

Coach-player communications: An analysis of player mindset at an elite level ice hockey camp

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【Abstract】

Numerous studies have devoted great attention to the importance of coach-athlete relationships (see Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett, 2005; Rhind & Jowett 2012; Philippe, Sagar, Huguet, Paquet, & Jowett, 2011). However, there appear to be no discernable studies focusing specifically on the communicative relationships between coaches and players participating in short-term sports camps. The aim of this current study was to examine the mindset of ice hockey players in an elite level short-term camp through answers given to an interview questionnaire. Twenty-seven players (16—22 years old) attending the 2013 West Coast Hockey Prep Camp were interviewed in semi-structured interviews on their reasons for attending the West Coast Hockey Prep Camp, their personal goals for the camp and hockey in general, and their expectations surrounding camp coaches and fellow participants. An inductive content analysis found that players showed a substantially high level of commitment to their sport (approx. 13.8 camps/player since they began playing hockey), a strong determination to use hockey to pursue higher education (22/27 players specified college or university either as their primary goal, or as part of their future plan for hockey), and an astute awareness of their needs development.

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コーチと選手間のコミュニケーション:
エリートレベルのアイスホッケーキャンプ参加者のマインドセットの分析

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キーワード: コーチと選手間のコミュニケーション、短期スポーツキャンプ、インタビュー分析、
アイスホッケー

本稿では、エリートレベルの短期キャンプに参加したアイスホッケー選手にインタビュー形式のアンケートを行い、得られた回答の分析を通して、彼らの考え方を考察した。16歳から22歳までの27人の選手に対して、半構造化面接を実施し、今回のキャンプに参加した理由、キャンプやホッケー全般に対する個人的な目標、キャンプのコーチや他の参加者に対して期待するものを尋ねた。

Introduction

For the earnest advancement of Japan's global human resources in the field of sport, Japanese athletes and coaches must have access to research which offers authentic insight into the mindset with which athletes approach sport internationally. For Japanese athletes, who remain largely reliant on the options provided by their teams for training and conditioning, short-term sports camps can offer a valuable consideration for advancing their training without requiring excessive time away from the team. Moreover, both the Basic Act on Sport (2011) and the Sport Basic Plan (2012) of the Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) devote attention to the importance of internationalization and international understanding in endeavoring to improve the country's level of competitiveness. Studies into the coach-athlete relationships of short-term sports camps can provide valuable insight into the general tendencies of participants due to the diverse backgrounds of both coaches and athletes.

Jowett (2005) affirms that the coach-athlete relationship is neither an aside nor a by-product of the coaching process or the athlete; it is the foundation of coaching. More recently, Davis and Jowett (2014) also report that there has been a surge of interest surrounding the coach-athlete relationship, and that several studies have shown that a high-quality interdependent coach-athlete relationship is central to effective coaching and a fundamental precursor of athletes' optimal functioning. In spite of the encouraging findings, research to date has largely been team-centered and has given little consideration to these relationships within short-term sports camps; an area of considerable influence in both amateur and elite sport that has been greatly overlooked. In offering a very superficial sense of the depth of participation in ice hockey camps in Canada, Hockey Canada (2013; 2014) currently runs over 100 skills camps across Canada and reports to have provided development opportunities for close to 65,000 players and 15,000 coaches since beginning the skills camp program in 1997. Research into the relationships of coaches and players in short-term camps can offer valid insight into not only the sports mindset of the participants but the communicative foundations as well; something which well complements the aforementioned aspirations of MEXT.

This study targeted elite level players in the form of semi-structured one-to-one interviews, seeking to determine the general mindset of the Elite Midget / Junior group – the top age group – attending the 2013 West Coast Junior Prep Camp through an analysis of responses to an interview questionnaire. While the overall objective of this ongoing research study is to create sports English language education resources through analyses of real-time instructional exchanges between sports camp coaches

and their players, this interview questionnaire sought to provide relevant background for these communicative interactions in the form of a greater understanding of the goals and expectations of the players on the receiving end of this instruction.

While coaches are guided by philosophies which represent what they believe to be important, i.e. their values (Pyke, 2013), coaches in this specialized environment are also responsible for addressing the needs (i.e. the goals and expectations) of this short-term clientele. Accordingly, they need to be flexible and adaptable in terms of both role and philosophy (Nash, Sproule, & Horton, 2008). For this reason, understanding the mindset of players involved in short-term camps is important in understanding how and why these coaches do what they do and say what they say, as an effective relationship has been widely reported to be closely connected with athlete success (Davis & Jowett, 2014; Li, Dittmore, & Park, 2015; Myers, 2013; Blanchard, Amiot, Perreault, Vallerand, & Provencher, 2009). Moreover, this insight can help orient coaches to a more holistic focus, allowing them to work with participants from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds and with varying experiences of being coached (Nash et al.).

In *Simply the Best: Players on Performance*, Johnston & Walter (2007) interviewed top ice hockey players on the various factors contributing to their motivation and success – both current and past – and in doing so uncover a list of descriptors pertaining to the coaches who have garnered the respect of these elite athletes. Items prevalent in the nine interviews include *upfront, honest, caring, respectful, consistent, candid, challenging, straightforward* and *balanced (positive/negative)*. Becker (2013) also identified similar characteristics in a study of over 300 articles aiming to identify the qualities that appear to enhance the impact of coaching behavior on athletes' development and performance (i.e. *positive, supportive, individualized, fair, appropriate, clear, consistent*). Ex-National Hockey Leaguer Joe Sakic summarizes the coach's job as a strategic balance.

“There are some guys you can yell at and some guys you have to pat on the back. (Coaches)’ve got to see who to go after and find different ways to get them going.” from *Simply the Best: Players on Performance* (Johnston & Walter, 2007)

And, with international participation in sports camps such as the West Coast Hockey Prep Camp continuing to rise, coaches must also give greater consideration to social and cultural variables in their instruction, over and above the conventional performance demands. Among the near 800 participants in the 2015 West Coast Hockey Prep Camp, 8% (approx. 64 players) attended from countries other than Canada, including players from Hungary, New Zealand, Russia, Taiwan, and the United Arab Emirates (Leslie, 2015). Through understanding how this diverse and elite

group of players approaches this short-term camp, and in turn the instructional strategies employed by camp coaches in endeavoring to address the needs and goals of the participants, we can uncover practical insight into the way(s) coach-player relationships are established and developed in similar sports settings internationally.

For both athletes and coaches, from a domestic perspective, research into the mindset of elite players abroad can provide individual- and cultural-based evaluative reference for approaches to both sport and coach-athlete relationships. On a global front, the data can provide awareness and understanding of the goals and expectations of top level athletes and coaches abroad, providing deeper insight into more culturally relevant and applicable approaches to sport when participating internationally. In addressing the potential diversity of this coach-player relationship, Li et al. (2015) observed in their research on Chinese Olympians that the Chinese athletes were much more paternally-oriented in comparison to their western counterparts. Hymes (1996, in Hinkel, 2014) further emphasized the importance of this cultural understanding, asserting that it crucially influences the sociocultural expectations of an individual's roles and noted that those who do not adhere to the norms of appropriateness are often placed in a position that exacerbates social disparities and inequality. If the mindset with which similarly-oriented individuals approach sport in other countries is better understood, athletes can more easily adjust to similar sporting environments internationally. Accordingly, this interview questionnaire was constructed to elicit responses which would provide information relevant to these goals, and participants in the interviews were left unrestricted in their responses (i.e. without restrictions on time and the content of their answers).

Methods and Materials

For this study, an interview questionnaire (Appendix 1) was conducted with 27 ice hockey players between the ages of 16 and 22 from the 2013 Elite Midget / Junior group of the West Coast Junior Prep Camp in Port Alberni, B.C., Canada. The interview questionnaire asked each of the 27 interviewees questions regarding their basic personal information (3 questions), their selection of the West Coast Hockey Prep Camp (3 questions), their goals for the camp and for hockey in general (3 questions), and their expectations for camp instructors and fellow players over the course of the camp (2 questions). The interviews were conducted by a single interviewer – the sole researcher in this project – and were recorded using a voice recorder and a video camera. The contents of the recordings were transcribed and analyzed for theme identification based on the data and theoretical understanding.

