

NORTHERNS BLUES HIGH PERFORMANCE OUTLINE

THE HIGH PERFORMANCE PHILOSOPHY:

To provide an opportunity for our players to up-skill themselves as individuals through access to elite coaching and world class facilities. The focus will be to up-skill individuals from technical, tactical and physical perspectives. As a by-product the individual will ensure that, across all levels, Northern hockey will benefit by winning medals and producing national players at both senior and schools levels.

OUR MISSION:

- To provide a comprehensive coaching programme which encompasses the modern game of hockey.
- To expose players to modern coaching trends with an emphasis on creating a base skills set.
- To provide opportunities for extension and growth beyond the High Performance and coaching programme.
- To provide coach education to ensure up-to-date trends and tactics are implemented throughout hockey in the province.

The High Performance programme envisages to serve the collective of Northern Hockey and not a specific team. Through access to the High Performance programme and hub programmes each member of the Northern Hockey community will contribute to the improvement of the Northern Hockey culture.

In growing our already proud and strong culture and brand we need to adhere to three principles:

1: EMBRACE CHANGE

Embracing change is hard for many people, yet change is the only constant in the world today. Change brings uncertainty. It often requires trust, commitment, and flexibility from all team members. At Northern we need to accept that things will constantly be changing and we need to adapt to that change whilst remaining true to the Northern philosophy.

2: MAKE THE EFFORT TO DEVELOP TALENT

One of the most important parts of Northern Hockey is the youth and development of the youth. There is no point in players reaching the senior levels without the correct set of basic skills and attitudes. Although results are important it should never take precedence over development. We need to feed the top!

“A keen eye for new talent and helping new talent refine their skills is a lost art. All too often, we wait for individuals to come along that already possess the skill sets we need.” – Sir Alex Ferguson.

3: CREATING A CULTURE FOR WINNING

Developing our culture within Northerns Hockey will require more than simply asking your team members to communicate, work together, or function in a specific way. You also have to instil an image, purpose, and meaning that helps drive your team to function within the Northerns way.

STRUCTURES AND PLAN:

In order to develop players to reach their full potential, it is also important for coaches to recognise how young players develop physical, psychological and emotional characteristics as they grow and mature. These will have a significant impact upon their ability to learn hockey skills, perform them, and apply them in game situations.

Coaches are encouraged to recognise how young players develop the physical and psychological capabilities necessary to perform a particular skill or task, and find ways of simplifying the complex activities of the game to suit a young player's physical and psychological abilities during any given period of their development.

The structures put in place will follow the guidelines of the Long-term Participant Development (LTPD) mould with a few additions to suit the needs of Northerns Hockey.

As mentioned before we will strive to set up a solid base in order to strengthen the top. There will be guidelines per age group that will need to be reached before moving on. These will be non-negotiable.

1: TRAIN-TO-TRAIN

Ages: Males 12 - 16 years of age
Females 11 – 15 years of age

Objective:

Building fitness and sport-specific skills. This is a critical stage of LTPD. Many of the important physical attributes will be shaped over the next 4 or 5 years. Specific hockey skills will be developed and become a habit.

This stage is about “Building the physical and mental engine”.

- **Physical** – Flexibility, disciplined warm-up and cool-down, agility, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength, core strength and stability, balance, nutrition: proper diet, prevention and care of injuries, importance of rest/recovery. Personalised programmes needed in order to respect the growth spurt.
- **Technical** – Improving the skills – fundamental skills are progressively developed and refined. Testing of skills – successful use of the skills in mini and modified games start to build confidence.
- **Tactical** – Basic team and individual tactics are introduced and developed. Work on consistency of performance under a variety of situations. Recognition of game play and decision-making is fostered.
- **Mental** – Pre-competition routine, introduction to mental preparation, goal setting, coping with winning and losing.

2: TRAIN TO COMPETE

Ages: Males 16 – 21 years of age
Females 15 – 21 years of age

Objectives:

Refining skills for particular events and competitions. By the age of 16, the players will enter the “Train to Compete” stage. During this stage they will further develop their hockey skills, including technical and tactical skills.

- **Physical** – Flexibility, disciplined warm-up and cool-down, agility, aerobic and anaerobic endurance, strength, core strength and stability, balance, nutrition: proper diet, prevention and care of injuries, importance of rest/recovery.
- **Technical** – Improving the skills: advanced ball and stick skills performed at speed. This is the critical stage for the development of the High Performance athlete. Specific skills are integrated with high proficiency levels for both attacking and defending play.
- **Tactical** – A focus on training drills that mimic game situations and encourage decision-making and not instruction, decision-making in game play, i.e. focus on ability to read the game and the use of space. Creating numerical advantage. Transition of play in attack and defence. Creating or preventing goal scoring opportunities.
- **Mental** – Critical evaluation of training and competition. Competitor mind-set: confidence, focus, determination, personal responsibility and involvement in decision-making.

