Conference Presented by Benoit Barbeau
for Coaches of the Development Program

INTRODUCTION

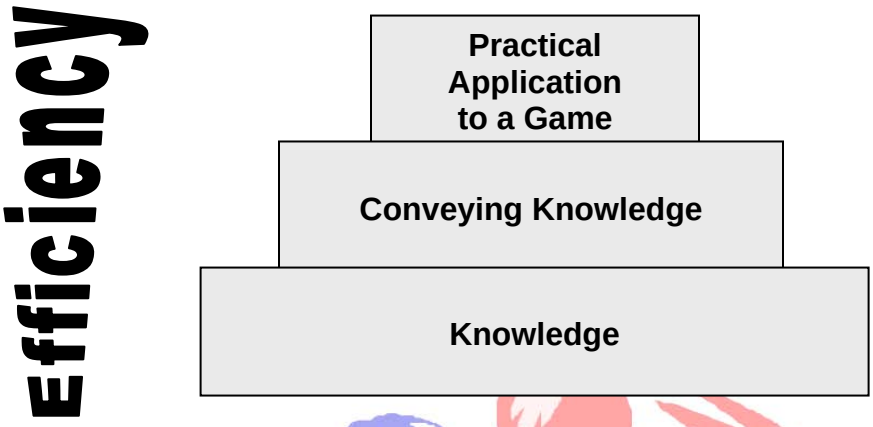
At the beginning of every season, coaches visualize their teams' game sequences and say to themselves: *"What a team I would have, if only my players could carry out what I see!"* But how do we get there? That's the magic question! Several factors can have an impact on the performance of a team, a player or even the coach.

Coaches must go through many steps in order to be effective. Everyone starts off by gaining basic knowledge then perfecting it. Doing so requires a necessary period of time that will vary depending on the effort put in. At this point, some coaches are already in over their head. Next comes conveying this knowledge to the players. It's not enough to have played hockey or to have taken a few classes to be able to teach effectively. Skills grounded in communication, planning and organization, and teaching are all indispensable, and their contribution cannot be denied. Anyone who refuses to acknowledge this reality is way off track.

The critical step nevertheless remains applying the knowledge, once conveyed, to a game. We often hear comments like, *"Yeah, but they do it right during practice…"* or *"But I've told him at least a hundred times!!!"* Possessing knowledge is one thing, but being able to communicate it to others is a totally different ballgame. **MANAGING** learning is crucial. Everywhere we look, the concept of **MANAGEMENT** is cropping up more than ever before. How do we coach the players? How do we motivate them and make them flourish? Do these questions sound familiar? Managing today's youths is a challenge in every sense of the word.

In this tip, I will present a number of tools to help you effectively teach and manage your players, based on what is available to you and your ability to dialogue with youngsters. I begin by providing a portrayal of the modern coach, followed by topics such as setting goals, statistics and assessments. This leads us to the observation grid and how to analyze results so as to provide your players with the best feedback possible. The tip concludes with the intervention log which, as you will soon see, is a key tool for learning and behaviour management. Let's get started!

THE MODERN COACH



Knowledge:

- Knowledge is acquired in various ways including reading, formal training and raw experience. It can be either theoretical or practical in nature. The knowledge coaches need to do their job is found in the *Yearly Teaching Content for Atom, Pee-Wee and Bantam*.

Conveying Knowledge:

Conveying knowledge focuses on the methods employed, as well as respecting the guidelines of the Yearly Teaching Content.

More specifically, emphasis is given to the following:

- **Logical and coherent yearly planning** in order to incorporate the various elements of the Yearly Teaching Content over the course of the season
- **Teaching**, respecting the time allotted for the development of technical, technico-tactical and tactical skills (for the % time, refer to Annex 1 at the end of this tip), as well as the time required to develop each element of the *Yearly Teaching Content* according to the division and class
- **Learning Steps**, choosing exercises ranging from the most basic to the highly complex in order to allow the players to experiment with the many governing principles and points to look out for, as well as to foster decision-making skills.

Practical Application to a Game:

These are measures that are taken so that players can truly apply what they have learned during actual games. In a nutshell, this is what we call **MANAGEMENT**.