Prior to the interviews, the members of the target group were briefed on both the

research study in general (i.e. Coach-player communication analysis) and the background reasons for conducting the interview questionnaire (i.e. to better understand the mindset of elite camp athletes); specifically, how the results of the questionnaire were intended to benefit other athletes and coaches, including those in Japan, in the field of sport. The players were also given a general outline of the questions to be asked during the interviews, and informed that the interviews would be recorded for the purposes of data analyses. Finally, the group was assured that any and all cooperation with the interviews and the questions within was purely voluntary. The only specific request given in the briefing was for those agreeing to participate to answer any of the questions they chose to answer as honestly and completely as possible.

The interviews were conducted over a 2.5 hour period of time in between camp training sessions, with players selecting interview time and order at their own convenience. Interviews were conducted in a semi-private corner of the camp's main player-relations square on the second floor of the Port Alberni Sports Centre, the camp venue, with the area partially enclosed with partitions in order to limit excess external noise for recording purposes, and to largely reduce player distractions. A table with two chairs facing each other was set up in the provided space and, following a brief handshake and exchange of names, both player and interviewer sat for the duration of the interview.

Although question content was predetermined and in some cases prewritten in full for reference and the acquisition of specific data, the phrasing and order of the questions was undefined in order to allow the content of the interviews to progress as naturally as possible. The categories and information specifically targeted by the interview questionnaire are detailed below in Table 1.

Table 1 Interview categories and targeted information

Category	Questions / Targeted information
Personal Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name 2. Where are you from? 3. Age
Camp history	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Is this your first time attending the West Coast Hockey Prep Camp? (No→ How many times have you attended this camp?) 5. Up to now, (approx.) how many hockey camps or training camps have you attended? 6. Why did you choose this camp?

Goals	<p>7. What are your goals for this camp?</p> <p>8. What are your goals for your hockey career?</p> <p>9. What do you think you need to do to reach your hockey goals?</p>
Expectations	<p>10. Both on- and off-ice, what do you expect from the coaches in the camp?</p> <p>11. Both on- and off-ice, what do you expect from the players in the camp?</p>

Each interview was recorded using a voice recorder and video camera, with the voice recorder placed on the table in front of the respondents, and the video camera set on a tripod to the right of the interviewer facing the interviewees. Both recording devices were turned on prior to each interview and switched off upon completion. Following the interviews, recordings were uploaded to computer and separated into audio and video files for transcription and analysis. Referencing the content of both file types, the uploaded data was transcribed manually by the interviewer and then analyzed and charted for analysis.

Results

Answers to the questions on the Player/Coach Interview Questionnaire, with the exception of players' names, have been charted by question in Figures 1-10. Based on uploaded file times, the average time for the 27 interviews was calculated to be 2m34s, with 5m19s the longest and 1m31s the shortest. Of the 27 players interviewed, two were non-native English speakers from Hungary, both 16 years old, and recorded times of 1m51s and 2m29s respectively. Although response times varied from individual to individual, the average time per response was determined to be 10.9 seconds. This figure was calculated through a recalculation of the overall average interview time to 2 minutes, based on a 2-second estimated question time for questions 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7, and 4 seconds for questions 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, and 11.

Answers have been summarized and grouped together in the figures below according to content and deducted meaning, with clarification and labeling for content and classifications included where relevant.

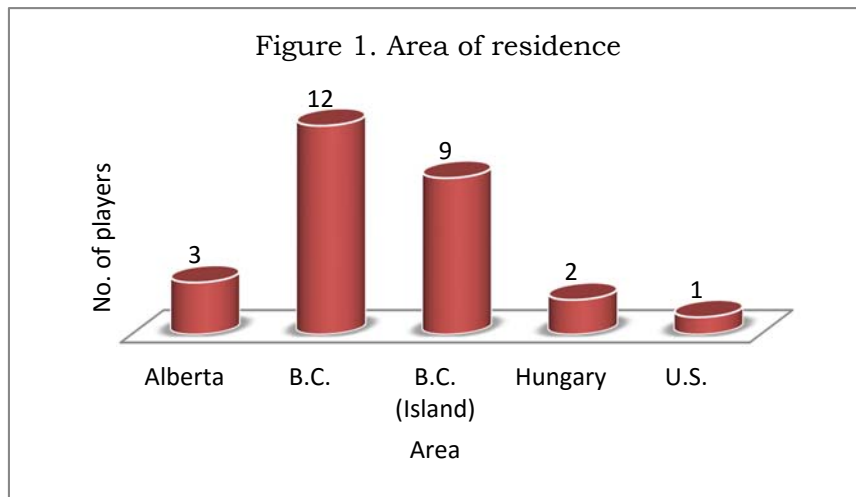


Figure 1. Question 2: Area of residence

As the West Coast Hockey Prep Camp was held in Port Alberni, Canada, located on Vancouver Island in the province of British Columbia (B.C.), the province was divided into the mainland and Vancouver Island in order to better represent the areas from which players traveled to attend the camp. Although 8 of the 10 attendees were from in and around Vancouver and the coastal area of B.C., due to the distance, time, and cost, the members faced similar commitments to those from the other areas of the interior, Alberta, and outside of Canada (as well as possibly those members from Nanaimo (3 members; 1 hr.+ commute) and Victoria (1 member; approx. 2.5 hrs.)), as they were required to stay in the Port Alberni area for the duration of the camp. Five respondents were from the local area of Port Alberni, with three of the five players being from the same family.

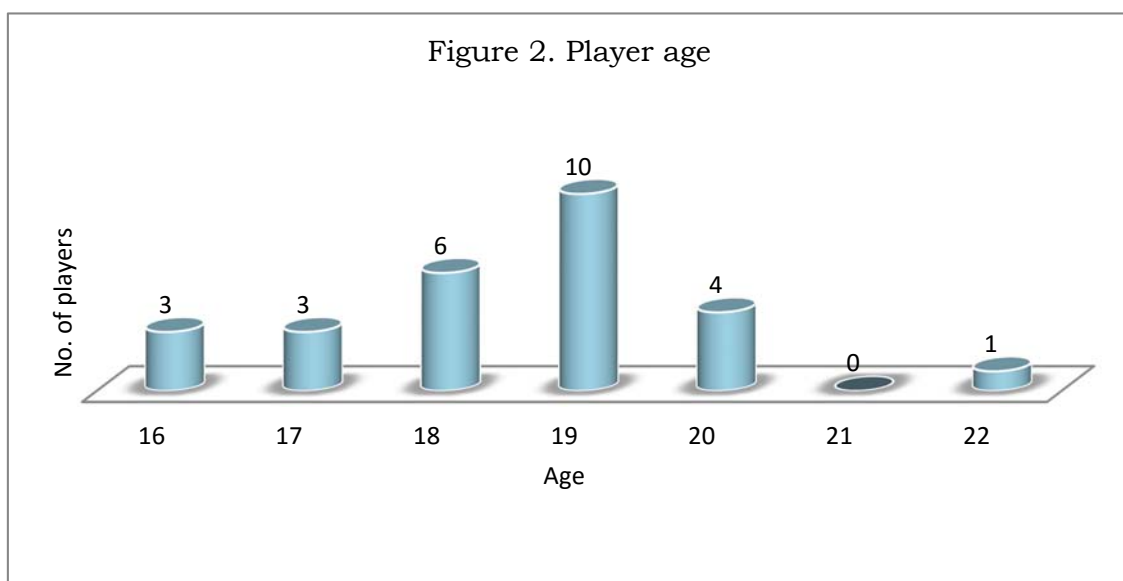


Figure 2. Question 3: Respondent age

The age range for the 27 players interviewed was 16-22 years old with an average age of 18.48, and no players 21 years of age.

