

MINNESOTA HOCKEY JOURNAL

Open Ice

with **Chuck Grillo**

MHJ recently caught up with one of Minnesota hockey's greatest contributors, Chuck Grillo. The Hibbing native has influenced the lives of countless kids in the world of hockey through his selfless desire and commitment to the game. A 16-year teacher and head hockey coach at both Bemidji and Rosemount High Schools, Grillo went on to spend another 16 years serving as a scout for the NHL's New York Rangers and Minnesota North Stars, and later as a vice president and director of player personnel with the San Jose Sharks. After retiring in 1996, Grillo today lives in Brainerd and continues to operate the very successful Minnesota Hockey Camps, one of the state's longest-running and most successful training facilities for both players and coaches. His thoughts, passion and wisdom on the state of hockey, kids and coaching are both insightful and inspiring.

Chuck Grillo on . . . mentors and coaches

Whenever I have the opportunity to talk to someone about coaching/teaching/mentors, I get real excited because this is my life. Whether staff or players, we need to make sure we say the "right things from the heart" when discussing the futures of young people. This is a subject I do not take lightly. I'm sure that some coaches get into the business for the fun of coaching practice and winning games. When a person assumes that position, though, they have to realize that they are in a position to shape people's lives forever.

. . . balance in kids' lives

Young people need balance in their lives. I've always felt sorry for the kid who went home after school, if this meant they were not enrolled in a co-curricular activity. I also feel sorry for the community that doesn't have enough programs for kids' after-school hours. I believe in co-curricular activities versus extra-curricular activities. Co-curricular activities should be listed as electives in alphabetical order with every class. This is where we acquire all the intangibles necessary for a successful career and life. Uninvolved kids means they are missing out on the most valuable growth experience in their formative years.

. . . the work ethic of today's players

One of the biggest problems I have with young people is getting them to see that they are only a short distance from the top. Their blend of talents makes them only a good "work ethic" away from a great career; it would be so simple for them to reach that level. When I say work ethic, I mean that they only need to put in honest and quality time, learn how to play at a consistently high level of intensity and have a back-up game. It doesn't take all that much to turn people's heads if they show a love for training.

. . . hard work as a reward

It is my belief that hard work is fun and rewarding. I also believe that everyone has unique skills. We have to recognize those skills and nurture them in a way that maximizes potential. One of the ways to nurture those skills is to create an environment where "hard work is fun and rewarding." Overall, I believe players should "dare to dream;" critique themselves on a daily basis; know their strengths and weaknesses; manage their weaknesses; build on their strengths; and don't forget to help others in the process.



. . . the key to success

Successful players, like successful people, take risks. There is a positive correlation between risk takers, winning and success in life. Risk takers live on the edge, but they know the consequences in every situation so their risk level is calculated. They know the consequences to the team, to their families and their lives.

. . . being there

As a coach and mentor, I've been a somebody in the lives of countless kids, and that means the world to me. ★