct, complete, and specific messages, becomes even more emphasized. When trying to build a more personal and trusting relationship, I have found telling something new about myself a good tool to get the player to open up, and speak more freely.

In cases of dropping a player's in the line-ups, or benching them during a game, I try to reason and justify my actions with the players as soon as possible. It's never a fun message to deliver, but I feel that getting through as soon as possible is the best way for the player to get over it and not keep wondering too much on what he did wrong.

Supporting messages and positive communication is also very important on building trust and team cohesion. Non-verbal communication and physical contact e.g. fist bumps, high fives and taps on back, are also good ways to give a small praise to a player, or another coach, that he is doing a good job. (Burton, D., & Raedeke, T., 2008, 15-35.)

In general, I feel like sometimes positive feedback is forgotten, and I surely could give more positive feedback. In my view, giving positive feedback is something that can't cause any harm, and in some cases can make a big impact on performance.

3.3 Week 3

Monday 16.9.19

We started the new week off with the team photoshoot. It was a big hassle as there were lots of other Tappara junior teams as well, and it ended up lasting longer than expected, which meant we didn't have time to do a full off-ice training session before the ice. The plan was to do speed and agility drills, but we had to settle for a warm-up and some sprints. On the other hand, players were extra fresh on-ice. We adapted some of the speed and agility drills on-ice and started off with those. After that we continued as planned with individual skills.

We started with edgework and skating technique, followed with scoring and skating diversity. In the end we played a few shifts of full-ice 3-on-3. A very good ice-session in general. After two days of rest, the players were clearly extra motivated and eager to get back to training mentally and physically.

Unfortunately, our ice-session for the upcoming Wednesday was taken away, due to KooVee men's team playing a Finnish Cup game. We gave the players clear instructions for an independent gym practice, to execute on Wednesday instead.

Thursday 19.9.19

Thursday practice started with an off-ice session at the gym. Independent practice, given to the players on Monday, consisted of lower body strength, so today were doing upper body and core strength. Not a too heavy session though, as we have to manage load to be ready for two important upcoming games this weekend. Again, a very good session and work rate at the gym by the whole team.

On-ice we started preparing for the games starting with passing and scoring drills, before going into more game-like situations. Our themes were attacking-zone-attacking plays and defensive-zone-defensive plays. Attacking-zone-attacking plays we practiced with a three-player co-action drills, that started with a quick break-out, progressing to screen-plays, tips and shooting from the blue line. Drills were good and players gave their best effort, but for many players scoring is just very difficult, as they lack some skills many have learned much younger. Lots of

work and repetitions needed there. The defensemen practiced box-out plays and protecting our net, which was decent. At the end we played a small-area game, with the main-focus being on scoring efficiency and one-timers.

Friday 20.9.19

Pre-game practice started off with our normal habits. Before going to warm-up, we held a video meeting with the whole team, separate special units meeting, and revealed lineups for the practice. On-ice we are continuing with the same themes as yesterday, except progressing the defensive-zone-defensive drills to five-men units. The ice-session was quite good, again some difficulties with scoring, but still progressing and getting better. Players were concentrated and clearly set to get a win tomorrow. Our roster is again missing a few players due to small injuries and illness, but I and the whole coaching staff was feeling pretty confident, as the work rate in training and atmosphere in the locker room has been exceptional this week.

Saturday 21.9.19 Gameday home OS Salamat

It was gameday, our opponent OS Salamat had been travelling for at least 7 hours from Oulu, so we had a good opportunity to get an early lead if they wouldn't be at their best at the beginning. After the first period we lead 2-0 and we would keep that lead to the end, final score being 4-2. A good solid game from us, especially from the defensemen not giving the opposition too many good scoring opportunities. Shots on target were 45-36 so we could have used our scoring chances more efficiently. We had a short discussion with the team after the game on what we have improve for tomorrow, as the opponent will be one of the best teams in our league.

Sunday 22.9.19 Gameday home Kärpät

Kärpät is undeniably one of the best junior clubs in Finland. They are the team to beat almost every year, in every age group. Our players knew it without saying. Players seemed extra focused in our pre-game meeting as we went through a few key points on defence and a couple of set-plays with our powerplay units.

We lost 0-3 but we played one of the best games of the season so far. Kärpät was just as good as expected, and we had trouble keeping up with their skating. We had to spend a lot of time

in our defensive-zone, but for the most part we could keep them out of good scoring chances. Our defending as a five-men unit is coming together as we want to, now we can start shifting our focus more on scoring, and of course, developing the players individual skills.

3.3.1 Week 3 analysis

Goal setting with the team and individual players can be time-consuming, but studies show its worth the effort. (Gilbert, W., 2017, 53-70)

Goals direct attention to the behaviors and attitudes that that affect performance. Setting goals raises excitement about the journey ahead, resulting in a more satisfying experience for coaches and athletes. Finally, goals lead to higher levels of effort and persistence needed to complete the journey. (Gilbert, W., 2017, 53-70.)

Goals have to be realistic and achievable to be effective. Unrealistic goals can have a negative effect on morale and stress. Goals should also be set in a form that they are something the players are encouraged to work towards, instead of something they have to avoid. (Gilbert, W., 2017, 53-70.)

In our team we set goals for the team as a whole, and also for players individually. At the start of the season, we included the players in the decision making and set two different goals. Short-term goals were first set for the pre-season training on what we wanted to improve and achieve. We had a follow-up on those goals at the end of summer training in June and set new goals for the 4 week individual training period in July. The goals the players had agreed on were met very well. The goals were as simple as having a positive attitude every day in training, improving constantly and giving your maximum effort every day. For the individual training period in July, the commonly agreed on goals were following the training program given, pushing and supporting each other, also doing some of the sessions together. As the competitive phase of the season started, the players only wanted one goal and that was making it into the top 10, and continue to play B2(U17) SM-league in the spring. Five of the last teams are relegated to Mestis, and the league being very even, it drives the players and the staff towards development every day.