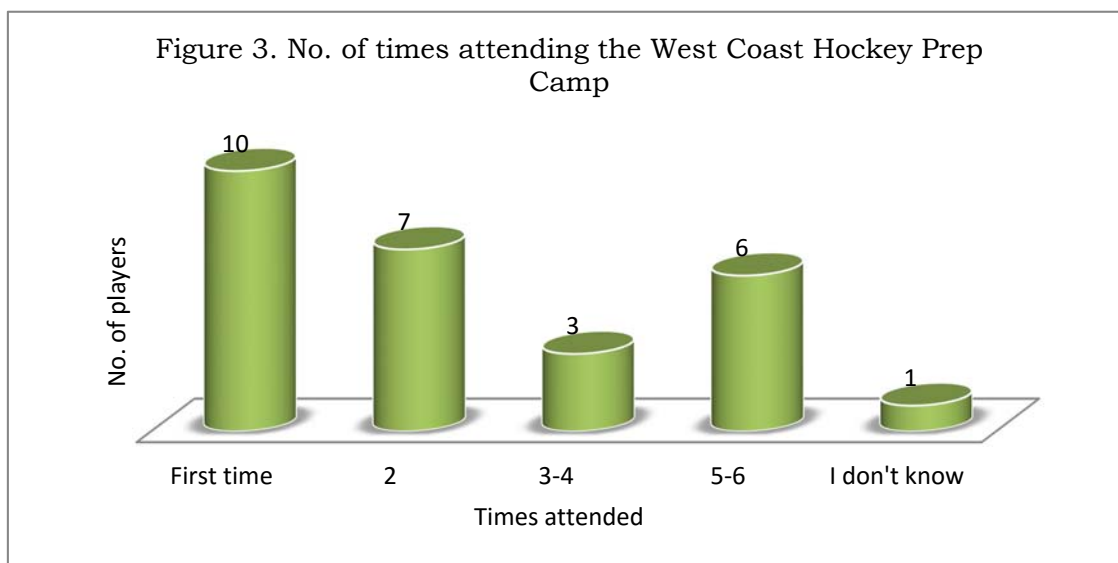


Figure 3. Question 4: West Coast Hockey Prep Camp attendance to date

For the 2013 West Coast Hockey Prep Camp, 10 of the 27 respondents interviewed were attending the camp for the first time. Of those 10, 2 were from Hungary where Glen Williamson, an instructor at the Prep Camp, coaches the U18 team, 6 were from the B.C. mainland, and one member each from the U.S.A. and Alberta, Canada. Of those attending for the second time, four of the respondents indicated that their first time attending was a few years prior, and one of the other two indicated that he had attended in 2012 as well. Two of the three indicating they had attended the camp 3-4 times were from the mainland, with the other from Port Alberni. Of the 6 respondents indicating they had attended the camp 5-6 times*, 5 were from Vancouver Island and the other from Alberta (the son of the one of the camp's coaches).

*Camp ownership changed in 2009 so those attending more than 5 times would have attended the camp under its previous ownership.

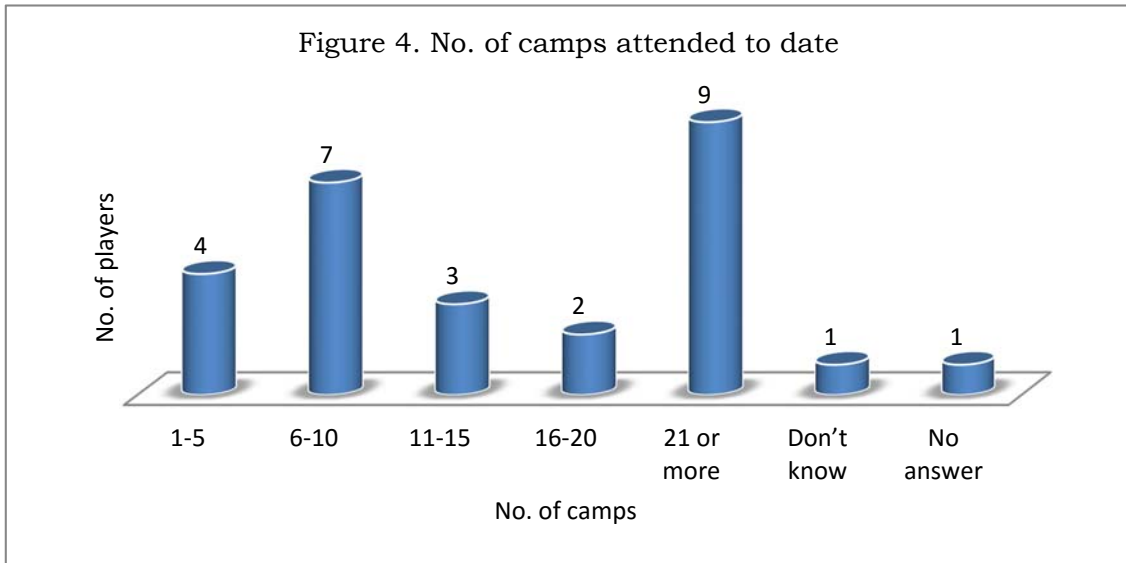


Figure 4. Question 5: Camp participation history

Table 2. Breakdown of camp attendance by player age [age(No.)]

1-5 camps:	18(1), 19(3)
6-10 camps:	16(1), 19(4), 20(2)
11-15 camps:	16(1), 18(2)
16-20 camps:	17(1), 18(1)
21 or more:	16(1), 17(1), 18(2), 19(3), 20(1), 22(1)

As indicated in Figure 4, only 4 of the 27 respondents had attended 5 or less camps in their career, with these players responding “about 5”, “3”, “2”, and “1”, respectively.

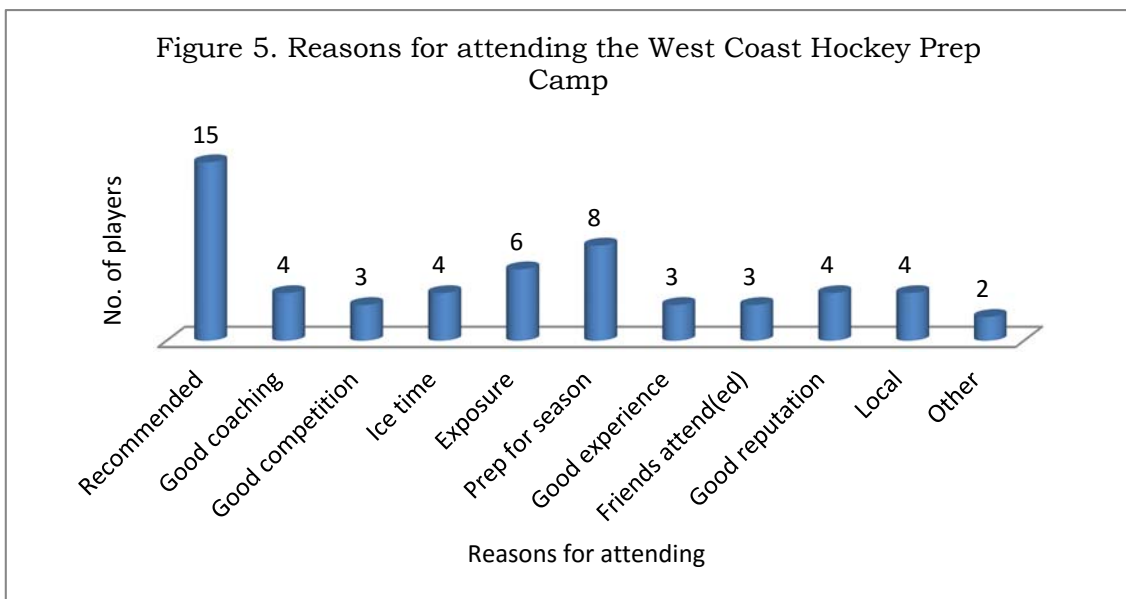


Figure 5. Question 6: Reasons for attending

In total, 56 answers were given by the 27 respondents for question 6 of the interview questionnaire. While five of the respondents provided a single reason for attending, the others answered with as many as four (2 respondents). Through analysis, the responses were grouped into ten categories* with an eleventh (Other) created for answers which could not be coded clearly. Of the ten categories, “Good coaching” and “Local” were directly stated by respondents so no further clarification was deemed necessary. The contents of the 10 categories are clarified below through the summarized responses of the players.

*Category order was based on the order of respondents interviewed.

