

## BENCH MANAGEMENT

The key to good bench management is planning and preparation. It is vital that you understand the strengths and weaknesses of your team as well as that of your opposition. For this reason it is important to pre-scout your league and other opponents whenever the opposition presents itself. Another key step in bench management is to determine what it is that you can control. Then it is necessary to identify the steps that can be taken to control the 'controllable'. Decide what is practical and develop a how, when and where plan.

Some key steps to good bench management are:

- *Communicate clearly with your team and staff about bench management procedures*
  - Involve them in planning
  - identify clear roles during games
  
- *Have procedures prepared for bench personnel and be prepared for all eventualities including:*
  - Injuries (training staff)
  - Broken sticks
  - Equipment problems
  - Dealing with officials
  - Shift lengths
  - Line Changes
  - Think about the what ifs
  
- *Mental preparation*
  - Visualize your decisions and situations
  - Focus your skills
  - Maintain emotional control
  - Be consistent but not predictable
  - Follow your feelings
  
- *Utilize your staff*
  - Assign tasks
  - Establish a clear game plan
  - Allows head coach to simplify focus
  - Delegate forward/defense assignments as necessary
  
- *Do not over coach*
  - Have a plan for dealing with corrections/avoid duplication
  - Allow the players to play
  - Do not expect perfection
  - Stimulate players with positive reinforcement
  
- *Present a positive bench image*
  - Remain cool/controlled in all situations/calms players
  - Stay focused on your responsibilities
  - Remain confident at all times
  - Be ready to raise your intensity level

- Be prepared for those key moments in a game when you want to elevate your team
- Be fair if you target players in any situation
- Demand that your best players be your best players
  
- *Show trust in your players*
  - Create positive ice time for all players
  - Make players believe that their ice time will be reasonable based on their performance
  - Outline the importance of the role that each player will play
  - Know when it is time to shorten the bench and utilize those players who are performing
  
- *Dress the line-up best suited for your opponent*
  - Determine how best to form up lines and defense pairings
  - Determine if matching lines will help
  
- *Encourage and develop a high energy, short intense shift game in your team*
  - Utilize a bench management philosophy where lines roll quickly
  - Reinforce and encourage an upbeat high tempo game
  - Have a sense for shift length on the bench by using the trainer to keep track of length

### ***Bench Management Checklist***

- *Changing on the fly*
  - When to change (timing)
  - How to change (gates/over boards)
  - Changing on possessions/regroups
  - On dump-ins
  - Player communication/who has who
  
- *Change Strategy*
  - Taking away the far side of the ice
  - Bench awareness
  - Maintaining the game tempo
  - Be a full line ahead/players know in advance
  
- *Goalie Out Plans*
  - Signal to Goalie
  - Timing
  - Replacement player
  - Delayed penalties
  
- *Using Time-Outs*
  - When to call the timeout
  - Designing the play responsibilities
  - Coaching responsibilities
  - Coaching aids (rink board, etc)
  - Players' responsibility (who's on)
  - Reasons to call a timeout (regroup team, late in game and behind, etc)

- *Delay Tactics*
  - Have a plan (slow tempo, regroup players)
  - Have a signal to initiate a stall
  
- *Game Plan Summary Card to include:*
  - Line –up
  - Opposition lines (matching)
  - Face-off plays
  - Specialty team units (PP/PK)
  - Track plus/minus and goals/assists
  - Area to design play
  - Area for comments (each period)
  
- *Bench Coaching Aids*
  - White rink board
  - Stop watch (line shift lengths)
  - Face off cards (plat designing)
  
- *Short Handed Penalty Situations*
  - Changing procedures
  - Where does player in box go (ice/bench, role)
  - Where does replacement player go (to puck/net)
  
- *Referee Plan*
  - Scout the officials
  - Be able to predict their patterns
  - Prepare your team for officials
  - Allows your players to remain focused on game

### ***Helpful Tips For Line Matching***

- *Advantages of Line Matching:*
  - Gives your team a game plan
  - Keeps your team alert to out change the opposition
  - Develops teamwork
  - Defines role for certain players
  - Neutralize the strengths of the opposition
  - Takes advantage of opponent's weaknesses
  
- *Disadvantages of Line Matching:*
  - Disrupts the flow of your game
  - Players do not like to come off ice when not tired
  - May result in unequal ice time for players
  - Opposing coach may get control of game and tempo
  - May appear to be admitting the opposition line or player is better
  - Slows game down

- ***Line Matching Considerations:***

- Match top defensive pair against opponent's top forward line
- Difficulties of changing on the fly for forwards and defense
- Be aware of short shifting your top players
- Be ready to cease line matching when it is not working
- Be certain to know your strengths and the opponent's weaknesses
- Understand the effect that the last change (home team) has on line matching

***Tips on Bench Behaviour***

- ***Giving Individual Instructions:***

- Responsibility of assistant coaches
- Give the player a chance to catch breath and regain composure
- Point out the mistake you are concerned about
- Make sure you provide positive feedback frequently
- Try to limit the number of negative comments
- Gentle/direct corrections when needed
- Lots of positive reinforcement

- ***Bench Composure:***

- Should be focused, intense and in control
- Be positive with and show trust in your players
- Know when to become involved with the officials if at all
- Follow your coaching instincts
- Be prepared to make decisions
- Be flexible and be prepared to change your game plan