At the start of the season, players set short, medium, and long-term goals, for themselves. Before the first one-on-one meetings, they were asked to fill out an inquiry on their mobile

devices. Short-term goal questions were more specific, and some of the players had a little trouble setting specific or measurable goals. The goals were looked at individual meetings, and in many cases I helped the players to figure out on what kind of goals should be set. Not by giving answers, but by steering them in the right direction and educating them on goal setting in general. For example, none of the players had problems thinking of long-term goals, the most common answer being becoming a professional. But getting more into it, they started to understand that you need to have short-term and medium-term goals, to achieve your long-term goals.

3.4 Week 4

Monday 23.9.19

After two tough games on the weekend, our plan for today was just to have a light mobility off-ice session and individual skills-ice with some edgework, shooting and scoring. During the season, load management is very important, as we are playing 13 games in 8 weeks. It's quite challenging to combine enough progressing training sessions, being fresh for games and consider all the pressure players get from school and personal life. Without good (and expensive) monitoring devices, a coaches best tool for load monitoring is to simply talk to the players. By asking questions like; How heavy did the training feel? How much more could you have done? Are you feeling tired from yesterday? You can get good answers from the players, especially if you have built a trusting and honest relationship. Then you can adapt the training sessions accordingly and the players are not so likely to be in a mental burnout or get repetitive strain injuries halfway-through the season.

Wednesday 25.9.19

Many of our players are suddenly suffering from the flu. Only 12 players and 2 goalies were present at practice today, so once again, we as coaches had to adapt our plan for today. Off-ice session was no problem as our plan was to do some coordination, as well as core and upper body strength. On-ice though, we had to adapt our drills, so they wouldn't be too heavy for the players. We also dropped a five-men unit drill, as it wouldn't really be that useful as many of our players were missing. Instead, we practiced scoring with the forwards. With the defensemen, break-out plays and shooting was executed. In addition, break-out drills, small-area games and a few repetitions on speed using a simple 1-on-1 backcheck drill. After the

training we discussed with the players on the importance of hygiene, as we don't want more players to get sick.

Thursday 26.9.19

It was a pre-game practice, so it started with our normal routine, watching clips from last weekend's games, going through the lineups and a few key points with the powerplay units. We had three lines of players available, so considering yesterday the situation could have been worse.

On-ice we started with defensive plays, boxouts and protecting the net, before moving on to attacking-zone plays. Attacking zone plays consisted of using the screen and crashing the net, to get better scoring chances. After that, our powerplay and penalty kill-units did some specific training, before ending the practice with a short stint of high intensity small-area game. After the practice, a quick chat with the players on how they will and should, prepare for the game tomorrow as it is quite late, puck dropping at 7.00 P.M. at Pori.

Friday 27.9.19 Gameday away Ässät

We departed to Pori at 3.00 P.M. Our opponent Ässät is on top of our league with no losses. I wasn't feeling very confident to get a win, as we only had three lines of players and this week of training had been a bit compromising through so many players being ill.

We ended up losing 9-1. Ässät was definitely the better side in every aspect of the game, shots on net being 53-18. In the first period we could still stay in the game, but after a couple of quick goals in the second period the players mentally gave up. We took a timeout and I started to shuffle the lines for the forwards, to get the players to start giving their best effort but it didn't seem to help.

After the game we gave the players a clear message that giving up during a game is unacceptable. It's against our communally agreed values. Then the focus was shifted towards tomorrow's game and the players sent to cool-down. With the coaching staff we discussed that some changes to line-ups needed to be done, but the situation is very difficult as all players that are fit to play are in the lineup. Consequently, there is not that much competition between the players for the lineup, and a few players not giving their full effort every shift has to be

tolerated. Trying to match the speed and intensity of teams playing with four lines is difficult enough.

Saturday 28.9.19 Gameday home K-Kissat

I was feeling a lot more confident ahead of our today's home game against K-Kissat. I was confident that today we would at least give our best effort, no matter what the score on the board was, as the players had promised after the game yesterday. We ended up losing 2-5, last three of opponent's goals coming in the last ten minutes. We felt the players gave their all in a tough game, but at the end it was our fatigue and a few bad calls from the referees that decided the game. We had one game misconduct and one 2+10-minute penalty given to us, which I felt were both wrongly given. It led us to playing with 4 or 5 defensemen, which was a load they could not carry under pressure. Nevertheless, even with losing, we as a coaching team were satisfied on the effort and attitude of the players. If we can keep progressing in our training and players stay healthy, we should return to winning ways shortly.

3.4.1 Week 4 analysis

Load management is defined as the deliberate temporary reduction of external physiological stressors intended to facilitate global improvements in athlete wellness and performance while preserving musculoskeletal and metabolic health. Basically, you reduce the amount of training and/or competition an athlete takes on to help them recover better and perform better over the long term. (Giandonato, J., 2019.)

In our team we implement load management at first hand by making annual plans to our physical and on-ice training. Physical loading is planned on a weekly basis, so that the workload is progressing to ensure constant development and to minimize the risk of injury. During the pre-season, we were able to follow our pre-determined annual plan with no issues and no accumulated injuries.

During the competitive phase of the season, we as a coaching staff started to notice some fatigue within the players. I discuss with the players on a daily-basis during off-ice sessions, to hear their feelings on the training. I feel it's an essential part of planning adequate training sessions and managing load. When identifying high fatigue, as a coach you have to be ready to change your plans. Overtraining is a serious matter that can lead to a sudden drop in

performance, repetitive strain injuries and the loss of enthusiasm for the sport. In this aspect we as coaches succeeded really well, as there hasn't been any repetitive strain injuries or over-training symptoms within our team.

During the competitive season in all junior hockey teams, it's constant balancing between having effective hard training sessions and being fresh for the games. Everyone wants to win games, but the development of the individual players is crucial for their future. Solely focusing on game performance is not really an option, because it would have such a big negative impact on training. Individual skill development would suffer greatly. Throughout the season, our goal was to have at least three progressing and developing training sessions during a week. We reached that goal most weeks during the season, but not every week. A few times we would have crucial games on weekdays, or the players would be just too fatigued from games to maintain practise form. But those are the kind of situations that you have to ready to adapt and change your plans.