Table 3. Abbreviated content of player responses to Question 6

Recommended:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · invited/recommended by team coach, camp coach/management · recommended by advisor · recommended by friends/family (Dad found camp on internet) · connection with camp staff
Good coaching
Good competition:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · good players · older/high level players · high caliber camp
Ice time:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · hard to get ice time locally
Exposure:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · lots of scouts
Prep for season:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · preparation for Junior A · get in shape · preparation for ‘next level’
Good experience:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · previous attendance was rewarding · liked it before
Friend(s) attend(ed)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · friends attend · older brother attended
Good reputation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · well run · good camp · well done/organized
Local
Other:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · goalie specific · Dad coaches at camp

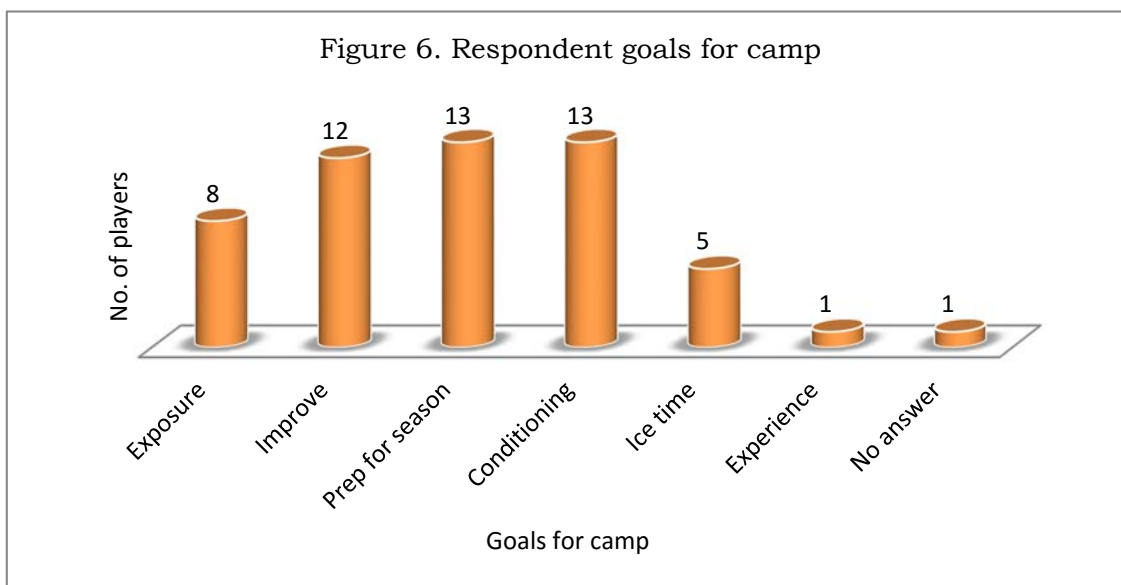


Figure 6. Question 7: Camp goals

In spite of the high quality of coaching and opportunity for exposure which the camp offers, the two most common reasons given for attending the camp were to prepare for the upcoming season and/or training camps, and for conditioning purposes. While the coding of Improve, Prep for season, and Conditioning would appear to overlap, the transcribed responses indicate each to slightly differ through such details as the following.

Table 4. Abbreviated content of player responses to Question 7

<p>Improve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve speed • work on my speed • try new things (that I don't usually do on defense) • bring up my intensity, hockey skills • improve as a player, be a better guy • (work on) every dimension • get better and stronger • pushing as hard as I can to move up • be better <p>Prep for season:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • get ready for junior camps coming up • get everything prepared for the season, feeling good for the season • know what I have to do at the main camp coming up, get the pace • prepare myself for Junior A camps coming up • make Junior A • get in shape for main camp coming up • get ready to go back, play hockey again
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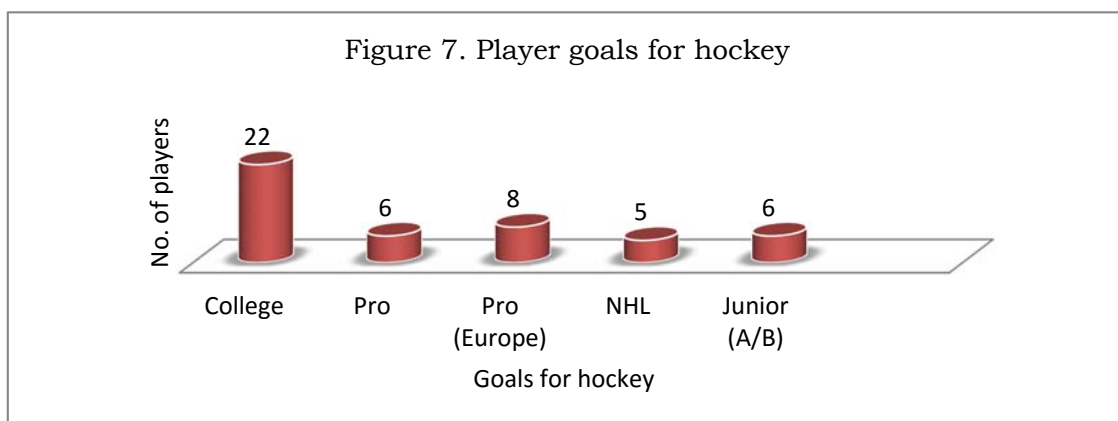
- prepare myself as best I can coming up to the season
 - get used to the quickness of the game
 - (be a) better player for Junior A
 - get ready for the upcoming season
 - get prepped for main camp, pick things up going into camp
- Conditioning:
- get (back) in shape
 - get my foot speed back
 - get into condition
 - get my conditioning up
 - be in tip top shape
 - get into good shape

Moreover, with consideration for the freedom of respondents to answer with as little or as much detail as they deemed appropriate, the data also shows that multiple respondents included information pertaining to combinations of the three categories, or for three of the individuals, all of the three as shown here.

Table 5. No. of respondents / multiple responses

Multiple categories in response	No. of respondents stating both / all three
Improve / Prep for season	4 respondents
Improve / Conditioning	6 respondents
Prep for season / Conditioning	7 respondents
Improve / Prep for season / Conditioning	3 respondents

Figure 7. Question 8: Hockey goals



Within the five categories in which respondent answers were coded for Figure 7, Pro was separated into Pro and Pro (Europe) as respondents made specific mention to one or the other (with one respondent stating both as possible options). The NCAA (National

Collegiate Athletic Association) was given specific mention by seven of the respondents, three stating Division 1, one specifically naming the Ivy League, and the others indicating college or school in general as one of their goals. Among the 22 answers in this category, 11 of them specified a scholarship in their response.

Fourteen of the respondents also expressed their desire to play hockey as a job (i.e., professional), with a greater number responding that they would like to play in Europe than in North America. Interestingly, the two Hungarian players at camp, both 16, each chose NCAA as the first of two goals, with one following up with Pro and the other the National Hockey League (NHL).

Of those interviewed, 11 indicated a single goal for hockey while other players, including the Hungarian athletes, chose to respond with multiple goals for hockey, with 11 players responding in two of the categories, 2 players in three, and 2 players giving answers in four categories. For 9 respondents, as illustrated in the example below, the responses represented a planned series of goals with some players indicating specific goals building upon the next:

“Play.. Junior A until I’m 20.. get a scholarship down to the States.. and then, from there, if I get that, then.. that’s the main goal, and anything after that is just a bonus..”
(18 years old)

Other respondents, such as the examples below, were somewhat less sure of their direction:

“.. well I’d like ta.. I’d like to stay Junior A and try and get a scholarship to a school and.. maybe go to an AHL team, and keep going that way if I can and play in Europe..”
(19 years old)

“...get a Div. 1 scholarship.. then, hopefully do somethin’, after that if I can.. maybe pro somewhere in Europe..” (20 years old)

Figure 8. Question 9: How to reach your hockey goals



Figure 9 codes the actions which respondents believed necessary for accomplishing their goals for hockey. The categories for the Action axis of Figure 9 were generated from the players' responses summarized below.

Table 6. Abbreviated content of player responses to Question 9

<p>Work hard:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work as hard as I can on and off the ice • a lot of hard work obviously • put in the extra effort • keep working hard and good things will happen • keep working hard • work hard, compete.. battle.. play hard • keep training hard • train hard • off-ice training • Jus' keep working hard.. work ethic.. and determination • I jus' gotta be determined • keep training, working hard • keep training, driving myself.. not giving up.. not losing my drive, an' my want for the game <p>Commitment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making sure I'm committed to it • if a kid is committed enough then I believe that he will get there • never quit.. never give up • desire <p>Improve skill set:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work on my weaknesses • improving my skills every day

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• skating definitely• keep improving• getting better at.. hockey in different ways.. like (be)cause if it's skating, stick handling, I can get better in everything• burst out of comfort zone• work on my speed and my.. shooting• work on your skills• speed• overall, ya' gotta be better at everything.. better skater an' puck handler• more physical• get better at the little things• keep.. getting, a little better every day• faster.. jus' get a little bit better an' jus'.. keep improving• jus' work on little stuff, like little parts of my game• improve consistency• pass better.. an' shoot harder.. an.. hit more times and, ah, see better on the ice <p>Exposure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• get noticed• show them that.. I can actually play th'.. skate at that level• get scouted• meet good people <p>Improve strength:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• increase my size... like, weight• get a lot stronger.. skate• strength• off the ice.. strength and conditioning• get stronger• I gotta get bigger and stronger• I have to be stronger <p>Success:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• need the right things to fall into place• have a good season this year• put some numbers up <p>Set goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• need to set goals for myself and achieve them and go up the ladder goal by goal• get to Junior A
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Categorization of responses to questions 10 and 11 of the interview (Figures 9 and 10) were based on the transcribed content and audio and video recordings. The applicable discourse of each response is included on the right of Tables 8 and 9, and corresponds to the assigned categories of expectation in Figures 9 and 10. Responses which include language used specifically in the category name have been marked with an asterisk.

