



HOCKEY COACHES

Beyond The Bench: Connecting Coaches Beyond Their Clubs

Coaching youth hockey can be one of the most rewarding experiences imaginable, but let's face it, it can also be incredibly challenging, stressful, and emotionally exhausting. Between player development, team dynamics, parent expectations, playing-time decisions, organizational pressures, and difficult conversations, coaches carry an enormous amount of responsibility throughout a hockey season.

And sometimes, the hardest part isn't making those difficult decisions. It's feeling like nobody truly understands the challenges behind them.

That's why we created Beyond the Bench.

We want to provide youth hockey coaches with something we believe has been missing from the coaching experience: a welcoming, supportive community where they can have honest conversations, feel heard, gain perspective, and build meaningful relationships with fellow coaches throughout Colorado.

You're Not Alone Behind the Bench

One of the most powerful aspects of *Beyond the Bench* is the opportunity to connect with coaches from different hockey organizations. Coaching can sometimes feel isolating, especially when you're responsible for leading a team, managing expectations, and navigating difficult situations.

When challenges arise, it's easy to believe the frustrations you're experiencing are unique to your team or organization.

But what if they're not?

What if a coach from another club is dealing with the exact same parent concerns, communication challenges, player development questions, or team dynamics? These connections can help coaches recognize that many of the challenges they face aren't necessarily unique to their program. They're often shared experiences throughout the youth hockey community.

By bringing coaches together across organizational lines, we create opportunities for honest conversations, fresh perspectives, meaningful friendships, and valuable professional networking. Coaches can exchange ideas, learn how others approach difficult situations, and build a support system that extends far beyond their own team, club, or hockey season.

Different clubs. Different benches. Shared challenges.

A Place to Feel Heard, Understood, and Supported

Coaches spend countless hours supporting their players, communicating with families, and making decisions they believe are in the best interests of their teams.

But who is supporting the coaches?

Sometimes coaches don't need someone to tell them how to handle a situation. They simply need someone who understands what they're going through.

Beyond the Bench provides an opportunity to openly discuss the challenges of coaching without feeling judged, criticized, or dismissed. Whether you're dealing with a difficult parent interaction, questioning a decision, navigating team conflict, or simply feeling the emotional weight of the season, your experiences deserve to be heard.

Feeling validated doesn't necessarily mean everyone agrees with your decisions. It means your experiences, challenges, and emotions are being acknowledged and respected.

And when coaches feel heard and understood, something powerful can happen. Trust develops, defenses begin to come down, and coaches become more open to exploring different perspectives and approaches.

Honest Conversations. Different Perspectives. Meaningful Growth.

What makes *Beyond the Bench* especially valuable is the opportunity to hear different perspectives from two people who understand youth hockey from multiple angles.

Kyle brings an honest, firsthand coaching perspective, shaped by his experience as a player, coach, evaluator, director, and hockey business owner. He understands the difficult decisions, responsibilities, expectations, and pressures coaches navigate throughout a season. His goal isn't to tell coaches how they should coach, but to encourage open dialogue, share experiences, and help coaches consider different approaches to challenging situations.

Coach Art Burns brings a unique combination of mental skills coaching expertise and firsthand experience as a hockey parent. His mental skills perspective can help coaches better navigate stress, frustration, conflict, confidence, leadership, and the emotional demands of coaching. Equally valuable is his perspective as a hockey parent, helping coaches understand how their decisions, communication, and interactions may be experienced by the families they serve.

Together, these perspectives can help coaches look at difficult situations through a different lens. Sometimes, hearing how another coach approaches a situation can completely change how we think about it. Other times, understanding a parent's perspective can help a coach recognize why a decision or interaction may have been received differently than intended.

We're not here to tell coaches they're right or wrong. We're here to help them feel understood, explore different perspectives, and become better equipped to navigate the challenges of a long hockey season.

A Healthier Way to Navigate the Hockey Season

Coaching youth hockey can be stressful, but how we process that stress, communicate our frustrations, and respond to difficult situations can have an enormous impact on our players, families, and team environment.

Our goal isn't to eliminate every challenge or disagreement. It's to create a healthy, constructive environment where coaches can talk through difficult situations, gain valuable insights, exchange ideas, build relationships, and discover better ways to navigate the ups and downs of the season.

Beyond the Bench isn't about comparing coaching philosophies, criticizing parents or organizations, or deciding who's the better coach. It's about connection, understanding, and recognizing that even experienced coaches have opportunities to learn and grow.

You may come to *Beyond the Bench* because of a challenge you're facing with your team, parents, or organization. But our hope is that you leave with something much more valuable: connection, understanding, perspective, and a community of coaches you can lean on throughout the season.

Because when coaches feel heard, supported, and better equipped to handle challenges, they're in a stronger position to lead their teams, communicate with families, and create positive experiences for their players.

And at the end of the day, that's what matters most.

Different benches. Shared challenges. One hockey community.

Beyond the Bench - Changing the culture of youth hockey, one conversation at a time.