3.5 Week 5

Monday 30.9.19

Monday training started regularly. A few players were still missing due to illness. Players went for a 10-minute jog and to do some dynamic mobility, before we started the off-ice session. Topic was coordination, speed and agility. Familiar drills that we have done a few times before. I was mentally ready to push the players to maximum, but as I saw how motivated the players were, I felt very content to step to a smaller role and let the players push each other. Made me happy that even on a Monday evening, after a few losses, the players hadn't let it affect their work rate and motivation to keep progressing.

On-ice we started with edges and skating technique. Some edgework movements are very difficult, but players seemed to enjoy the challenge. After that we did some scoring and diversity with the forwards, as defensemen did also skating diversity and shooting from the blueline. All of practice went well and in at the end we decided to play a full-ice 3-on-3 as a "thank you" for the good effort given.

Wednesday 2.10.19

Before the start of training we had a short discussed with the team about motivational factors. Partly because we as coaches, want every day to be like on Monday. The team captain said that on Monday, the players had decided on themselves that they are tired of losing, and they would pick it up a notch in training and in games. Naturally, that made us as a coaching team very content, and also kept strengthening this decision made by the players.

In the off-ice we did lower-body and core strength at gym. Players were once again very self-motivated and didn't need much guidance. On-ice we started with passing and scoring drills, before going into our main theme attacking-zone-defense, in other words, forecheck. We started with an emphasis on individual skills, such as using the stick to block lanes and accelerating from crossover skating. Our plan is to progress this to five-men unit drills on Friday and Saturday.

Thursday 3.10.19

On Thursday we had to change rinks with the Tappara A-juniors, because they wanted to practice in a smaller rink for an upcoming game. This was a good alternation also for us to practice in a bigger rink. Off-ice training started at the gym, with the theme being upper body strength. On-ice we started with high-speed passing drills and scoring from odd-man rushes. After that we started working on our forecheck. Today we were using two and three players cooperation, making sure every single player knew their positions, how to use the stick etc. It took some time, but the players clearly started to get a better hang of it. At the end we played a small area game, in which effective forecheck and turn-overs were key aspects, so you wouldn't tire yourself out by having to defend very long.

Friday 4.10.19

Once I got to the rink, I heard that once again we are not going to be able to have four lines in the game on Sunday, due to illnesses and injuries. It's a bit irritating, but not much we as coaches can do about that. Off-ice started, and I ran some mobility and quite light body control movements for the players. Between sets I kept talking about the importance of body maintenance and listening to your own body. We haven't had a single repetitive strain injury in our team so far this season, so I think the players are quite good on picking these things up.

On-ice we started with scoring from odd-man rushes and using screens to score. Then we progressed to five-men unit game-like situations. First with forechecks leading to turnovers, and then with attacking-zone-attacking plays and scoring using the screen. It's taken some time, but playing as a five-men unit is finally looking like its coming together.

Saturday 5.10.19 Morning ice

We had booked an extra morning ice-session for Saturday morning. Plan was just to keep a video meeting, go through the lineups for tomorrow's game and have a light 45-minute ice-session. Also, to keep the players in rhythm ahead of tomorrow. In the video meeting we watched clips of our previous games. Clips were chosen mainly to improve our forecheck and defense. Good and bad examples were shown, and by asking questions we made sure the players were following. A few things were also discussed and gone through with the powerplay and penalty kill units, until everyone was sent to warm-up.

On ice we did a simple passing and scoring drill, to get the players in a good feeling and flow state. After that we did a few drills five-on-five, practicing the things we went through in the meeting. They seemed to go well, so we moved on to powerplay units practicing their thing. In the end we played a few shifts of a small area game. Altogether it was a good, solid structured morning ice-session.

Sunday 6.10.19 Gameday away Kalpa

We started our four-hour bus ride to Kuopio. Kalpa from Kuopio is a good hard skating team, that we just managed to win in a pre-season exhibition game, so the expectation was that it was going to be a tight game. Unfortunately, this time we ended up losing 7-4, last of their goals being to the empty net.

Not a bad game from us, but we just couldn't quite match their skating. Our single biggest sector of improvement, alongside skating, would have to be the powerplay units that couldn't generate any goals. After the game we had a quick chat in locker room on what we could have improved, and then we started heading for dinner and home. On the way back I watched the game on video, that confirmed our observations on the lack of skating power and losing too many 1-on-1 duels.

3.5.1 Week 5 analysis

According to studies, a growth mindset can be very beneficial for all humans in all aspects of life, including hockey.

To briefly sum up the findings: Individuals who believe their talents can be developed (through hard work, good strategies, and input from others) have a growth mindset. (Figure 3) They tend to achieve more than those with a more fixed mindset (those who believe their talents are innate gifts). This is because they worry less about looking smart and they put more energy into learning. When entire companies embrace a growth mindset, their employees report feeling far more empowered and committed; they also receive far greater organizational support for collaboration and innovation. In contrast, people at primarily fixed-mindset companies report more of only one thing: cheating and deception among employees, presumably to gain an advantage in the talent race. (Dweck, C., 2016.)

When adapting these findings into coaching a hockey team, I feel like the first thing you have to achieve is growth mindset for yourself. I didn't have a growth mindset before starting to coach, neither was I thought about growth mindset during my playing career. After finding about the studies I've been looking more into it and working hard to develop a growth mindset. I think I've become a long way on developing a growth mindset, and I feel like I have developed to a point at which I can teach and coach growth mindset for my players.

What Kind of Mindset Do You Have?



I can learn anything I want to.
When I'm frustrated, I persevere.
I want to challenge myself.
When I fail, I learn.
Tell me I try hard.
If you succeed, I'm inspired.
My effort and attitude determine everything.



I'm either good at it, or I'm not.
When I'm frustrated, I give up.
I don't like to be challenged.
When I fail, I'm no good.
Tell me I'm smart.
If you succeed, I feel threatened.
My abilities determine everything.