More specifically, emphasis is given to the following:

- Game objectives, as well as short-, medium- and long-term goals
- Statistics available to the players, including the type of information and its pertinence
- Evaluating performance via the observation grid and video footage
- Analyzing results, feedback (the type of feedback and its impact on motivation), adjustments and the coach's tolerance for error

- The how and why of the intervention log, follow-up, the disciplinary control system, direct intervention and sanctions

GAME MANAGEMENT: SETTING GOALS, STATISTICS, AND EVALUATIONS

Everybody knows that statistics can be accumulated on the number of successful passes, face-offs or power play goals. Far be it from me to imply that these statistics aren't highly practical, but are they the *only* tidbits of information that can help coaches become more effective? Coaches are realizing more than ever before that there is a huge difference between the professional and development hockey environments — it is like comparing apples and oranges. On one hand, you've got up-and-rising players with limited experience, and on the other hand, you have more accomplished players with greater skill (this does not mean, however, that no effort can be made to improve game management at this level!) As far as we are concerned, statistics are much more than a coaching reference tool: they can and should be put to work when developing our young players.

In the last few years, considerable attention has been given to the quality of teaching. Everything has become highly structured upon the arrival of *Yearly Teaching Contents* and a *Learning Steps Guide*, and an increasing number of coaches now prepare an annual plan. These positive new trends have given rise to many readjustments for the coaches, one of the most notable being evaluations. First of all, what do we evaluate? Why are we doing it? How do we do it? What kind of statistics should we be accumulating? How do we manage learning? All these questions are worth examining in greater detail.

Coaches who work with an annual plan know full well that they cannot teach all material concurrently and must therefore proceed one step at a time. This is also why they must set their goals at every game. But what kind of goals should they be making? Goals that are based on what was taught, of course! Pseudo-goals such as, "*Stay intense throughout the entire game*" or "*Don't let yourself get distracted*" are in fact wishes, and not objectives, because they are neither tangible nor measurable.

Remember back to when you were in school. Written examinations were used to measure the degree to which the students had grasped the course material. An objective might be, for example, to achieve a result of 80%. These same principles are found in the development of young hockey players. Each player must be given a sense of direction, with an objective to achieve at every game. Such an approach forces the players to become focused and motivated. At this point, no reference is made to the victory or defeat displayed on the scoreboard because the real victory is whether or not the player's individual goal was reached.

The goal in question could cover an entire element or simply a sub-element. The status quo for coaches that use the leaning steps approach is to define goals based on sub-elements because they do not have sufficient time to teach the entire element over the course of a week. More advanced players can be assigned goals focusing on effectiveness (results oriented) instead of performance where we observe the player's way of carrying out the movements or actions targeted by the goal. Although reaching set objectives will clearly improve performance, patience is the word of the day. It is risky to set overly lofty goals before the elements have been thoroughly taught or to not allow the players to progressively improve their percentage of success when performing the elements being evaluated. What is important for coaches operating in a development environment is to get their teams to perform at the height of their

abilities. But is this enough to make a winning hockey team? Some of you know the answer already.

Take for example the ***Approach on a Carrier***, described on pp 46-50 of the ***Yearly Teaching Content for Atom, Pee-wee and Bantam***, which appears in Annex 2 of this tip. Let's examine how we can set goals for this element using an observation grid.

THE OBSERVATION GRID

An observation grid is a table used to measure the degree to which a taught element has been mastered. It must be straightforward and easy to use. A basic system of "+" and "-" is often sufficient. The use of video is recommended because it enables the observer to drill down to even the smallest details. Let's now take a look at how a grid is developed...

Our ***Approach on a Carrier*** example comprises four (4) governing principles. To create the observation grid, simply enter a governing principle at the top of each column as a point to look for, and note the name or number of a player at the beginning of each row. The observer then indicates whether or not each governing principle has been respected with a "+" or a "-" at the appropriate place in the grid. Statistics must be gathered quickly while the game is underway, without turning one's focus from the action on the ice to a sheet of paper. Observations collected in this manner (8^{+}, 6^{-}, 3^{-}, 10^{+}, 14^{+}...) can later be compiled between periods or at the end of the game.

EXECUTING THE APPROACH ON A CARRIER

Governing Principles ——— NAMES	Determine the speed of approach	Angled approach and speed adjustment	Stick on the ice blocking the middle	Taking the opponent out of the play	% Success

Let's suppose that a coach has taught the first two governing principles, *determine the speed of approach* and *angled approach and speed adjustment*, over the past week. As part of his weekend games, he could require a minimum percentage of success (a measurable objective) when applying these governing principles, ex: 60% for the first game and 70% for the second. The observer must be well versed in the governing principles in order to accurately assess the players' actions. An inexperienced observer might have difficulty quickly noting down the "+" and "-". Over time, however, the sense of observation becomes refined and the statistics start to take shape. The use of video makes the observations easier, but requires more time to carry out. It nonetheless comes highly recommended.