The number of responses detailed in Tables 7 and 8 indicate the number of specific

items classifiable in the designated categories, whereas the numbers for player expectations charted in Figures 9 and 10 illustrate the more general meaning deduced through the combined analyses of transcriptions and recordings.

Table 7. Number of multiple responses

Fig. 9 Expectations of camp coaches		Fig. 10 Expectations of other players	
No. of responses	No. of players	No. of responses	No. of players
1	3	1	8
2	7	2	7
3	11	3	10
4	3	4	2
5	1	5	0

Repeated phrasings in parentheses (i.e. Table 8. *Prepare us for the; on and off the ice; Good instructions; High intensity; Learn new/different*, and Table 9. *Push...players; Push...each other; Not be*) were separated as the language applied to items which could be delineated separately. For example, *Good instructions for drills and during games* is charted in Table 8 as two separate points: *good instructions for drills*, and, *(good instructions) during games*.

Figure 9. Question 10: Expectations of camp coaches

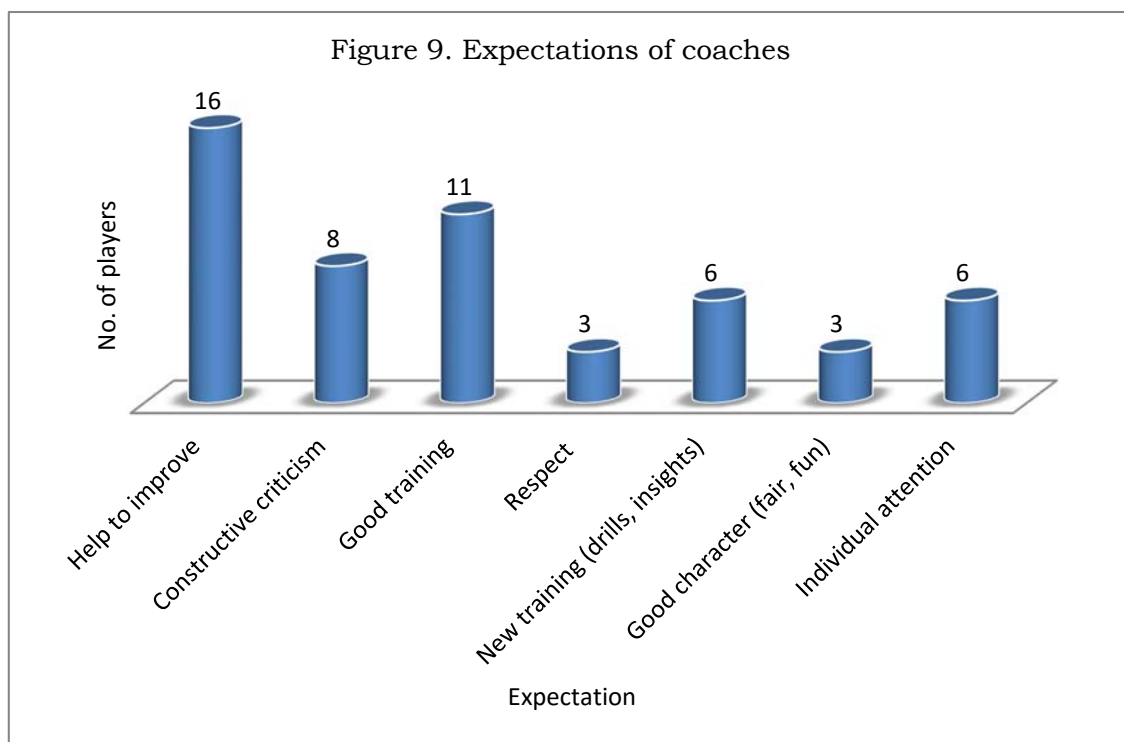


Table 8. Abbreviated content of responses to Question 10

Category of Expectation () indicate number of specific answers given	Player expectation of camp coaches * indicates same language appearing in Category of Expectation
Help to improve (16)	Help us improve* Help us improve* Push us to improve* Work us hard Help us improve* Work and push us hard Prepare us for lifestyle (Prepare us for the) next level Help us improve* Teach us Help us improve* Push us hard Prepare us for games Do their best to improve us* Prepare us Work with us
Constructive criticism (10)	Identify weak points Advice to get better Constructive criticism* Constructive criticism* Good advice Coaching on and off the ice Advice (on and off the ice) Constructive criticism* Feedback Constructive criticism*
Good training (14)	Good drills* Get us in shape Good off-ice* Good training* Good practices* Good instructions for drills (Good instructions) during games Keep high tempo Good practices* High intensity practices (High intensity) off-ice Hard camp Good drills* Good drills*
Respect (3)	Class Respectful*

	Respect*
New training (drills, insights) (10)	Knowledge Knowledge Advice for training Learn new/different drills* (Learn new/different) styles of coaching (Learn new/different) philosophies Knowledge New drills* (New) information (New) training*
Good character (fair, fun) (3)	Fair* Strict Have fun with players*
Individual attention (6)	Approachability Support Individual (constructive criticism)* Friendly High expectations Individual (constructive criticism)*

Figure 10. Question11: Expectations of players in camp



Table 9. Abridged content of responses to Question 11

Category of Expectation () indicate number of specific answers given	Player expectation of other players * indicates same language appearing in Category of Expectation
Work hard (20)	Play hard* Play hard* Play hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Not slack Work hard* Play hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Work hard* Train seriously Enjoy
Competitive (11)	Compete* Compete* Compete* Compete* High intensity Good competition* Do their best Intensity Competitiveness* Do their best Competitive*
Challenge others (12)	Challenge each other* Push each other Don't make it easy for other players Push weaker players (Push) younger (players) Help us get better Not make it easy for others Push others Push each other on-ice (Push each other) off-ice

	Push me to get better Help me to get better
Good attitude (respectful, friendly) (13)	Friendly* Not goof around Don't be mean Not be selfish (Not be) rude Friendly* Support Not screw around, be serious Good attitude* Not get pissed off if they're better Don't complain Get along Professionalism
High skill level (2)	Fast pace High skill level*

Discussion

For camp coaches committed to successful short-term instruction, the results of the player interviews offer significant insight into the mindset of the Elite Midget / Junior group attending the 2013 West Coast Junior Prep Camp. The expectations and high level of motivation expressed by the players can help coaches to better assess their own efforts at addressing the general needs and expectations of these individuals and groups that they are all too likely unfamiliar with. Specifically, the categorized expectations for coaches in Table 8 (i.e. *Help to improve; Constructive criticism; Good training; Respect; New training; Good character; Individual attention*) and for fellow players in Table 9 (i.e. *Work hard; Competitive; Challenge others; Good attitude; High skill level*) characterize an important foundation for which successful coach-player relationships can foster. While individual attention remains an important variable in the development of individual players, in sports camps open to the public, an understanding of the general mindset of the participants can provide meaningful reference for coaches in their communicative efforts.

