

ADM: What about Squirts?

By Jim Clare, ADM Chairman



As I have stated several times in previous articles about the ADM, it is not all about the mites! The ADM is a full ladder of development for all ages and skill levels. The basic premise of the ADM is that we as adults impose adult competition and skill on our young athletes. These KIDS vastly under-train and over-compete, and we as coaches are more concerned about immediate outcomes (the win) rather than optimal training for our skaters.

The ADM is a comprehensive plan of development that is centered on the participant and focuses on age-appropriate training. Part of what a coach should do well beyond the skater's mite years is develop the long term athlete by better understanding the windows of trainability that exist and maximizing the development opportunity during those key times.

At the Squirt age group the kids should begin the process of learning how to train, this includes learning the fundamental sports skills needed to move to the next step in the development ladder. It is the period of accelerated learning of coordination and motor skills as well as the development of hockey specific skills. Hockey is a late specialization sport, and as such, early specialization can be detrimental to later development and refinement of hockey skills. The ADM, and any professional athlete you may hear from, will tell you that it is imperative that your child develop a solid base in a variety of sports. A few that come highly recommended are lacrosse, swimming, gymnastics and baseball.

Below is an excerpt from the USA Hockey Long term Athlete Development program regarding this stage of hockey development:

USA Hockey's key focus for this stage:

- Continue to develop physical literacy
- Continue to participate in 3 complimentary sports
- Participants at this stage should learn solid basic skills in skating and puck control
- There is no need at this stage to specialize at a specific skater position, however goalies may begin to focus on their position

Physical Development:

- Mastering of fundamental sport skills
- Continue to encourage daily physical activity (formal and informal)
- Narrow focus to a minimum of three sports
- At this stage participants are ready to acquire the general sports skills and hockey skills that are the cornerstone of all athletic development
- Maintain and refine ambidextrous sports or sport movements (e.g. gymnastics, swimming, throwing with both hands, kicking with both feet, etc.)
- Participate in sports that require similar movement patterns

Monitor growth:

- Keep track of growth spurts by regularly measuring height (3 months) and looking for a sudden increase
- Growth spurt can last 18 to 24 months

Early in the stage, 10 & Under (Squirt), introduce general fitness framework

- Warm-up
- Rhythm and coordination runs both on and off the ice
- Spatial awareness (jump distance with a number of changes in direction)
- Rest and recovery (fuel breaks, meals, sleep)
- Reaction time and agility
- Focus on skill and execution
- Cool down with short stretch and muscle rebalance – important because of rapid growth of bones and soft tissues

Throughout the stage:

- Develop strength - using exercises that incorporate the player's own body weight, as well as medicine balls and Swiss balls
- Continue to develop endurance through small area games and relays and develop flexibility through exercises
- Speed can be developed by using activities that focus on agility, quickness and change of direction – short duration, less than 5 seconds

10 & Under (Squirts):

- 95 – 100 total ice touches per year
- 3 – 4 times per week for 60 minutes
- 6 to 7 month season
- 75 to 80 practices and 20 to 25 games
- 10-12 skaters & one goalie per team

To learn more about Long Term Athlete Development at Squirts, click [HERE](#).