

Bret Olsen
U8 Assistant Coach

I'm Bret Olsen, father of 3 kids that are all very involved in sports including hockey, baseball, gymnastics, and soccer. Professionally, a Mechanical Engineer currently supervising a global team of engineers developing electric motors for electrified vehicles.

I Enjoyed playing team sports as a kid and had a couple coaches that had a lasting impact on the adult I became. I want to give back to the sport that taught me so much and believe that with the right coach a team sport can teach kids important life lessons and help them develop into responsible, motivated young adults. I enjoy being on the ice with the kids, helping them develop not only their hockey skills but their social and team work skills as well. I stay motivated by being a good role model for my kids. Teaching them the importance of being reliable and dependable not only for your family, but in your career and in your community.

I think being able to combine my experience raising kids with my professional training and experience managing associates and projects gives me a great perspective on ways to be successful coaching youth hockey. Coaching should primarily be about teaching, deciding who goes through the gate and when is only a tiny portion of the coaching role. We should expect every player, and coach for that matter, to make mistakes every game, we need to take advantage of those mistakes and use them as learning opportunities to improve for the next shift.

I've gravitated to a role in my professional life where I have the opportunity to mentor younger engineers and help them develop into valuable team members within our company. The greatest part of this is being able to witness these individuals develop into independent contributors and leaders in our department. I think the same holds true for coaching. It is very rewarding to be part of helping a child learn to skate, or stick handle, or shoot and to be able to witness them progressing from a first skate to playing structured hockey. Whether we are winning or losing, we should always be learning. I focus on teaching and learning, whether it's core individual skills or team strategy aspects. I put a heavy emphasis on effort, discipline and responsible team defense. I address learning opportunities in the moment during games and then follow up at practice with drills targeted at specific areas that players or the team may be struggling with during game play. The goal is continuous improvement so that we are in the best position possible to succeed at the end of the season. Hockey is a team sport, and team culture is critical to building a successful team. I am a firm believer that a team that skates well, works hard and plays a team game will always be successful over individual talent. As a coach, my target is to have distributed scoring throughout the whole line up so that our team becomes difficult to match up against. In my opinion, it is the coach's responsibility to develop the whole line up as much as possible and the best way to develop is to get learning opportunities during live game play.

I am heavily aligned with the long term player development model from Hockey Canada. We need to start with building the core foundational individual skills and continually improve on those individual skills as the players mature. As players become confident with individual skills we can move into adding positional aspects and then team system strategies. The theme is that we are always learning and improving year over year and this gives the team the best chance at becoming and staying a competitive team.

I prefer to take a bit of a democratic approach with the entire coaching staff. It is good to hear different perspectives and insights from all the coaches before making critical decisions so that we do not miss any key aspects or have any biases heavily impacting decisions for the whole team.

Each person learns and understands differently, and the best way to understand how each person learns is to establish a relationship with each player and build trust between coach and player so that the coach is able to ask questions and the player is able to answer honestly. I try to ask leading questions that get the player to think about the root cause of the problem and what potential solutions may be. That way we can then discuss the pros and cons of the options and move towards choosing something to implement.

I am not coaching future pro hockey players; I am coaching future members of the community. On top of making sure that they enjoy playing this game, I want to instill importance on fair play and good sportsmanship, being a good team mate that builds up people around us rather than breaking them down, and supporting each other. If every player I coach ends up playing beer league with buddies when they are my age, then I've done a great job as their minor hockey coach.