

MULTI DIMENSIONAL



HOCKEY DRILLS & TRAINING

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One dimensional or Multidimensional Hockey Coach?

One- or Multidimensional Hockey Coach?

Are you a one dimensional “8-bit Super Mario” coach or a modern multidimensional hockey coach? I will connect this one- and multidimensional topic to console games and how it relates to us hockey coaches and hockey training as a red thread throughout this book about leadership, hockey practices and hockey drills!

The exclamation mark on the row above is there since this is actually already the second edition of the book, with changed title, since the creators of F0rtn1t3 (you need to figure out the name of the game), stopped the first book due to the references to the game in the book title in the first edition, although it’s about hockey and how the console games can be seen as “enemies” or as source for different type of training and challenges for the players. So therefore the future references from here on will be to multidimensional or F0rtn1t3.

If the title itself already raises question marks, (although I think most people have at least heard about F0rtn1t3 at this point), it may be a matter of deepening the understanding in this subject and how you can take advantage of it in your hockey training.

So if F0rtn1t3 sounds unfamiliar, there is also the risk that you could be an “8-bit Super Mario coach”, or at least stuck in a one dimensional thinking.

But calm, we will work through the subject calmly and methodically, from the game connection to modern challenging hockey drills, for the quick thinking and fast acting hockey player and you as the coach to take lead.

When I started as a hockey coach in parallel while I was still playing hockey myself, I was 14-15 years old. As a player I had started playing hockey in Finland and could already see a huge difference between the training focus between Swedish and Finnish teams. It was also the starting point for my own training philosophy in the beginning of my coaching career, seasoned with a solid training program from the Swedish Hockey Association, including Step 3 in the end (the highest).

I focused on skating as you did in Finland, with a bit more advanced skills and combined this with the passing and team game from Sweden, which worked tremendously successfully with e.g. The 83 team I coached back then.

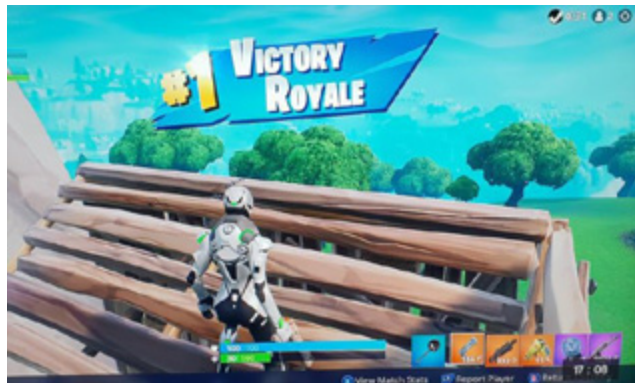
But how does it look like today? Today, the challenge is different, all players are skating, and most of the players are also good team players out on ice?

In 25 years as a hockey leader, I have seen a tremendous development in the individual skills and with that the speed, fakes, shots and what the players are able to do on the ice (quick decisions and quick action).

I wrote that everyone skates, but many players skate amazingly and manage to do the stickhandling on the same high level, while they are able to deliver a pass or take a shot in all positions, which we can see a proof of in all new and especially young NHL stars. Most are ready from day one, for games at the very highest level.

Before we go any further, I want to make it clear that I am not a big fan of console games, although it can sometimes be perceived as so in the book. For example, I would prefer my own children to be more physically active than they are right now!

But I try to understand, and see the possibilities, as well as handle the new challenges I'm facing, as a parent and coach.



When it comes to the grammatic and language in the book, I'm Finnish (mother tongue), living in Sweden and fluent in Swedish, so English is my third language, if you find some grammatic errors or funny / strange expression, you know why... Please try to see above the "Swenglish" and just try to catch the message 😊

Hockey and coaching then and now

Hockey and coaching then and now

Before we make the connection to the games, we will go through some hockey basics.

Let's start by doing a fun experiment, take your mobile, tablet or computer and search for highlights from YouTube from different eras (e.g. highlights NHL 90) then you search highlights NHL (latest season) on a new tab. Ideally, you have these two rolling at the same time next to each other, on different devices or on a split screen, otherwise you look at the latest first and then on the newest one. What do you see?

If you did not do the exercise, do it, before you continue...



NHL highlights from 80s vs NHL highlights 2018

There is a huge difference in the pace of hockey now compared to returning for about ten to twenty years. You might have made the reflection that it seems to be in slow motion? That feeling comes at least in a comparison with the 80s. Also looking at what is done on the ice regarding the skills performance, more advanced in higher speed and less time.