Created by: Reid Wilson @wayfaringpath ©️🌐🌐 Icon from: thenounproject.com

Figure 3. Growth vs. Fixed Mindset (Modified from Wilson. R, 2019)

I find that coaching growth mindset to players can be either very easy or extremely difficult, depending on the individual player and their upbringing, and also on their previous coaches. After building a trusting relationship with the players, and discussing their strengths and weaknesses, as a coach you start to guide the players towards a growth mindset by asking questions like; What have you learned? What steps did you take to achieve your goals? What can you learn from the decisions you took? In many cases this season, the right kind of answers come easily, were the player had really put thought into his own development and believes on working hard towards his goals. In a few cases the player's answers were practically non-existent, and I could see there is a lot of work to do on developing a growth mindset. With these players I would have more communication, either during a formal-like meetings, or just everyday talk during practise. The importance of feedback also comes into play, as you should focus the feedback more on the effort and work-rate, instead of the outcome. I have found giving the correct type of feedback easy, after doing research and developing a growth mindset myself. Seeing the effects will take a while though, as developing a growth mindset is not something you can adjust to over-night, but I feel that I and my players are on the right road.

3.6 Week 6

Monday 7.10.19

On our way back from Kuopio last night, we discussed within the coaching staff the possibility of making the Monday training optional. Meaning that there would be no supervised training and the players could go on to the ice without full gear if they wanted. We decided that it would be the best solution, so the players that feel tired after a tough week could rest and recover. I wasn't at the rink on Monday, but later I heard that around ten players went on the ice to practice shooting etc.

Wednesday 9.10.19

On Wednesday it was back to ordinary training. After a warm-up, off-ice started with speed and agility. When doing speed training, I decided to implement 30-metre sprints and time a few repetitions. We did 30-metre sprints as part of our testing program, so I figured we could get some baseline on where we were going in parallel to May and July. I had the test results on my phone, so it was easy to compare the timings. The environment was a bit different, but it clearly showed that we are in a good situation as the times were slightly better or around the same as during the tests before. After a few repetitions, the times started to get slower, so I also knew there wasn't a reason to continue maximum speed training.

On-ice we started with a three-lane passing drill, before going into odd-man rushes and scoring. All the drills also included breakouts and getting yourself open, which is going to be one of our themes this week. After that we moved on to scoring from screen plays and playing rebounds. In the end we played a small-area game with two odd-men in the attacking zone, so the emphasis was on scoring. Altogether a good session after a quite physically demanding off-ice.

Thursday 10.10.19

Thursday practice started with a coordination, body control and mobility off-ice session. Coordination was executed with a ladder and stickhandling combination. Body control was built mainly around core strength and stabilization with movements done in pairs. In the end we did mobility with dynamic stretches and chain movements.

On-ice we started with a passing and scoring drill, before going on to breakouts and odd-man rushes. We have made some slight adjustments to our instructions on how the winger should get himself open, and that's what we wanted to carefully go through. Aim of this adjustment was to make the puck retrieval faster, and to get more odd-man rushes. In the end we did a few shifts of five-on-five, focusing on break-out quickness. We have a bit different schedule this week as tomorrow is a day off for everyone, and then we return to practice on Saturday morning before leaving for an away game at Vantaa.

Saturday 12.10.19 morning ice + gameday away K-Vantaa

In the morning, a video meeting with the players started at 8.45 A.M. I had prepared a few clips regarding breakouts from our previous game to show how slow they were, and why we had trouble getting the puck over the blueline. I thought the players absorbed this, but we will have to wait and see to the game to be sure. After the video meeting, special team units had a quick meeting of their own, and then everyone was off to warm-up. On-ice we started with a simple "flow" drill. After that we moved on to breakouts, first with three-men cooperation and then with five-men units. At the end power play units practiced their thing, and we played a few shifts of two-on-two small area game. After the ice-session we gave a quick reminder on what to eat before leaving for Vantaa and suggested to take a short nap.

Today's game was against K-Vantaa, a good team on top of us in the league standings. We played a very good game but ended up losing 3-2 in a shootout. We have made a lot of progression especially in breakouts and defending. We had a few very good scoring chances that could have decided the game, but on the other hand, so did K-Vantaa as well. Both goalies played a really good game, shots on net being 34-40. Losing in a shootout is annoying, especially when as a coach you start to question if you made right decisions on the players trying to score. Nevertheless, one point is better than nothing and tomorrow is a new opportunity to get the win.

Sunday 13.10.19 Gameday home Blues

On Sunday we were playing a home game against Blues. We lost the previous encounter 5-3, but since then we have made a lot progression individually and as a team. Also, this time we were playing with four lines, so I was feeling confident. We ended up winning 7-3 and finally

broke our losing streak. What a great feeling it was to get a win and you could tell a big weight was lifted of the players shoulders. The game was hard fought, and it wasn't won until the last period that we managed to score four goals. After the game we gave just a few positive things on the performance and praised the players will-to fight until the end. After that we left and let the players celebrate on their own.

3.6.1 Week 6 analysis

We conduct testing three times during the season, at the start of the season in May, after the independent practice period late in July, and during the Christmas break. The tests include on-ice, physical and strength testing. The tests are executed within the club's mandatory guidelines. In addition to the clubs testing guidelines, we conduct an on-ice skating diversity test within the guidelines of the Finnish Ice-Hockey Federation.

On-ice testing include a 500-metre skating endurance and skating diversity test (Figure 4).