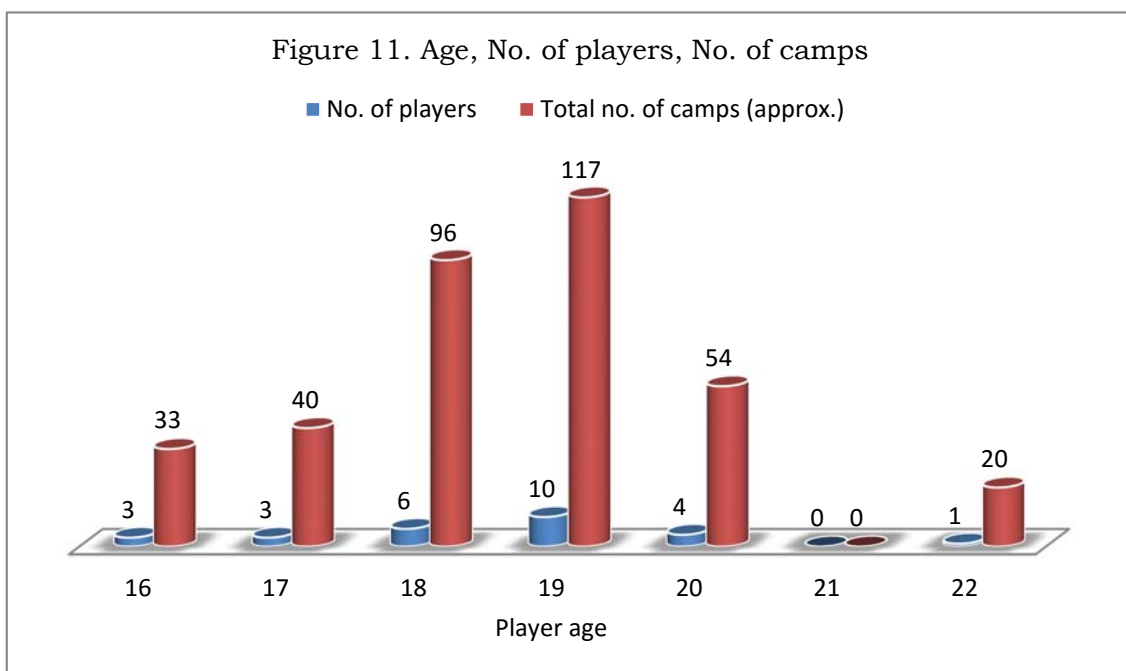
In charting the individual responses to each of the questions on the questionnaire, the following three conclusions were realized; each of which is discussed in further detail below.

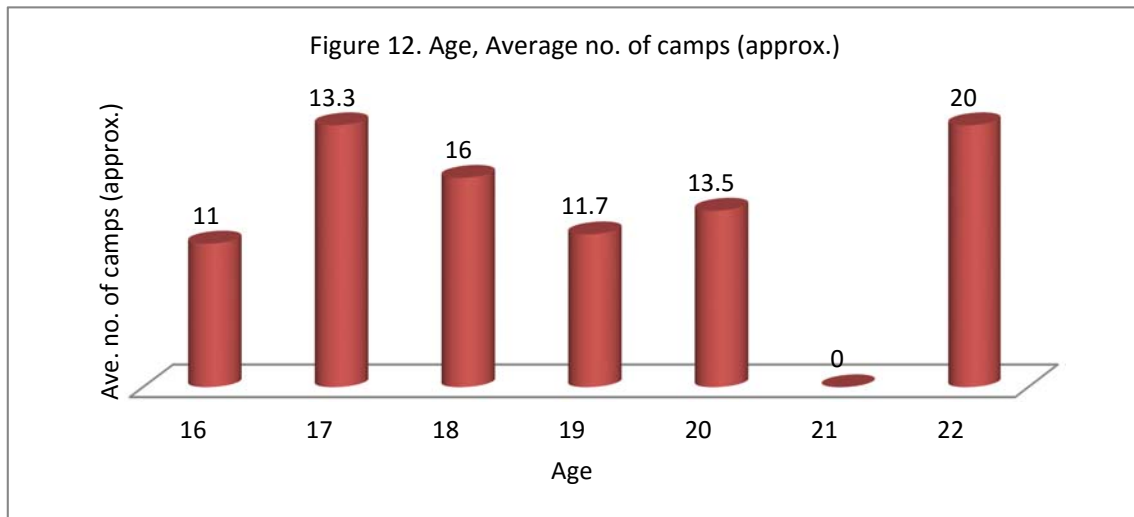
- 1) Player dedication to hockey is clearly evident.
- 2) Higher education as a preeminent goal for hockey is pervasive.
- 3) Players demonstrate a high level of awareness and thoughtfulness with respect to personal development.

1) Player dedication

When asked for their age during the interviews, 4 of the 27 players interviewed responded with the year they were born (“I’m a ’94.”), while 5 others added “just turned” or “almost” for clarification or specificity. For high level players in particular, age is a significantly important variable in their development as higher age groups offer greater opportunities for exposure. The choice of this language epitomizes the degree to which these athletes have immersed themselves in their sport.

Although the average number of camps illustrated in Figures 4.1 & 4.2 below conveys a general understanding of the amount of player commitment, consideration must be attributed to much more than the number or frequency – due consideration must also be given to the necessary time and financial commitments required to attend these camps as well. In a 2013 examination by the Globe and Mail on how income divide is shaping Canada, Mirtle (2013) documented one parent who reported paid roughly \$5,000 per year for each of their two children just to register in the Greater Toronto Hockey League. In the same article, one coach estimated the commitment to be around \$10,000 for a child participating on advanced level teams due to a 6-7 day per week commitment. While these numbers do not pertain directly to camps and the numbers below per se, Mirtle indicates that the correlation between the importance of participating on elite teams in order to get scouted or drafted has led to an even greater growth in the monetary burden on parents. And, according to the results in Figure 8, this kind of exposure was recognized by five players as an important variable in reaching their goal(s) for hockey.





While the numbers are difficult to analyze with any certainty due to the limited number of respondents (26, with one “No Answer”) and the approximate estimates provided in the interviews, they do provide a valid estimate of the average number of camps per age and for the age range as a whole. Based on the answers of the 26 players who responded to Question 5, the average number of camps per player in this group was 13.8 (Figure 12). With consideration for the three respondents who answered “Countless” and “I can’t count”, and the two others who indicated a total number between “20 and 30” (calculated as 25 camps/person), respectively, the actual totals could vary by +/-5 or more for each of these players. Moreover, the answers of the five other respondents who also answered in less-than-specific terms (“1/yr. since Peewee” (11- & 12-year-old division (“Peewee”, 2014)); “2/yr. since 5 or so”; “2/yr. since a kid”; “3 or 4 for the last 4 or 5 years”; “Every summer since 6 or 7”) were also estimated based on player age and therefore further contribute to the approximate calculations.

Nevertheless, with the total camp history in Figure 11 extending well over 300, and a viable average of over 10/player as indicated in Figure 12 (364 total camps / 26 respondents = approx. 14 camps/player), these numbers illustrate a great deal of commitment in both time and financial resources, based on a very conservative estimate of CAD600 per 6-day camp (x 360 camps = CAD216,000, or approx. CAD8,000/player (excluding any and all additional costs such as travel, food, and accommodation)).¹ And, with college as one of the main goals of these players (Figure 7), this is likely far from the end of camp spending for many players and their families

¹ West Coast Hockey Prep Camp, Elite Hockey Camp (Port Alberni, BC, Canada): 6 days, \$689 (West Coast Hockey Prep Camp, 2015) <<http://www.prepcamp.com/elite-male/>>
 Okanagan Hockey School, Advanced Development Camp (Kelowna, B.C., Canada): 6 days, \$749 (Okanagan Hockey Camps, 2015)
 <<http://okanaganhockey.com/camps/adv-development-camp-skater/>>
 <<http://vancouverhockeyschool.com/camps/spring/junior-development/#junior-development>>

as each subsequent level and team will require players to continue training at the highest level. Moreover, in consideration of the current limits on financial assistance, such as with ice hockey teams in the NCAA in which a maximum of 18 “full” scholarships are permitted to team rosters of 26 (“NCAA in the NHL”, 2015), or with the CIS (Canadian Interuniversity Sport) where “Forty-four percent of all CIS student-athletes receive an athletic scholarship which, on average, covers 51% of their tuition and compulsory fees” (“Athletic Scholarships”, 2014), this financial commitment can be projected to continue and is representative of the notable level of commitment of both player and parent.