By assigning objectives, every game becomes a type of evaluation. We use the game as a test environment to determine whether the players are able to apply the concepts they were taught. Let's now take a look at an observation grid used to measure the degree of effectiveness of a complete element.

THE APPROACH ON A CARRIER — MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS

KEY POINT	Did the carrier return to the centre in control of the puck?	
NAMES	YES/NO	% SUCCESS

The overall effectiveness of a complete element is only assessed (as a percentage) once the teaching is completed and the successful execution of each governing principle has been observed. What counts here are results! It goes without saying that the more closely the governing principles are adhered to, the greater the chances of success.

FEEDBACK AND ANALYZING RESULTS

The observation grid serves no purpose if its results remain a secret. Observed individuals are eager to learn more about their performance. It's not enough to say, "*You played really well*," or "*I know you can do a lot better than that!*" Young players hunger to know what they did well as much as what they did poorly. The observations in the grid enable coaches to precisely calculate the percentage success for each governing principle being assessed or the degree of effectiveness in game situations. By being made aware of their individual results, rising young hockey players know exactly what they have already got under their belt, as well as what still needs a little work. Once the players have been evaluated, the coaches find themselves in a position where they are able to make appropriate adjustments as part of the following practice sessions (with special attention given to certain players).

The players should have at least basic knowledge of the coach's yearly plan, and it might be a good idea to share this information with the parents. The players must accept the fact that not everything can be fixed at the same time, and that each component of the game will be individually and sequentially mastered. The coach must deliver clear and convincing arguments in this regard in order to effectively convince the players. Feedback becomes a surprisingly strong source of player motivation at this phase of development. Players need to feel they are making progress. If their results are poor and they do not make their personal goal for the game, they will know that they need to double their efforts at the next practice in order to achieve their goal at the following game. Exercises and drills are no longer carried out purely for the sake of getting them over with. Instead, players view them as a way of getting a special edge that will make them improve. Moreover, they also sometimes contribute to a high level of (mental and physical) intensity during practices and create an environment that is conducive to learning. Coaches have everything to gain when they adopt this approach because their players perceive them as beneficial stakeholders who are committed to their development. Over time, the team's overall performance should improve because each player is making individual progress…

MANAGING LEARNING AND BEHAVIOUR VIA AN INTERVENTION LOG

This can all seem quite simple on paper, but the reality is often a different story altogether. If every team were composed of players who consistently did everything asked of them, it would be fantastic. However, this is rarely the case.

Coaches who use statistics to evaluate their players' progress have at their disposal written arguments as supporting arguments. When video footage is possible, visual proof is also available. These coaching aids are just as useful for showing players that an element has been grasped as they are when demonstrating that the opposite is true. With developing players, coaches must intervene whenever a player does not meet an assigned objective, that is, every time a player fails to heed directives. If no intervention is made, the statistic becomes useless and the coach will quickly lose control of the learning process. Not only must the performance-related details be presented to the player, the series of consequences in place for undesirable behaviour must also be made known. The coach must have devised a scale of measures (*i.e.* sanctions) ranging all the way from further explanations to full suspension. Such an extreme measure is a decision that cannot be taken lightly. It should be the final step of a lengthy and engaged intervention exercise. Logging all such interventions in a special notebook is recommended (see the example in Annex 3 at the end of this tip.) Individualized follow-up of this nature enables the coach to efficiently manage the players' learning. The players, on the other hand, are aware of the mechanism in place and are further inspired to attain their goals. All in all, it's the whole team that benefits.

