



Article from Jeff - The Importance of the “Non-Stars” on the Team

I wanted to write an article about the importance of every single player on a team. A small percentage of every team from youth hockey all the way to the NHL is made up of star players. Typically eighty percent of a team is made up what I am going to call the “non star players”. I want parents who are standing in the cold bleachers to know that even if your child is not on the first line scoring the goals, or racking up the assists or on the first defensive line, power play or penalty kill, that your son or daughter is an integral part of the hockey team.



There are many cogs in the wheel that are necessary to make the wheel spin. I am constantly explaining this to my campers, and teams. Parents should not feel bad standing next to the star players parents because their children are responsible for helping the star player child be that flashy goal scorer. I have friends that had long and successful NHL careers playing on the third and fourth line.

I have to apologize to my campers and parents around the country as I feel I am always referring to the Bruins, Red Sox and Patriots as I am a Boston guy but here I go again. I have been anxious as a former Boston Bruin and current fan watching the three star players go down, Savard and Lucic have fallen to injury and star player Phil Kessel got recently traded. Low and behold the Bruins are holding strong because the 3rd and 4th lines are stepping up and contributing offensively. Right now a fourth liner, Begin is the second leading scorer of the team.

Here are some tips for the “non star players”:

1. **Be vocal on the bench and the ice.** Cheer your teammates on when they finish their shift. Start a bench pat and send it down the line periodically through the game. Don't be afraid to talk on the ice. Let a teammate know you are behind him or her, ready, or congratulate a nice play or pass by just saying “Nice!” This also can psyche the opposing team out. It is hard to beat a team that is unified and gels. Please try to take pride in yourself -- just as important on the team as the star player because you are.
2. **Leadership.** The goal scorers or stars are not always or actually usually not the team leaders. They may be gifted with natural ability, but not necessarily have the charisma or gift of gab of others. Non-star players are often the leaders of a team. There is nothing better than a team full of leaders and charisma and respect for all players. That is the team that will go all the way.
3. **Be the first on the ice and the last off the ice.** Work ethic is important for both the star players and the non-star players. When doing a drill, don't look to see if the coach or parents are watching. Be focused on the drill and yes your efforts will be noticed. Be the best practice player and you will be a star player.
4. **Push your teammates to do better.** Push each other including the last person in a drill. Say, “Nice effort, keep it up!”

5. **Take pride in your role or your child's role.** Notice the little things that happen in a game that YES contribute to a win or a great effort. I believe the assist to the assists or goals should count for points even though they do not count on the stat sheet. The shot blocked should count for a point. Taking the hit to save the play should count for a point. Winning the battle for the puck should count for a point. Winning the face off should count. Winning the race to the puck and battling for the puck and coming up with the puck, or battling so hard that a teammate can grab the puck should count for a point.
6. **Making all teammates smile or feel good about his or her game or the win.** Every single player is responsible for the win!
7. **Most importantly rally around your goalie** ESPECIALLY when he or she is in a losing streak.
8. **It is a long season.** Make a joke in the locker room, have a team joke that is an inside joke only to your teammates. Make each other laugh and become friends. You need different personalities for a winning team. A happy-go-lucky joker as well as the serious down to business player!

Tip for the star players:

Be fortunate that you are the star player, but realize that every player on the team is just as important and helps assist you to get those goals. Be humble and cheer on the non-star players and become a tight knit group and care for each other - that is how to win. Have heart!

Non-star players can become the star players and vise versa:



Don't think that you are pigeon-holed the "non-star" player or "star player". Things change quickly in hockey. You can become the star player of a particular game, or season, or following season. The key is to keep working hard and don't feel bad about an off game or a bad shift. Pick yourself up and go for it the next game or next shift. Remember that hockey is a game of mistakes. Recover and learn from the mistakes and move on... no big deal, guys and gals. The star players of the NHL make mistakes too.

Don't forget to take pride in yourself whatever role you have on the team. Remember, you made that team and everybody is an important member and integral on helping the team to victory. Hockey is funny, different players step up at different times. And in my eyes (which are trained eyes of the game) the steady "non-star" players are also stars.

Sincerely,

Jeff