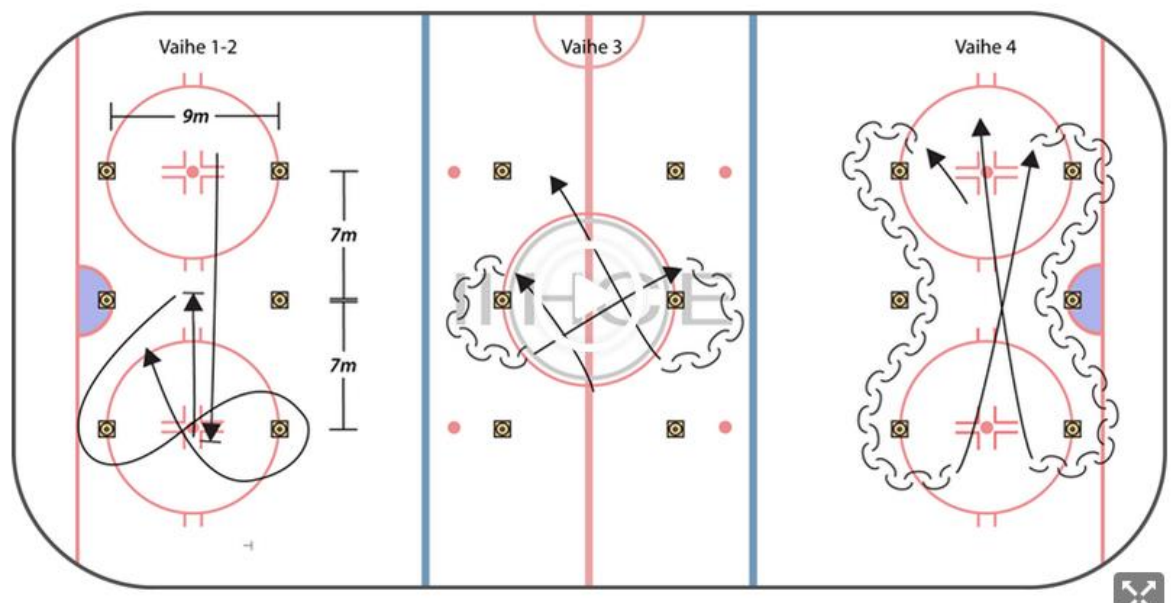


Figure 4. On-ice testing skating diversity test (IIHCE, 2010)

Physical tests include a 30-metre sprint, five jump and a 30-minute running endurance test. Strength testing consist of the maximum weight in three repetitions in squats and clean. It also includes bodyweight movements of maximum pull-ups and maximum hanging toes to bar. (Figure 6) Testing is done each time in as similar conditions as possible using the same equipment. Physical and strength testing is not implemented in December due to fatigue and stress it brings to the players.

Below are the test results without the players names. Note: Last three players are goalkeepers.
(Figure 5-7)

Figure 5. On-ice test results

500m (7.5)	500m (31.7)	Luistelun monipuolisuus (14.5)	Luistelun monipuolisuus (31.7)
76,89	74,66	36,97	36,02
75,60	70,28	35,91	34,37
68,88	69,02	38,75	35,42
66,28	67,39	37,00	
67,08			
	65,69	36,41	36,94
	67,58		33,38
65,76	68,48	39,47	37,03
66,12	69,16	36,38	35,07
67,62	69,18	35,06	36,47
65,31	69,13	37,34	36,31
67,08	68,89	36,00	34,65
70,47	71,03	36,47	34,81
74,72	72,68		37,03
66,06		35,6	
	69,69		35,60
68,23	65,59	35,37	33,69
94,78	98,22		
95,18	96,49		
	95,00		

Figure 6. Physical test results

30m 2.5	30m 29.7	5-loikka 2.5	5-loikka 29.7	30min 2.5	30min 29.7
	4,55 4,90		10,84/11,12/11,25		5970
4,82 4,80	4,44 4,64	10,63/10,87/11,20	11,41/11,55/11,24	6200	6330
4,59 4,81	4,71	10,83/10,75/10,77	11,32/10,00/11,39	6350	6630
4,39 4,39		11,38/11/11,12		6100	
4,13 4,36		11,51/11,70/11,47		6730	
4,56 4,46	4,69 4,57	11,63/11,80/11,53	12,50/12,25/12,99	6400	6600
	4,40 4,70		11,49/12,47/12,28		7180
4,89 4,73	4,39 4,45	11/11,12/11,20	11,60/11,60/11,88	6300	6650
4,89 4,73	4,80 4,84	10,72/10,63/10,90	11,15/10,66/11,39	7050	7180
4,32 4,53	4,63 4,90	10,50/10,65/10,82	10,90	6400	6750
4,45 4,75	4,50 4,44	11,40/11,92/12,22	11,95/12,30/12,39	6210	6330
4,72 4,75	4,55 4,80	10,90/10,77/10,48	11,20/11,33/11,07	6370	5690
4,94/4,84	4,70 4,80	10,14/10,05/10,15	10,69/10,39/10,75	6450	6780
4,53 4,66	4,65 4,51	10,60/10,67/10,77	11,71/11,00/11,74	6550	
4,38 4,34		11,95/12,00/12,26		6750	
4,62 4,72	4,50 4,70	-/12,4/12,12	13,24/13,29/13,48	5850	6415
	4,70 4,37		11,53/11,39/11,32		7300
4,73 4,76	4,44 4,50	13,74/12,82/12,86	13,46/13,42/13,25		6700
4,81 4,75	4,90 4,57	10,55/11/11,38	11,50/11,43/12,37	6300	6600
	4,57 4,31		12,83/12,70/12,73		6410

Figure 7. Strength test results

Kyykky3 (3.5)	Kyykky3 (30.7)	Rive 3 (14.6)	Rive 3 (30.9)	Leuat (3.5)	Leuat (30.7)	Riippuvatsat (3.5)	Riippuvatsat (30.7)
	90	55	50		16		22
85	110	50	50	9	13	2	10
105	145	60	65	7	10	5	11
90	110	70	70	11	14	19	19
80				8		13	
100	120	55	60	5	11	2	9
	90	55	55		26		15
85	95	60	65	12	17	3	13
80	100	50	55	10	10	5	19
85	100	50	55	13	16	8	20
85	110	55	70	9	11	7	15
70	90		50	13	21	12	15
60	90	45	50	6	10	0	7
	70		50		10		10
80		65		10		10	
	75	45	50		11		12
	110	60	60		8		21
95	100	60	60	20	24	21	26
60	80	45	45	4	7	4	7
	120		65		8		8

Hockey players in general are used to testing and most of the tests executed were familiar. Special attention was required during the strength tests to make sure the players don't try to over-attempt too big weights and cause any injuries.

On a team-level testing also measures how the coaching staff has succeeded on planning and implementing training. I feel we succeeded well, as the strength results had improved significantly.

The physical test results also included big improvements especially in five-jump. 30-metre sprint results did not have many notable improvements, but that's something we reacted on, and started to focus more on speed and agility training. That's also why I decided to monitor it during the season. On-ice results of July cannot be directly compared to the results in May, as the players had not been on the ice for four weeks. The results on December will give a better picture on how we are doing in those attributes, but anyhow, we will keep working on skating a lot, as the importance of it is huge.