The intervention log can also serve to track any infractions of team-related rules such as tardiness, forgotten equipment, disregard of a directive, improper behaviour during a game and inappropriate dress. This means that, at any point in the season, the coach can consult an accurate representation of each player covering both learning and behavioral aspects. This detailed report is a great help when working with the players, and provides the tools the coach needs whenever asked by the players or parents to justify a decision. Problems loom on the horizon, and maybe rightly so, if ever the players or parents detect an inconsistency in the method of intervention or the sanctions imposed by the coach. Copious amounts of energy are spent resolving conflicts of this sort, all at the expense of teaching and coaching. Organized and structured coaches, however, do not have to worry about this problem.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that setting goals, statistics, evaluations, the observation grid, analyzing results, feedback and the intervention log all constitute powerful tools that enable coaches to rise to the highest level of the pyramid and join those who are able to make their player effectively and consistently apply the elements they learn to actual games. Coaches derive great satisfaction from the realization that their players are making progress individually and that their team as a unit is improving overall. Armed with such knowledge, they are able to analyze their players' performance with greater objectivity and thus heighten the quality of their interventions. In short, they are able to **MANAGE** their players.

Annex 1 — Time allotments for skill development

Use this table to appropriately allot the time required for the development of technical, technico-tactical and tactical skills. You will also find it handy when determining the time required to develop each element of the *Yearly Teaching Content* according to the division and class

COACH'S YEARLY PLANNING IN % OF TIME								
	Global %	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Atom								
Technical	50	75	70	60	50	35	30	30
Technico-Tactical	30	15	20	25	30	40	40	40
Tactical	20	10	10	15	20	25	30	30
Pee-Wee								
Technical	40	65	60	50	40	25	20	30
Technico-Tactical	35	20	25	30	35	40	45	40
Tactical	25	15	15	20	25	35	35	30
Bantam								
Technical	30	30	35	35	30	25	20	20
Technico-Tactical	40	50	45	40	40	30	35	35
Tactical	30	20	20	25	30	40	45	45
Midget								
Technical	25	30	25	25	25	20	20	20
Technico-Tactical	30	35	35	30	30	25	25	25
Tactical	45	35	40	45	45	55	55	55

Annex 2 — Approach on a Carrier

Most plays during a match are one-on-one situations. A player on defense seeks to reduce the carrier's play options by covering a non-carrier or by simply placing pressure on him after identification. The approach on a carrier is intended to be a controlled and subtle weapon. Controlled because the defensive player decides the path the carrier will take by applying the governing principles for the approach on a carrier. Subtle because the carrier believes he will get away once he sees that the defensive player is not aiming straight for him; however, he is mistaken. It is a trap that closes in on him gradually. An approach on the carrier enables the defensive player to steer him into the boards (greatly reducing his play options), thereby communicating to the defensive teammates where the intended play is about to unfold. A defensive player's primary goal when approaching the carrier is not to recover the puck (although it can be done on occasion); instead, it is to prevent the carrier from cutting back through the middle while in control of the puck. In one-on-one situations, you have to play your man. Remember that when a defensive player is approaching the carrier, his partners are applying individual coverage on a non-carrier. They are the ones responsible for intercepting a pass, if possible, or recovering a loose puck.

Used everywhere on the ice, the approach on a carrier must be perfected by all players in all contexts. It is the first component of any defense. Unfortunately, too many coaches neglect to teach this concept thoroughly, leaving the team vulnerable in one-on-one situations. Under such conditions, a successful defense is difficult to ensure. The approach on a carrier must be taught at the very beginning of the season because everything else relies on it. A defensive player's aggressiveness and his desire to catch up to or immobilize the carrier are two important assets.

The governing principles are as follows:

GOVERNING PRINCIPLES:

1 — Determine the speed of approach:

- Head for the opponent **quickly** if he does not have control of the puck, (ex: pursuit, puck in skates or the carrier falls). In this situation, it is important not to let the carrier gain control of the puck. It is a race to gain possession.
- Head for the opponent **more slowly** if he has complete control of the puck. More slowly does not mean sluggish and passive, however. Understandably, the gap separating the defensive player and the carrier must be constantly reduced. The defensive player will nonetheless be more careful in this case.

2 — Angled approach and speed adjustment:

- The defensive player's body is blocking the middle (meaning that it is always more centered than the carrier's body). This will allow him to catch up to the carrier with forward crossovers, possibly with a sharp turn or simply by gliding with the knees bent in

order to skate alongside the carrier and neutralize him more easily. To succeed, he will need to adjust his speed and angle of approach to match that of the carrier. This is especially true when the approach on the carrier is completed over the length of the ice. An angled approach is unnecessary when pursuing because the defensive player is behind the potential carrier. When approaching a carrier face-on in a restricted space along the width of the ice, the angle of approach is reduced to virtually nothing. The position of the defensive player's body relative to the carrier's will be enough to steer him. Furthermore, the carrier must be kept away from the net when on the width of the ice or behind the goal line in defensive territory. The defensive player's right shoulder is lined up with that of the carrier or vice-versa, depending on the intended direction when guiding the carrier.