It is enough to watch old clips on the greatest of them all, Wayne Gretzky and the feeling that it is in slow motion appears. It's my biggest idol, but my boys at home aren't that impressed, was he the best?

Then you have to pick up the number of goals and assists in order to succeed persuade them, because the highlights do not really bite and convince them.

The pace and speed of the performance is the big difference in today's hockey compared to before, together with the players doing technical things during the matches that did not exist at the time of comparison.

What I try to say is the importance of working with the speed, agility and directional changes in the exercises, and especially in skating, but also in stick handling.

Frequency and speed of execution are the keywords, the time to do things decreases all the time.

...but at the same time, we can see...

...That the poor or lack of basic physics of the children and young people gives completely different types of challenges to the coaches in the teams. The coach will find it difficult to, for example, to teach skating technique, if it is difficult to get down in a squat position for the players.

Or to practice more advanced stages of skills, if both physics and coordination are several years after the actual age. Looking for underlying causes is not particularly difficult?

This will be the theme in this book, but I have been thinking for quite a while, if this part could be turned into something positive, by understanding that children and young players have completely different types of talent and skills with them and that we as coaches have not fully understood it yet and maybe do not take the full advantage of those “new skill sets”?



Training and coaching young players

Exceptional performance is becoming even more evident in the young ages, although most of the children devote more and more time to the mobile and gaming consoles, but still there are those who carry out technical tasks that many adult players could not imagine themselves performing five years ago or show technical skill level, which they were

never in the vicinity of at the same age, even though they are world stars today.

In many cases, the physics is therefore worse than before, but the technical level, puck handling, fakes and shots can be at a much higher level, many times thanks to shoot plates, synthetic ice, backyard rinks and various training products for off-ice, also combined with the “gaming brain”.



This needs to be considered in the training during the hockey practices, the physics need to be strengthened at the same time as the technical level can often be increased much more than you think.

Today's players have already "programmed" quick decision making, understanding the surroundings in a fraction of a second by games like F0rtn1t3 and also programmed the connections in the brain for other advanced skills, by watching hockey highlights, via their mobiles and sources

such as YouTube and Instagram, let that creativity come forward.

The development process is on long-term

One key in the training and development process (capacity building) is to be patient and see the development as longterm. Look objectively where your players are in their development and don't rush to throw in the trickiest drills right away, if you're not sure of the level, but you can probably still use the difficult exercises much, much earlier than you think.

Skating is the base for everything

Skating and skating skills are the basis of all other hockey activities, puck handling, fakes, passing, pass reception, shots and games. Without great skating, no success!

Sometimes I feel it would be much easier in ice hockey, if it was more like swimming. If you cannot swim, you cannot compete, you need to practice more! And if you only manage to swim 25 meters, you cannot participate in a competition over 50 meters, simple?

I recently watched a practice with the youngest players, where they practicing passing the puck to each other. What I could see was half of them falling as they hit the pass to their friend couple of meters away, and the other half was falling when they tried to receive the pass.

Skating is a prerequisite for being able to perform passes, fakes, shots, directional changes without having to think and focus, for example, on the balance or on moving forward, it goes and should go automatically.

Dave Smith, the NHL referees' "boss", showed an interesting example worth considering and testing. You ask your players to run on the spot, and doing stickhandling, then start to ask questions to the players, then you will see how automated the moves are, quick answers, it's there.

If the responses come in a slow pace and you sometimes need to repeat the question, the moves are not automated, these activities require too much attention from the brain, and then you can imagine how the decision making will be during a game with skates on and things happening in a fast pace round you. More skating and stickhandling practice!



Skating varies and will vary between players, but everyone needs to be able to move quickly and smoothly on the ice, it is skating, which is the foundation of the game and all other steps, otherwise it is floorball.

This was not the fun part in the hockey practice before, maybe because it was too much Super Mario thinking in the skating drills (more soon), but the drills in the book will change it. Skating with balance, coordination, quick decisions and challenges.

The grim truth is that if there is no skating skills, there is no success.

The balance in skating

It is enough to look at the skate edge contact surface with the ice, to realize that balance is one of the cornerstones of good skating.

Through the small contact surface from the edge, the player should go full speed forward, backwards, turn around, stop, make direction changes, resist body contact, at the same time as the player has control on the puck, fellow players and opponents.

Spend time on skating by also mixing in physics, agility, balance and coordination, on the ice, but also outside.

That was a little bit of hockey and hockey coaching now and then, much is the same (the basics), but a lot has also changed.

