Youth Ice Hockey Coaches’ Perceptions of a Team-Building Intervention Program

Julie Newin and Gordon A. Bloom
McGill University

Todd M. Loughead
University of Windsor

The purpose of the current study was to explain youth ice hockey coaches’ perceptions of the effectiveness of a team-building intervention program. Eight Peewee-level hockey coaches implemented the same team-building activities with their teams throughout the regular season. Data were gathered using 3 methods. Specifically, coaches answered questions on a pre- and postintervention form after each team-building activity, coaches’ behaviors were observed by members of the research team, and each coach completed a semistructured exit interview after the completion of the regular season. Results highlighted the benefits of the team-building intervention program. Specifically, coaches felt athletes enjoyed this experience and improved or acquired a variety of important life skills and abilities. Coaches also felt that athletes bonded during activities and improved their abilities to work together as a group. Finally, coaches felt that their own personal communication skills improved.

Regular physical activity has numerous physiological (e.g., Haskell, 1994), cognitive (e.g., Etnier et al., 1997), and psychological (e.g., Landers & Petruzzello, 1994) benefits for individuals of all ages (Carron, Hausenblas, & Estabrooks, 2003). A major component of physical activity for youth is participation in team sports at both the recreational and competitive levels (cf. Wankel & Mummery, 1996). Unfortunately, youth-sport participation begins declining after the age of 12; this finding is especially critical given that it is also a crucial time for the development of children’s social skills and self-esteem (Hedstrom & Gould, 2004; Lindner & Johns, 1991). A number of reasons have been proposed to account for this dropout behavior. These include individual aspects such as lack of desire and environmental aspects including negative experiences with coaches (Wankel & Mummery).

In Canada, attention to appropriate coaching behaviors is central to various coach-education programs including those conducted by the National Coach Certification Program (NCCP). One of the mandates of the NCCP is to establish