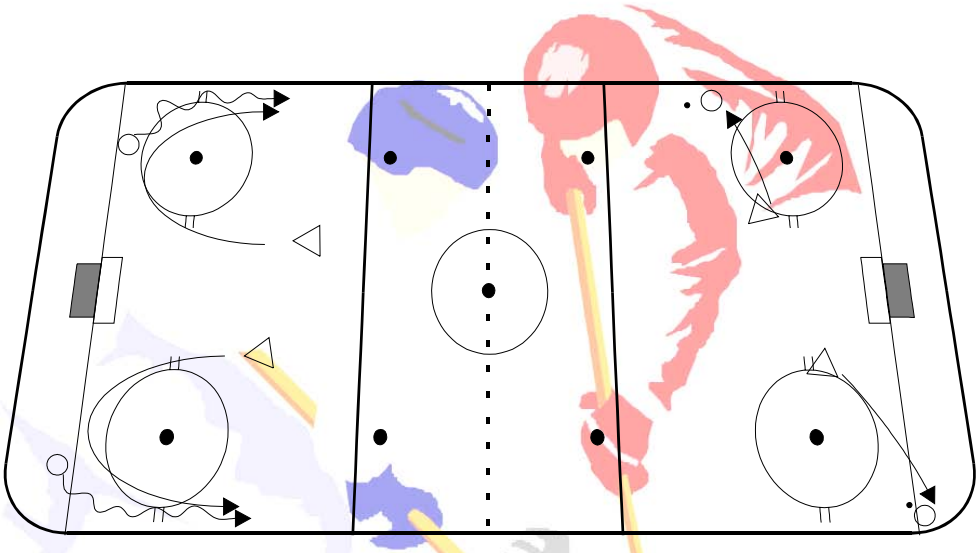


Figure 1. Guiding the carrier. On the left, notice how the defensive player's body is more centered than the carrier's. This situation is often seen when forechecking in offensive territory or the neutral zone, as well as in every situation where the approach on a carrier is executed along the length of the ice. On the right, the carrier is guided in a restricted space along the width of the ice. Notice that the angle of approach is reduced to a simple shoulder-to-shoulder positioning. There an attempt is made to steer the carrier away from the defended net.

3 — Stick on the ice blocking the middle:

- Positioning the stick on the ice to block the middle prompts the carrier to continue moving towards the boards because it is another obstacle in addition to the body. When in pursuit, the position of the stick can eliminate one way out. When approaching the carrier face-on in a restricted area, the stick is placed on the ice on the same side as the defensive player's body with respect to the carrier.

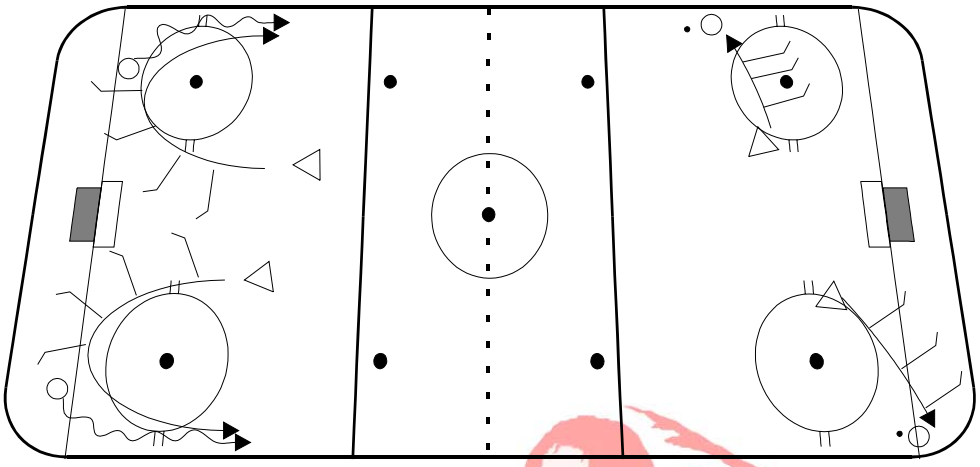


Figure 2. Positioning the stick in the approach on a carrier. On the left, notice how the stick blocks access to the middle, leaving open only one way out — towards the boards. The same result is reached on the right, in a restricted space in defensive territory. Notice how the carrier is steered away from the net.