Now, let's take a step into what affects us as coaches today, the "gaming world". Of course, it's not a new thing, but the time spent on games is totally different than before through the availability of it, today everyone has at least one unit,

that can be used for gaming, but let's stick to the pattern and start with moving back in time...

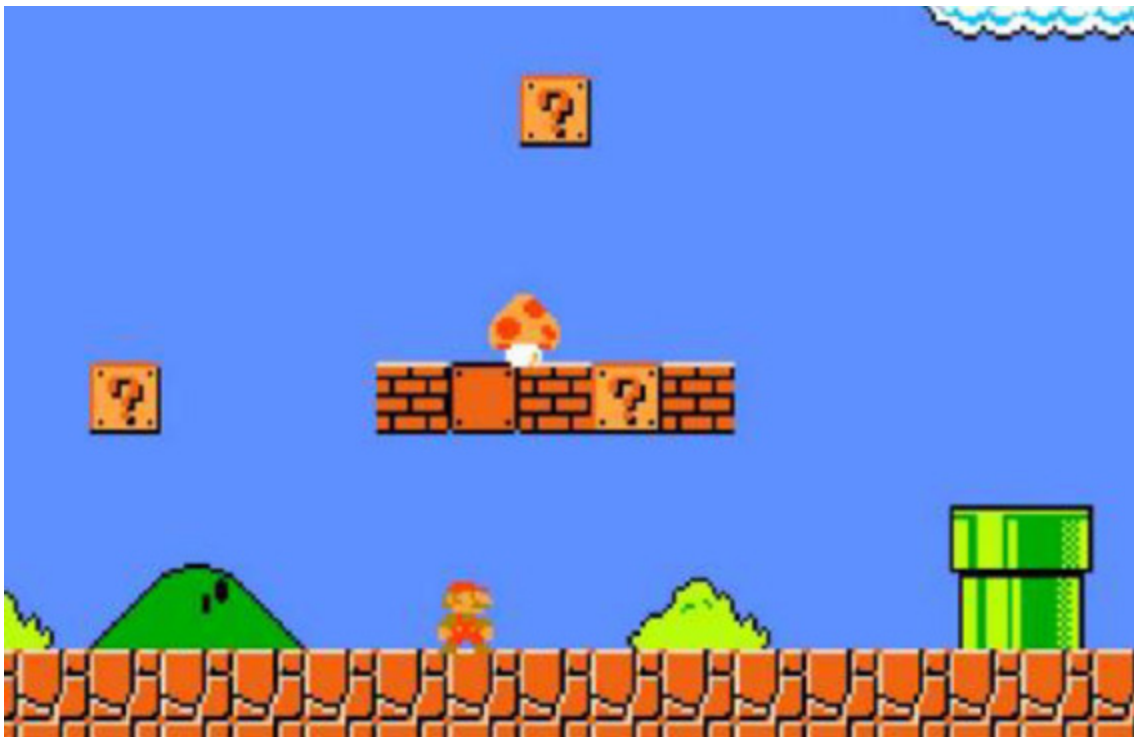
One dimensional view

One dimensional view

To be able to make the parables from the game world to hockey, I first need to ensure that we see and understand the games, which I refer to on a base level.

We start with the classic game, Super Mario in its original format, "8 bit" and the "one dimensional approach.

In Super Mario, the game moves from left to right and you can jump up on platforms and then fall down to ground level again, and you must move from point A to point B, I can say that everyone has played Super Mario or a copy of the game at some point of time (e.g. Giana Sisters)? If not, everyone should have seen or heard about the game.



In the game you have to get through the levels and preferably get as high points as possible, so that afterwards

you can boast or tell, for your friends in the school or the football match on the yard, or street hockey match, what level you were at, or your high score in the game or on a single course to get some respect, or actually get a setback, by being "beaten" by a friend who said he / she actually came further with higher points.

... This was of course valid during the time, when the game was up to date and we met for real. Who actually plays football or street hockey these days?

Below an excerpt from Wikipedia:

Super Mario Bros. is a side scrolling platform game consisting of 8 worlds with 4 courses in each world. Mario can jump, run and on some paths also swim. The enemies are all defeated by usually jumping on them, but some enemies (usually thorny) are dangerous to jump on. Furthermore, Mario can find things that make him stronger. A magical sponge makes Mario the Super Mario. As Super Mario, Mario is twice as big and can crush bricks. A flower allows Super Mario to throw fireballs and a star makes Mario invincible for a few seconds. Under the effect of the star, however, he can still die from falling into holes. / Source: Wikipedia