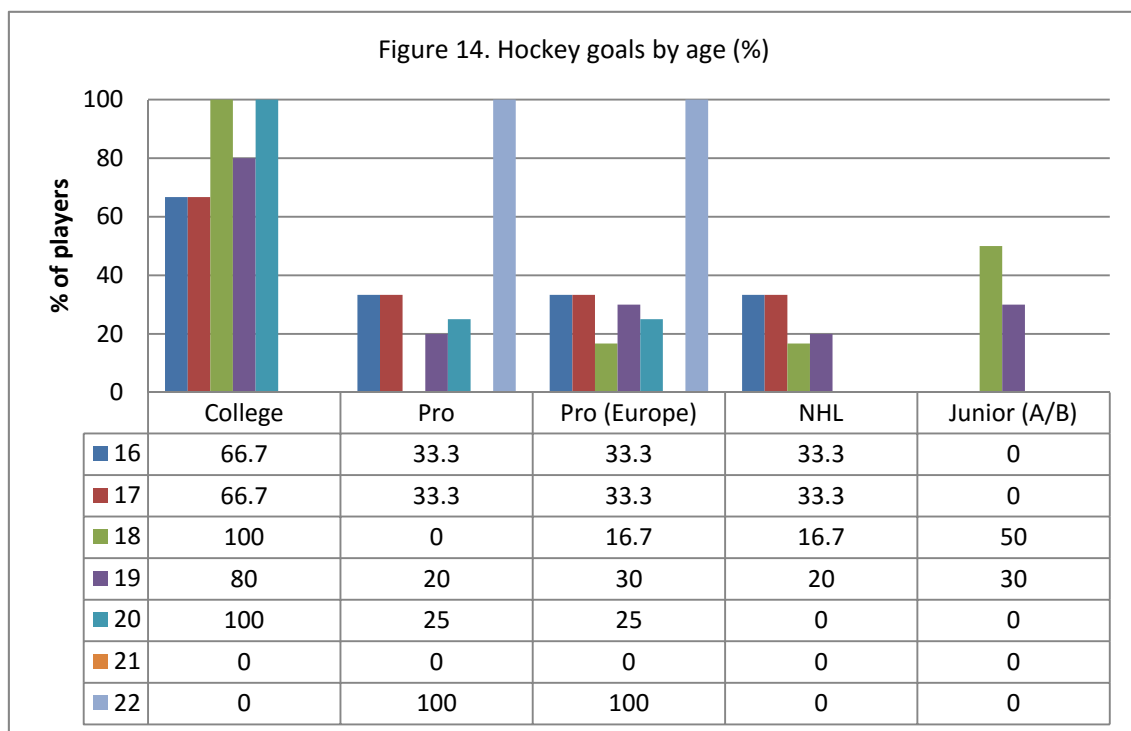
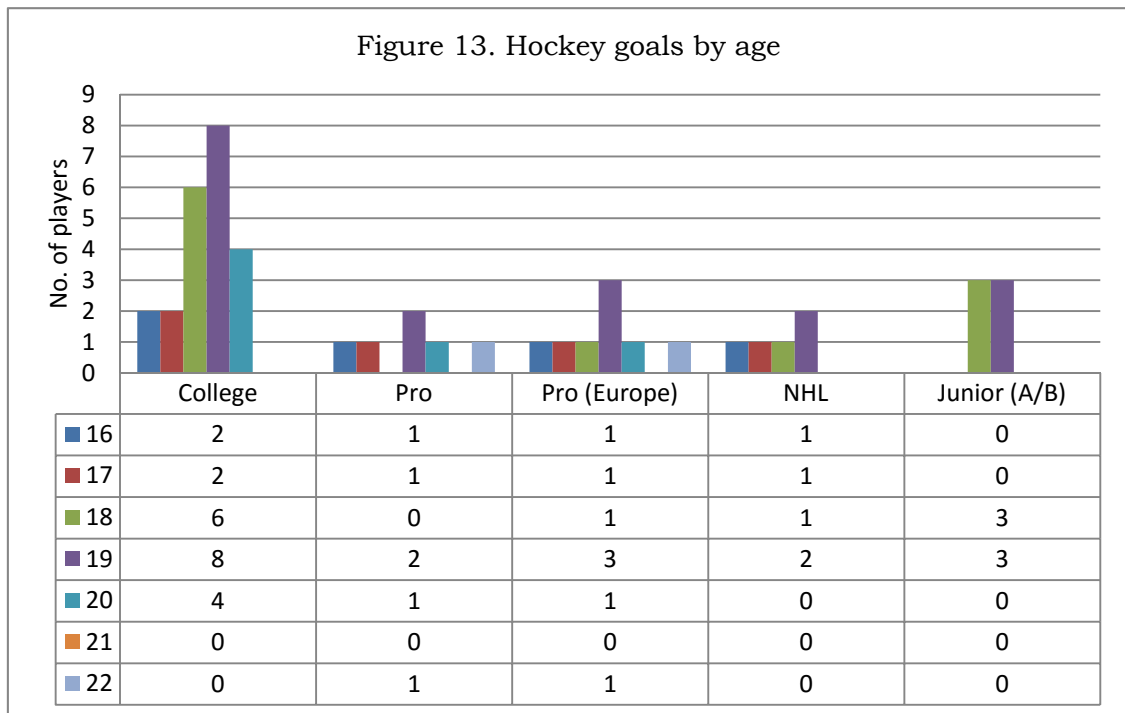
Table 8. 2013-14 Average CIS athletic scholarship for men’s and women’s hockey

CIS sport	Gender	No. of Athletes	% of Athletes Receiving an AFA* *AFA: <i>athletic scholarship (athletic financial award)</i>	Ave. Award
hockey	female	742	59%	\$2,790
hockey	male	921	54%	\$3,997

(“2013-14 AFA Report by Sport”, 2014)

2) Hockey to pursue higher education

For elite players who have chosen to dedicate their future to their sport, it is very enlightening to see that in spite of the allure of the NHL with its huge salaries and bonuses – the number one pick in the 2015 draft, Connor McDavid (18 years old), received a new contract worth approximately USD11.325 million in total at USD985,000 per year plus bonuses (The Canadian Press, 2015) – and prestige, or “everyone’s goal” as one respondent phrased it, respondents overwhelmingly indicated college as at least one of their goals. Among the 18-year-old group for example (Figure 13), only 1 of the 6 members expressed pro as one of their goals, while all 6 indicated higher education to be one of their goals. Moreover, even more interesting than the number of respondents who chose higher education as their hockey goal, is the fact that the NHL ranked a mere fourth (of six) in the ranking (Figure 14).