3.7 Week 7

Monday 14.10.19

New week started with 13 players present at the rink. A few were sick and one player had injured himself during the game yesterday and was seeing a doctor. Nevertheless, as a coach you have to give your full attention to the players present, not to those who are missing. Off-ice session started with mobility, coordination and body control. A quite light session with mostly familiar movements.

On-ice we started off with skating technique enhancing and the use of edges. Some of the movements were very difficult and players had a hard time executing the movements, but it was in good spirit with a few laughs. Only one or two players were able to successfully execute the movements, while maintaining puck control. Accelerating and scoring were also part of the drills and the players were trying hard to score, as they were having a scoring competition of their own. It's a fun way to get a little extra seriousness on the scoring. Then we moved on to scoring and shooting, now defensemen and forwards doing their own game-like drills. In the end we played a small-area game with an emphasis on shooting one-timers, as one-timer goals counted as two. Overall a fun practice with a lot of activity and repetitions.

Wednesday 16.10.19

Wednesday was back to a more traditional way of training, as we started to prepare for the games ahead. After watching the weekend games on video, it was a mutual decision with the coaching staff that we need to improve our scoring efficiency, as well as make quicker breakouts from our defensive zone.

At off-ice today's theme was speed and agility. Not an optimal point to practice those attributes as we are playing on Friday, but often you have to compromise on game freshness to develop the players. It was a good off-ice session with great effort, especially in a few relay races we did. Races and relays are also a good way to build team cohesion, as players have to work in teams and support each other. Also, if there's different tasks within the team, players also must discuss on each other's strengths and weaknesses to win.

On-ice we started with a passing and scoring drill, advancing to odd-man rushes. Next up was breakouts, which we practiced in two stations, the starting position being slightly different. After that, a short stint of backchecking, and then we played a half-ice game with fast breakouts being the target. A pretty good session overall.

Thursday 17.10.19

On Thursday we started with a team video meeting. I had prepared a few clips from the games last weekend. The clips were mainly about breakouts and using the screen in attacking-zone-attacking situations. After that we went through the lineups, but mentioned that they still could change, as we are having a morning ice session tomorrow before leaving for Jyväskylä. After that the players left for warm-up.

On-ice we started with the forwards and defencemen practicing their own drills. I was with forwards and we were doing scoring and skating diversity drills. The defencemen were doing breakouts and shooting from the blueline. After that we combined the two, with a full-ice breakout, rush and attacking-zone-attacking drill. It was a quite complex drill, but it went pretty well as the pieces had been practiced independently first. Then we moved on to five-on-five drills with the same themes. At the end of the practice we played a small area game.

Friday 18.10.19 morning ice + gameday away JYP

Morning ice started at 9.30 AM. Schools were on break this week, so the players could participate. Our head coach and equipment managers had to work though, so I was running the practice with only our goalie coach also present. Players did their individual warm-up, and after that I went through a few key points with the special-teams units, as we would have some time to practice our powerplay this morning.

The plan for the 45-minute ice-session was simple. We started with a passing drill, and quickly moved on for the breakout drill we also did yesterday. Then we practiced some five-on-five breakouts and rushes, before moving on to powerplay units and in the end a two-on-two small area game. After that, a quick round-up on the ice and the team captain making some team cohesion preparing, I left the players five minutes of free time on the ice, to practice shootouts etc.

Our opponent in Jyväskylä was JYP. We couldn't match their tempo and intensity, so we ended up losing 4-1. Shots on net being 38-28. JYP was clearly the better side, even though we had our moments and could have scored a few more. Players seemed a bit tired and not so willing to fight back, after we were losing 2-0 after the first period. Also disappointing was our breakouts, that didn't seem to work even after a lot of practice this week. We watched the game on film on the way back and made a few remarks on what to improve for Sunday.

Saturday 19.10.19

We had an afternoon practice on Saturday, ahead of our game on Sunday. This time we decided not to have video meeting with the team. Instead we had made a few changes to the lineups and powerplay units, so we went through those in the locker room. After that I was running some recovering mobility exercises for most of the team, as the head coach watched a few clips with certain players.

On-ice we kept it quite light and practiced the same drills as in the past two sessions. Number of repetitions were kept low, but a high intensity was still expected, as it was something that was missing from the game against JYP. In the end of the practice, a quick round up on the ice and a short "reality check" with the players. We need to start winning games to assure that we are staying in the upper division after the Christmas break.

Sunday 20.10.19 gameday home KJT Haukat

Sunday home game was against KJT Haukat. The opponent is below us in the standings and playing at home, this was a game we were expected to win. It can be a difficult basis to prepare yourself mentally for a game like that. You can easily think you've won the game too early, and that's almost what happened. We ended up winning 8-6 after a messy game. Lots of penalties and somehow, we ended up losing a 5-2 lead to a 5-5 situation after two periods. Fortunately, we could get ourselves together and clinch the crucial goals in the last period to get three points. A bit of mixed feelings in the locker room after the game, as it wasn't a pretty game by any means, but a win was what we needed.

3.7.1 Week 7 analysis

Cohesion is typically thought of as the degree to which the group feels connected and remains united while pursuing a common purpose or goal. Connection to one another is considered a form of social cohesion, whereas working toward a common goal is considered a form of task cohesion. (Gilbert, W., 2017, 93-101.)

One of the most compelling questions asked about cohesion is whether cohesion causes improved performance or whether improved performance increases cohesion. Thankfully, coaches don't have to comb through hundreds of research papers to learn the answer to these questions. Reviews of research show that cohesion is both a cause and a result of improved athletic performance. Some other findings about cohesion and performance include the following:

- Both social and task cohesion are highly linked with improved team performance.
- Social cohesion is more strongly connected with improved team performance than task cohesion.
- Cohesion matters for both individual and team sports.
- The relationship between cohesion and improved performance is evident for both genders, but it is extremely high for female athletes. (Gilbert, W., 2017, 93-101.)