3: TRAIN TO WIN

Ages: Males 21 years and older
Females 21 years and older

In South Africa the concept of 'training to win' kicks in well in advance of the suggested age ranges. That is part of the cultural problem in schools. Winning comes before development. Hence, it's a bottom-line culture. "Train to win" before mastering the training to train and compete phases, is counterproductive. The result? Ill-equipped players for the competition phase that follows.

Objectives:

The Train to win stage should see players have most of the capacities in place to perform at a high level. There should be a focus on team dynamics. The maintenance of physical attributes appropriate to the performer's skill requirements and further development of match specific skills take place. For top provincial players the training year will be divided into a double periodisation while an international calendar may result in triple periods of periodisation for the national team programme.

- **Physical** – All systems are fully trainable towards the end of the stage, testing should determine the priorities of training emphasis. Individual fitness for maintenance and improvement. High level of work rate encouraged along with institution of proper lengths of recovery. Commitment to rigorous training. Performance (result) orientated. Multiple periodisation – taper and peak periods are key.
- **Technical** – Refine skills. Game-related technical repetition under pressure. Players are normally identified for provincial, junior and senior national squads. This stage is focused on refinement of skills although elements of advanced skills may still be developed such as use of skills for specific positional or tactical reasons (when, where and how). Hit, sweep and push pass with reference to distance and pressure. Specific positional and set play specialisation established and mastered.
- **Tactical** – High degree of decision-making, leadership and game analysis. Advanced use of skills for tactical play such as cross-field aerials to break from a press and also set the stage for a quick attack. Counter attack by use of good position for absorbing the attack and then launching an attack. Switch off marking and covering, communications with players for changes in tactics. Ability to adjust game plan, adapt strategies to suit changing demands. Use correct method of entry into the circle, for example direct or baseline.
- **Mental** – Competitive attitude and will to win is solidified. Focus on individualised mental strategies used to prepare and perform consistently under a variety of competitive situations. Increased emphasis on personal responsibility and player involvement in decision-making. Utilise on and off-field strategies to maximise teamwork. Mental capacities: individualised mental training programme and consistent use and application of mental skills. Regular monitoring, evaluation and adjusting of goals (short and long term). Continue to set both process and outcome goals. High level of awareness of ideal performance state. Competitor's mind-set: confident, focused, determined, goal-driven.

COACHING FRAMEWORK:

In order for us to achieve the bigger picture we need to place emphasis on each tiny aspect and ensure they are never glossed over or neglected, thus a framework for each specific age group has been developed and needs to be met.

UNDER 14

1. Skills

- Carrying position – 2v1 carrying position.
- Receiving – open, closed, front and reverse stick, receiving on the move.
- Body positioning – low base, pre-scanned movement to encourage speed and protection of the ball, Foot and body positioning on defence.
- Passing- pushing accurately, precisely and quickly (ball speed and accuracy) off both feet. Slapping may be attempted once pushing is mastered.
- Dribbling- carrying the ball in front with eyes up. Basic elimination skills (Indian dribble, over the top, inside pull, aerial skills, etc.)
- Defence – channelling, timing and interception (jab).
- Focus on pre-scanning.
- Focus on small sided games that involve spacial awareness and decision making.

2. Tactics

- Positional roles.
- Positional play.
- Understanding of space.

UNDER 15 – 16

1. Skills

- Slapping – ball speed and accuracy, deception if skill is mastered.
- Development of overhead.
- Hitting over distance.
- Open receiving on the move.
- Tackling – channelling and setting up double tackles.
- Develop drag flicking techniques.
- Dribbling – develop aerial skills.
- Deflecting.
- 9 yard scoring and defending skills.
- Focus on pre-scanning.
- Smaller sides games to encourage decision making.

2. Tactics

- Transitions of play.
- Basic pressing - full, 3/4 and 1/2 court.
- Creating numerical advantages on attack and defence.
- Executing a game plan.

OPEN

1. Skills

- Deception on all passing.
- Refine overhead (accuracy and defensive and attacking usage).
- Receiving on the move and as an elimination skill.
- Refine drag flicking.
- Further development of aerial skills.

2. Tactics

- Adaptations of pressing.
- Ability to change formations.
- Execute and adapt game plans.
- Reading of the situation to exploit opportunities.
- Analyse themselves as well as the opposition.

"For me, winning isn't something that happens suddenly on the field when the whistle blows and the crowds roar. Winning is something that builds physically and mentally every day that you train and every night that you dream." ~ Emmitt Smith

NORTHERNS BLUES PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

At Northernns we strive to play the game to the best of our ability leaving nothing out on the field and never giving in. Although we play hard at Northernns, we play within the rules at all times and remain humble in victory. In defeat we remain positive and strive to rise above the challenges posed. We understand that a positive, dedicated attitude toward training and preparation is a non-negotiable.

