

Dear Parents:

I created, built, and operate my own training centre in Barrie, Ontario called Shoot the Puck Hockey Training Centre (STP). I train young hockey players all year-round to improve their performance in Minor Hockey, and to help them move on to play Junior or University Hockey.

I opened my training centre in 2008 and have spent more than two years becoming a Certified Instructor of Dr. Yasha Smushkin's training system. I was a student of Dr. Smushkin when I was younger and he is the only instructor who has a clearly defined system for development. It starts with the body-skates system (skater), then moves to the body-skates-stick system (hockey skater), and finally to the body-skates-stick-puck system (hockey player).

Dr. Smushkin started his Elite Hockey Agility School in 1973 and over the years has developed hundreds of players who have gone on to play professional hockey. His hockey skills and physical abilities development are designed to teach and challenge player's mind, spirit and body to prepare them to "play not for fan", but

“perform for fame”. Over the past 39 years a tremendous amount of time has been dedicated to researching and studying every aspect of the young human body in live evolution in sport competition. As result he developed revolutionary techniques that teach players to be unstoppable, untouchable, ahead of the action, to slowdown speed of the game.

My training with Dr. Smushkin included 140 hours of on ice work at his camps to learn his teaching methods, a series of personalized lectures, and the reading of his three books, “From Zero to Hockey Hero”, “Hockey Agility”, and “Mastering Hockey Agility”.

This “Message to Parents” section is taken from his first book “From Zero to Hockey Hero,” which he wrote as a guide for parent to help them avoid being misled in Kids’ Hockey. Some of the topics covered include the definition of fun as it relates to your child and hockey, individual skills versus teamwork skills, the educational partnership between teacher, coach, and parent, and some of the components of skating and how it relates to the bodies system of levers. As Doctor will tell you,

there are only two things in hockey: “innocent children and naïve parents”.

In North America, there is no official national compulsory program for individual skills development. A license is not required to open a private hockey school or to be a hockey skills teacher (a number of hockey instructors in the greater Toronto area are also former students of Dr. Smushkin, but lack his official certification).

In a marketing driven society, don't be misled by flashy pamphlets and catch phrases. The evolution and complexity of youth hockey development can be very confusing for most parents. It is important that the hockey development decisions you make for your child are based on the quality of the program. This can only be assured with the certified instructional leadership provided at STP hockey.

The majority of parents want to acquire more information about the additional learning experience for their children. That is why they often seek professional assistance in providing supervision for their kids' hockey development. There is a wide spread belief in minor hockey that one has to be born talented to become a Hockey Star. Indeed, when we see the apparent ease with which a good hockey player performs in a game, we gain the impression that the player's skills are heaven-sent, rather than self-developed. However, this is only the impression. The history of modern sports proves that, yes, natural gifts help, but it is the **System of Training**, that predetermines whether a child will grow into an excellent athlete or not. The **System of Training** produces the talents, not vice versa, and hockey, as a sport, also complies with this general rule. **And if the system of training is based on the knowledge of health science and laws of athletic development, then such system is far more advanced and effective in comparison with those based on hockey experience alone.** The exercises that form this system were created in accordance with physical, physiological and biomechanical laws of sport, as well as the educational principles of athletic development. My method provides the step-by-step build up of the set of various individual skills which contribute tremendously to the players' speed, finesse, quickness and power in the game.

Hockey administrators and coaches should be responsible for the education of parents as well as of children themselves about hockey. In turn, parents also have to learn about the scientific approach to youth development from specifically qualified teachers and educators because the parent is the primary figure in the formation of a young hockey player.

When parents enroll their children for the first time in hockey they usually know little about the struggle between the new and old approaches in this sport. They find themselves involved in this struggle and making decisions before they are able to get full understanding of how these approaches may affect their child's interest and future.

As a result, many parents are easily misled by having their children labeled "all stars", "elite", "MVP", "A", "AA", "AAA", "defenceman", "offensive forward", etc. However, as many discover afterwards, these titles do not mean much. We see examples year after year where AA teams beat AAA teams, and A teams beat AA teams in official hockey

tournaments. .

Often, parents follow victory driven coaches and push their kids too far thinking they are developing great athletes. |

They do not realize that when a child plays two to three games of competitive hockey a week, always concentrating on winning, there is a psychological pressure that builds up which never advances the body development essential if we were to focus on skills instead of winning. Unless things get changed many children will continue to suffer psychological and physiological damage which usually results in a low self-esteem and a loss of interest in competitive hockey.

In fact, very few parents realize that the spending of so much family time, energy and money on many games and tournaments not only achieves little progress in the child's overall development, but actually delays the development of his body's skeleton system.