First steps in building team cohesion are simple. Getting to know the players and players getting to know each other is crucial. These steps are quite easy to achieve through team and player meetings, tasks that require co-operation and including all in decision making. Building trust and strengthening the cohesion is much more challenging task. At the start of the season

we approached this task by having a few not hockey-related activities, such as team dinners and a playful baseball match. In August we had a three-day “camp” in Mänttä, where we practiced and played a few exhibition games, but also had other activities such as sauna and barbecue. In addition, the players got to spend a lot of time together in an isolated area away from their usual everyday hassle. I feel that that trip was very beneficial in terms of team cohesion, and after that everyone could be comfortable in the group.

During the competitive season we have kept strengthening our team cohesion by keeping the players active in decision making and goal setting. Setting a points goal for the 3-5 upcoming was one tool we used. In practice we would have a lot of competitions that required teamwork and communication within the players. I would also try to build cohesion and positivity by praising the players, being enthusiastic and participating in some of the competitions. That way I felt I could get more involved and keep building a positive atmosphere. Sometimes it’s difficult when we faced losses, but I try not to let it have an impact on me the next day.

When expecting good team cohesion, where the team’s best interest comes before the individual players and it doesn’t matter who gets the credit, as a coach you have to act in fair manner. All players have to be treated equally and fairly. In my opinion it also includes giving reasons to players that are not in a big role or on the ice during crucial moments in games, on why they are not there. If possible, also giving them a boost according to their own role also helps and prevents them bringing negativity to the team. In the end, all roles within the team truly are important, even though they might not be equally big.

3.8 **Week 8**

Monday 21.10.19

After a rough week, we started Monday practise with a recovering off-ice session. After a light jog we did some balance and dynamic mobility. It was only a 45-minute session. On-ice we started working on skating diversity and the use of edges, combined with some scoring. Familiar movements, but some of which are very challenging. The movements require good core stability and balance skills. The players seem to enjoy the challenge though, and they are very receptive of feedback.

We moved to a 1-on-1 drill, which started with a breakout situation. After that we played two different small area games, and at the end we did a playful shootout, with the losing team picking up the pucks. Not a bad practise session, but the players as well as the coaching staff seemed a little tired and out of energy. Good thing that we have a day off tomorrow.

Wednesday 23.10.19

At the rink on Wednesday I found out that three of our forwards are absent. Two because of illness and one because of knee problems. It puts us in a position that we have 9 forwards and 7 defensemen available. Within the coaching staff we discussed that we have to move one defencemen to play as a forward on the weekend, if the situation doesn't change. It's good to make a decision early in the week, on who is the player that has to play out of their normal position, so they can practise and get used to that position before a game. We ended up deciding on the player, and that he will be training as a forward for the week. Reasons being his skating power and ability to shoot straight from skating.

Off-ice practise started with speed and explosiveness training. This time we used the stairs and the gym to practise these attributes. In the end we had a little extra time, so we did also a core strength exercise. As a coach you have to sometimes improvise and come up with things on the spot, and this was one of those situations, but everything went smoothly as I executed a core strength exercise we had done earlier in the season. On-ice forwards and defenseman practised separately at first. Then we combined them to a full-ice breakout and scoring drill. After that we started to practise defending in a three-on-three drill, before ending the session with a small-area game that included box-outs and screen plays.

Thursday 24.10.19

Thursday brought no improvements to our partial roster. In off-ice training we went to the gym to practise upper body strength and explosiveness. The training was done in six stations, using barbells, free weights, and gym balls. A very good off-ice session with a lot of activity.

On-ice our themes were scoring and boxout, with some breakouts included. All of practise was done with the players being in their own positions. First, we started with one-on-one's, progressing to three-on-two and three-on-three situations. At the end we played a small-area game similar to yesterday, and the players were clearly improving, and understanding the

importance on defending your own net. A good practise overall, but tomorrow we must take some load off, to get the players to recover ahead of the game on Saturday.

Friday 25.10.19

Friday brought us one player back from being ill, and we could finish and go through the lines for the weekend. We had a team meeting where we watched clips from our previous game and tried to learn from our mistakes regarding defending in our zone and breakouts. After that the powerplay unit had their own meeting. Our shorthanded unit has been solid throughout the season, so they didn't require a meeting. After that the players went for an independent warm-up.

On-ice we had decided to keep a light session, after two hard sessions this week. We started with a classic passing and scoring drill, before going to breakouts and odd-man rushes. After that we practised five-on-five defensive-zone-defending and breakouts, with the lines that we are playing with tomorrow. After that, the powerplay units practised their thing, while the other players did a scoring drill at the other end. In the end we played a few shifts of small-area two-on-two game. Players seemed quite ready for the game tomorrow.

Saturday 26.10.19 gameday home HPK

Our home game against HPK from Hämeenlinna was a very important game, as they are almost on equal points with us in the standings. Before the game we had a short team meeting to remind to players on what we had to improve, and what we had practised during the week.

Sadly, we ended up losing 2-4. Shots on net being 23-30. A tight game in which HPK was slightly better, no excuses on that, but what made me disappointed was our powerplay unit, that let HPK score two shorthanded goals. In a such a tight game, it's very difficult to win when the powerplay unit is not working at all. We must make some serious adjustments and changes to our powerplay units. After that game, we had a short team meeting in the locker room and discussed with the players on what went wrong. I stated that we can't start giving up and keep working hard to get points.

3.8.1 Week 8 analysis

Coaching is more than a job; it is an all-consuming lifestyle. Although coaching can be extremely rewarding because of the potential for having a lifelong positive effect on athletes, the effort can also easily wear down even the most accomplished and resilient coach. The long coaching journey from the preseason team building to end-of-season reviews and recognitions is a grind. (Gilbert, W., 2017, 339-365.)

Coaching is very fulfilling for me, during the time of this 8-week period I did not have any major issues managing my own well-being. I try to take care of myself by cyclic sleeping routines, nutritious food, and some exercise. Of course, there are days that you feel tired, but usually it seems to go away when you get to rink. A continuous stress factor during this 8-week period was the fact that if we had a few players sick or injured, we didn't have a full roster for the games. Like mentioned previously, it is very hard to play this series with three lines, game after game. But I try to take it also as a learning factor, on not to stress about things you cannot affect. When team personnel start to get tired or stressed during the season, I have found the best way to relief it is peer support within the team personnel. During the season we had a lot of good conversations in our coaches office. Often not even hockey related, but just everyday chatter and joking helps to relief the stress and rise the mood.