ETHOS:

All Northernns teams need to play and train adopting the C.A.R.D.S ethos.

- ▶ **Creativity** – During training creativity should be encouraged at all times. During games the extent of creativity must be dictated by the situation. At the younger levels, i.e. u14 and u16, creativity should not be discouraged to ensure a result.
- ▶ **Awareness** – Players should be aware of their off-field situation and be tolerant of all the different factors that contribute to the makeup of their team. On the field they need to be aware of the given situation so that they are allowed to make decisions without the fear of failure.

- ▶ **Resilience** – The player and team need to be resilient through tough times on and off the field and should always understand the importance of the collective rather than the individual.
- ▶ **Decision-Making** – Players should be encouraged to make decisions during training and games. The coach should facilitate or provide feedback on whether the decision was right or wrong. The player's decisions need to fail or succeed for them to grow.
- ▶ **Self-Awareness** – Players need to understand who they are and be allowed to be that person in the team environment. If they have a good self-awareness they will understand what works for them and how they can contribute to the collective effectively.

VALUES:

- ▶ Teamwork
- ▶ Discipline
- ▶ Respect
- ▶ Commitment

PLAYING PHILOSOPHY:

General -

1. Go forward.
2. Be aggressive.
3. Be dynamic.
4. Play positively.
5. High work rate on and off the ball.
6. Play in the moment and play what you see.
7. Live the values of the organisation.

Attacking Principles -

▶ **Fluid/Dynamic:**

Players must become role-specific and not position-bound. Understand what is required of them specific to their position on the field. Attacking or defensive role!

▶ **Play Forward/Get through the lines:**

Have the mind-set to play forward first. Always looking to go forward and get support runners through the lines with a give and go mentality.

▶ **Tempo:**

Control the tempo of the game, looking to always play with as high a tempo as possible when the game allows it.

▶ **Aggressive:**

Play with aggression at all times, always looking to score and not being afraid of taking the opposition on. Not to be confused with physical aggression, i.e. fighting.

▶ **Counter Cover:**

Having counter cover precedes attacking. Have the mind-set of setting up cover and then identify numbers to commit forward.

▶ **Guard Player:**

There should always be a player in the guard position, firstly as a point of defence on turnover or as a player that can change the point of attack or create a 2v1.

Defensive Principles -

▶ **Breakdown of play as high in the field as possible:**

This allows us to get numbers back and set up defensively. It slows down the counter attack and disrupts play. The breakdown tackles need to be clumsy, but not deliberate.

▶ **Numbers behind the ball:**

This must happen as quickly as possible so that we can set up defensively as a team and not have to defend while chasing back.

▶ **Point of defence:**

The person closest to the ball meets the attacker and determines the direction that we want their team to go. We would prefer the wide channels, which are more manageable areas. There must be full stick pressure on the ball carrier.

▶ **No infield breaks:**

This is especially important in our 25, but applies all over the field. By allowing the player infield, he has more passing options and a direct route to our goal.

▶ **Fill the critical area:**

This is the area in the middle of the field just outside our D, the most dangerous place for any attacker to have the ball. "Box-of-death" to goals.

▶ **Track your runner:**

STAY WITH YOUR MAN!! Once he has made a pass and made a lead after, if you have not tracked your runner there will be a 2v1 situation, or worse, with the man you were supposed to have been marking. This is possibly the most important DNN that we need to implement if we want to be defensively perfect as a team.

SYSTEM PRINCIPLES

1. **4 AT THE BACK:**

More patient and methodical approach to game.

Defenders:

Outside halves overlap and are attacking players.

Midfielders:

Play close together creating space for outside defenders to overlap.

Strikers:

Look to have one post up player, one leading high and one contra leading.

2. **3 AT THE BACK:**

Look to be direct and play at pace, player are more dynamic and are not position bound but rather role specific in their relation to the ball.

Defenders:

Play tighter and deeper. Man to man marking. Distribute rather than carry. If overlap occurs blocker must cover.

Midfielders:

Two blockers on different heights. One will be the free player in the press. Outside midfielders play wide and look to go forward and eliminate.

Strikers:

Look to have one post-up player, one leading high and one contra leading.

PRESSING PRINCIPLES

Full Court:

- Aggressive.
- No hesitation.
- Wild dog hunting mentality (relentless).
- Assertive body language.
- Loud communication.

¾ Press:

- Set up quickly and organise.
- High energy but more patient.
- Understand turnover zones.
- Know how to attack on turnover.

Half Court:

- Set up quickly.
- Lower energy with assertive body language.
- Extra patient approach.
- Understand the turnover zones.
- Don't over commit on the counter attack.