4 — Taking the opponent out of the play:

- In many regions of the country, the approach on the carrier must finish with a body check in order to immobilize the opponent and take him out of the play (in Quebec from the Bantam division on). Physical contact without colliding with the carrier may also be used (Pee-Wee division in Quebec). In all divisions, if body checking is impossible or not allowed after the approach (Atom division in Quebec), it is imperative, at the very least, that the player stick with his man, regardless of whether or not he has the puck. In this last scenario, it ensures that the transition between the approach on the carrier and individual coverage of a non-carrier takes place for the defensive player who initially identified the carrier as the man to cover, provided that the opposing team keeps possession of the puck after the carrier clears or passes it. This prevents the carrier from being active after the pass, thereby eliminating the possibility of a give-and-go or a give-and-follow. Finally, it allows the defensive partners to identify the opponents to cover and avoid any confusion.

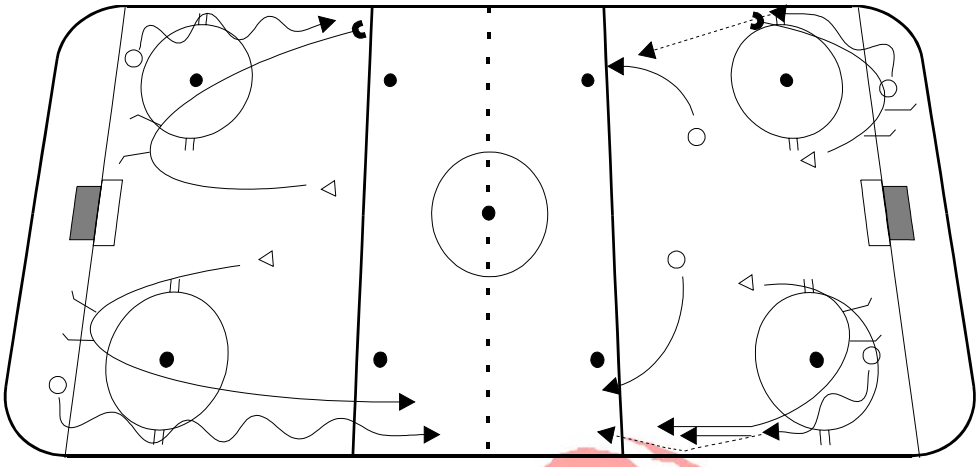


Figure 3. Taking out the opponent following an approach on the carrier. Notice how in the lower-left corner, the defensive player cannot body check the carrier. Nonetheless, he sticks with him. In the upper-left corner, the defensive player completes the body check and takes his man out of the play. In the upper-right corner, the defensive player does not concern himself with the pass and does not pursue it. On the contrary, he sticks with his man and takes him out of the play. Finally, in the lower-right corner, the defensive player sticks with his man even if he cannot body check him after the pass.

COMPONENTS:

- ◊ Forward crossovers
- ◊ Sharp turns
- ◊ Collecting information
- ◊ Body checking (when allowed)

SUGGESTED EXERCISES:

BARBEAU, BENOIT *ICE HOCKEY LEARNING STEPS GUIDE*, 1996, pp. 19 - 33.

Annex 3 — Notebook Example

Below is an example of an intervention log used to efficiently manage the players' learning and track any infractions of team-related rules. It provides an accurate representation of each player covering both learning and behavioral aspects.

INTERVENTION NOTEBOOK

Player's Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

INTERVENTIONS

Pre-Season Training Camp

September 4	Did not stop at the red line as instructed. A warning was given.
September 11	Lacked intensity; discussed with him. Improvement is required.
September 13	Did not stop at the red line as instructed. Assigned 10 board-to-board exercises.

Regular Season

September 22	Arrived late. Will not play the first period at the next game (team regulation).
September 27	Did not achieve the approach on a carrier objective (results: 21% instead of the expected 60%). I met with him and re-explained the rules that were taught.
October 10	Did not achieve the approach on a carrier objective (results: 35% instead of the expected 70%). I went over the video footage with him, and had him skate 5 minutes at the end of the October 12 practice.
October 24	Arrived late for the second time. Will not play the first two periods at the next game (team regulation).
November 10	Did not achieve the coverage objective (results: 54% instead of the expected 80%). I re-explained the concepts to him. He will be benched for the first three shifts at the next game.