Working as an assistant coach has been a great experience, after two years of being a head-coach. I feel I didn't have to stress and use a huge amount of time on things such as dealing with parents, player recruitment, and organizing facilities. Instead, I could focus more on the players and actual contents of training, which was a relief and a boost for my mood. Knowing the role and work amount of the head-coach, I did my best to take some workload of him and would always offer help. I think that resulted in such a good work distribution and a trusting relationship between us.

4 Discussion

In my previous job at a different club, I worked three seasons with the same age group. Everything went well as the players developed and the team had won medals. Nevertheless, I felt I had adapted a routine, which didn't give me much of a challenge. I made the decision to return to my hometown of Tampere and to the club I played as junior. I only had good associations with the club, so it was an easy choice. I made it clear early that I want to be in a competitive team, willingly as an assistant coach. When the opportunity came, I did not hesitate to make the move.

Moving to a "new" club is always big change, but I felt that my family and friends living in Tampere would help me adapt. Also, my previous playing career at the club, helped me make the decision "by heart". Nevertheless, the first challenges I faced was building relationships and trust with my new co-workers and bosses. Meeting new people and building trust is the best way to learn human relation and communication skills. Acting as a professional in formal meetings and everyday life was easy, the harder part being building more personal relationships. Luckily, I was able to build a trusting relationship quickly with the other coaching staff. Partly because we seemed to think in a similar way on part of the coaching progress, leading him to give me a lot of responsibilities and say in the decisions regarding the team. The importance of teamwork increases, which taught me a lot for the future, in terms of delegation, communication, and identifying people's strengths and weaknesses.

Coaching older players than before, I had to adapt my communication and knowledge on physical training. Older players are more aware on why certain things are done in a certain way. Communication has to be more open and the decision justifiable to create a positive environment. I found it to be a positive matter in terms of my own development, as I felt I had to put more effort in the planning of practise. Also, some of the materials I had used in my previous team didn't not adapt to this age group, which lead me to do research and look for new materials.

In my coaching, I feel that for my players to reach the next level they have to grow to an athletic lifestyle. Junior hockey being extremely competitive in Finland, the players have to be year-around athletes. Developing their physic and mental attributes is crucial. Every day you have to pursue for development. As a coach, I feel that planning a progressing and rewarding

practise plan is needed. That was my aim, and in reference to the test results and individual meetings, I felt that I did a pretty good job on that.

Before this diary-form monitoring we had a successful pre-season. First tasks being to build team cohesion, common values and routines. On this aspect we succeeded as the training brought success, the players being committed and aware of their own development targets.

During the first part of the season, we failed to win as much games as we wanted. In my opinion, the main reason being the failed recruitment in terms of the amount of players. On the other hand, the players we had got a lot of time on-ice, and also a lot of attention in training, which should benefit them in the future.

Taking a more critical view on my own working, there is a few things we could have differently. In addition to small things like give more positive feedback, in terms of organization, we could have considered to implement mobility testing. It would have given us a better picture on whether it was an area we needed to focus on more, or if the players had developed in that area.

A more autonomy supporting environment could have also been generated. Perhaps on giving the players more say in what the on-ice training consisted of. Shifting more of the responsibility to the players, instead of the coaches. Leaving the coaches for more of a helping teacher role.

In the end, this diary has been a great way to reflect on the learning done within the pre-season and the start of competitive season. I feel a wrap-up of the season is needed also in the future, for a throughout exploration on how the season went, what are results, and what aspects of coaching are the most crucial for me to develop. In the future I hope to keep developing especially my communication skills, tactical knowledge, and in-game coaching to make it to a level where I can coach professional players.

5 Bibliography

Balyi, I. 1995. Long-Term Athlete Development model. European Sport Coaching Framework. 2017. Human Kinetics Publishers.

Lara-Bercial, S. North, J. Härmäläinen, K. Oltmans, K. Minkhorst, J. Petrovic, L. 2017. European Sport Coaching Framework. Human Kinetics Publishers.

Burton, D. & Raedeke, T. 2008. Sport Psychology for Coaches. Human Kinetics Publishers.

Dweck, C. 2016. What Having a “Growth Mindset” Actually Means. Readable at:
<https://hbr.org/2016/01/what-having-a-growth-mindset-actually-means> Read 3.5.2020

Giandonato, J. 2019. What Is 'Load Management' and Why Does it Matter for Athletes? Readable at: <https://www.stack.com/a/what-is-load-management-and-why-does-it-matter-for-athletes> Read 28.2.2020

Gilbert, W. 2016. Coaching Better Every Season: A Year-Round System for Athlete Development and Program Success. Human Kinetics Publishers.

IIHCE, Material Bank. 2010. Figure 3: Readable at:
<https://www.iihce.fi/suomeksi/Materiaalipankki/tabid/90/Default.aspx#/search/q/page:0;term:luistelun%20monipuolisuus;sortBy:publishdate/material/872>

Read 8.3.2020

Juniorit Tappara. Seuran historia. [Club History] URL:
http://juniorit.tappara.fi/juniorit/seuraesittely/seuran_historia.html

Read: 5.9.2019

Meloni, J. 2015. Communication Keys for Coaches. Readable at:
https://www.usahockey.com/news_article/show/518896-communication-keys-for-coaches

Read: 5.2.2020

Skahan, S. 2016. Total Hockey Training. Human Kinetics Publishers.

Wilson, R. 2019. Raw Energy, Fixed vs Growth Mindset

Figure 2: Readable at: https://getrawenergy.co/growth-vs-fixed-mindset/#.XplzInJS_IU Read 5.3.2020

6 Appendices

On-ice

Practise happening on the ice

Off-ice

Practise happening somewhere than on the ice e.g. Gym, outdoors, stairs

Drill

Specific practise happening either on or off-ice

Edgework

Skating practise that includes the use of outside or inside edge of the blade

Skating diversity

Skating practise that includes turns, change of direction or rotation

U17

Under 17-year olds team