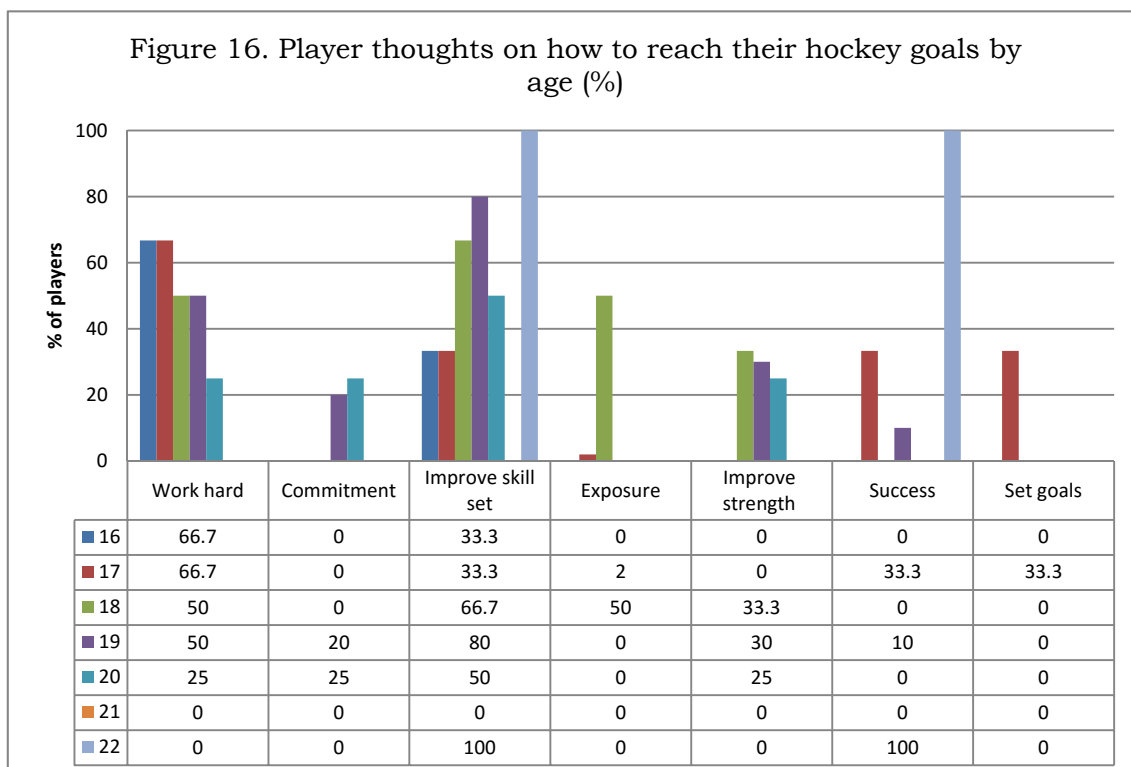
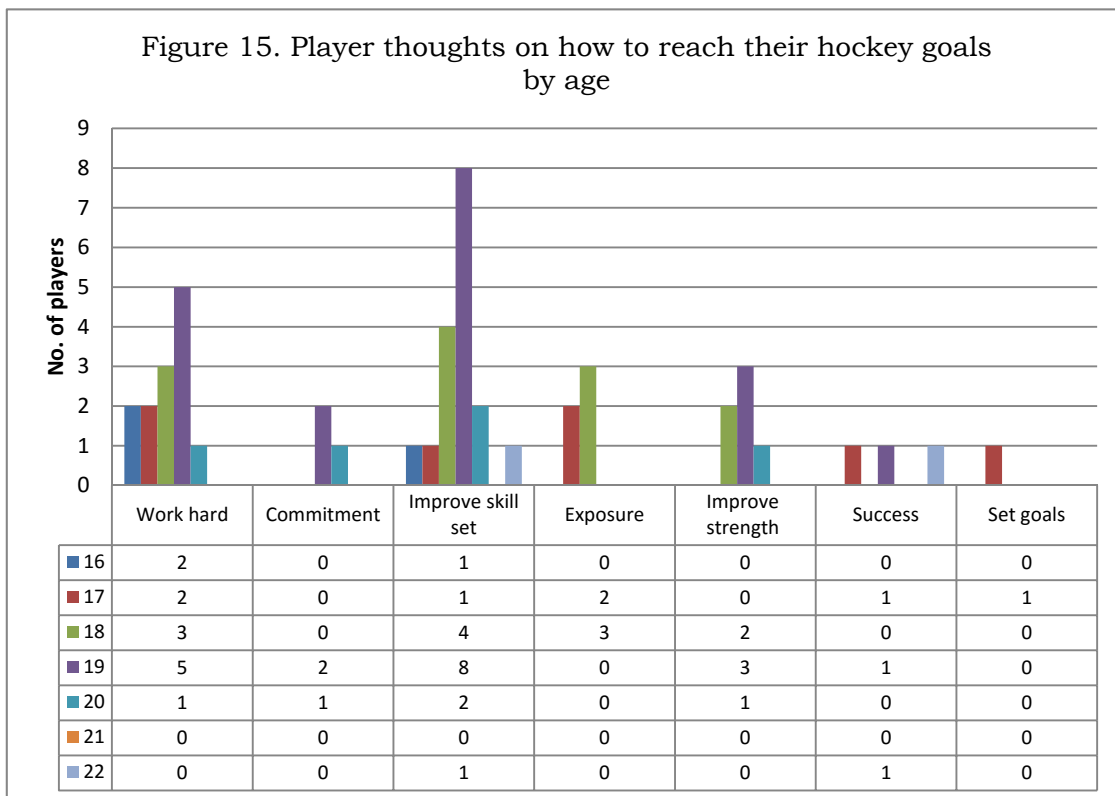
Possibly, as Koukouris (1991, in Wylleman & Lavalée (2004)) reports, this can be attributed to parental involvement and their pressure toward continued formal education in favor of a professional future. Alternatively, it may be the realization of parent and/or child of the cost versus actual success rate. Leonard (1996) reported two decades earlier that only one fifth of 1% of high school athletes at the time had

attained a professional sports career, and Ken Campbell (2007) calculated that only 4.7% of players in the highest level of amateur ice hockey ended up in the NHL, and that when ‘Little Johnny’ begins his minor hockey career, his family has a better chance of winning the lottery than he does of becoming an NHL player! More recently, College Hockey, Inc. (2015) reported that 30% of the players playing in the NHL in 2015 (up from 21% in 2003) had played hockey in the NCAA; all highly noteworthy references and insight for both players considering their futures and for the coaches that seek to help them realize their dreams.

Regardless of the background behind the goals and ambitions of this group, their education-oriented responses lend light to the motivation which helps drive them. For camp organizers and leadership, it is clear that a thorough understanding of the opportunities for using sport as a vehicle for further education is essential.

3) Attention to skill development

In a sport where statistics largely dictate player success, the responses of the interviewees illustrated marked insight into the means to these numbers through a considerably higher weighting of answers pertaining to hard work and improved skill versus those specifically codable in the category of Success. While Figures 15 and 16 below provide an age breakdown of the responses to Question 9 of the questionnaire (i.e. *What do you think you need to do to reach your hockey goals?*), the specific content of the responses (see Table 6) illustrate the general focus of the players on areas not directly targeting statistics. Player responses such as: *work as hard as I can on and off the ice* (Work hard); *never quit.. never give up* (Commitment); *work on my weaknesses* (Improve skill set); *meet good people* (Exposure); *I gotta get bigger and stronger* (Improve strength); *need the right things to fall into place* (Success); *need to set goals for myself and achieve them and go up the ladder goal by goal* (Set goals) show an example taken from each charted category and reveal the general understanding of the players’ belief in the need to approach their game with much more than mere goals and assists on their agenda.



The examples offer significant insight for both coaches and fellow players. While one mention was made of *putting up numbers*, the significance of these results is represented by the number one; only *one* member of this elite group made direct

mention of numbers in their response. It is this insight that can allow these athletes and their coaches to communicate on the same page. If coaches can approach the camp with the knowledge that their clientele is focused on much more than just personal statistics, they can more valuably apply their time to addressing the general goals and needs of these highly motivated individuals.

Conclusion

While the impact of interpersonal behavior of coaches is well supported in research (see Blanchard et al., 2009), studies on coach-athlete relationships have not focused specifically on short-term sports camps. Considering the extensive number of camps these elite players attend on average, their deep desire to use hockey to pursue higher education, and their acute level of awareness of their personal needs for development, it is clear that a greater body of research surrounding the coach-athlete dyad of short-term camps would be of great value to both coaches and players alike. In recognizing the proactive and progressive manner with which these players approach this camp, it is also clear that in order for camp coaches to be successful in their instruction, they must make intentional efforts to respond with equal or greater drive in order to meet the goals and expectations of these players. Moreover, as part of future research, the roles and philosophies of camp coaches as they pertain to camp instruction, versus long-term instruction (i.e. regular teams), need to be further analyzed in order to affirm whether they best meet the needs and expectations of these players.

Research focusing on short-term sports camps can provide coaches with valid reference for streamlining their instruction to establish more productive and timely relationships with their clientele; a group characterized by a diversity of sport and ethnic background, limitations on individual coach-player interactional opportunities, and discernibly high expectations. For players, the research can serve as reference for the motivational levels and expectations of other likeminded athletes. For international consideration, the data offers great value for both coaches and players in presenting authentic insight into the mindset with which athletes abroad approach sport, while helping to address such goal-minded aspirations as MEXT's yearning for greater competitiveness in allowing athletes the insight to participate in these camps more seamlessly. In general, a greater understanding of the coach-athlete dyad in short-term sports camps can provide valid reference for individuals interested in participating in similar short-term sport settings.



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Player/Coach Interview Questionnaire: The 2013 West Coast Hockey Prep Camp

Interview No. _____ **[Group C Junior 1/4]** || **[Group D Junior 2/3]** || **[Instructor/Coach]**

Personal Information

1. Name: _____
2. Where are you from? _____
3. Age: _____ yrs.

Choosing the West Coast Hockey Prep Camp

4. Is this your first time attending The West Coast Hockey Prep Camp? Yes / No
No →How many times have you attended this camp? _____
5. Up to now, (approx..) how many hockey camps or training camps have you attended? _____
6. Why did you choose this camp? _____

Goals

7. What are your goals for this camp? _____

8. What are your goals for your hockey career? _____

9. What do you think you need to do to reach your hockey goals? _____

Coaches & Players

10. Both on- and off-ice, what do you expect from the coaches in this camp? _____

11. Both on- and off-ice, what do you expect from the players in this camp? _____

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