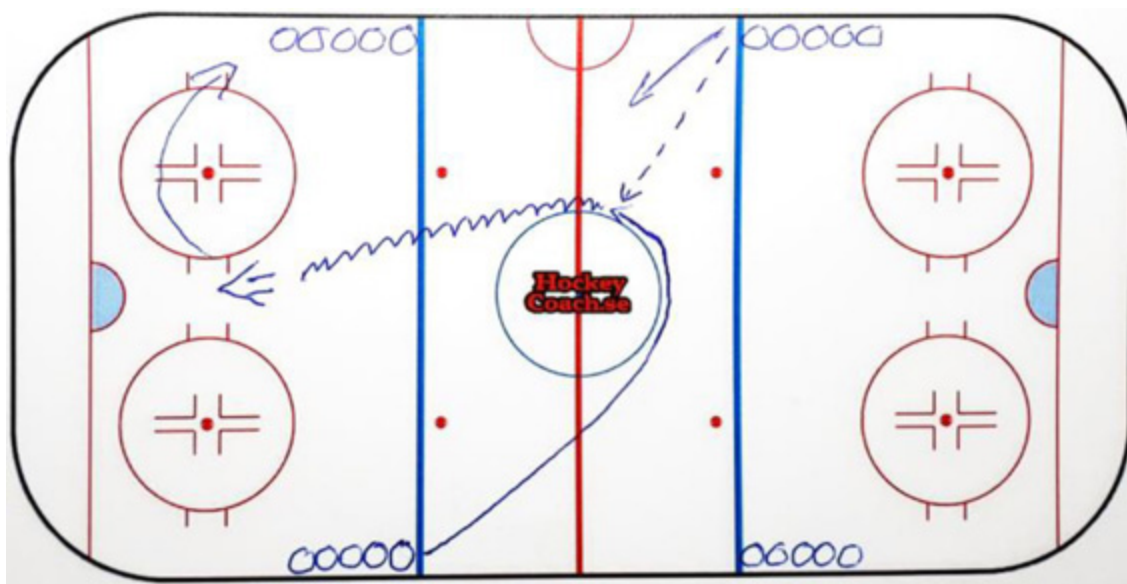


The game control for the Nintendo and Super Mario game is also classic, a cross on the left to steer with, a button to jump with and one button to shoot with. Simple, no manual or super memory is required to remember this, even though I am unsure if it was actually the B button that you jumped with?

Hockey drills during the one-dimensional time

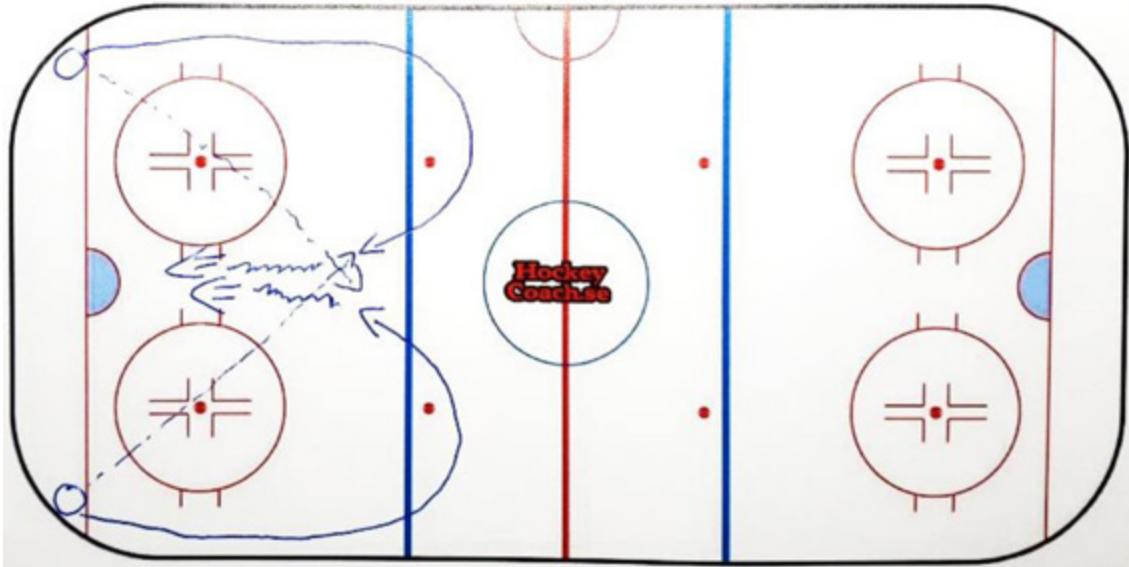
Hockey drills during the one-dimensional time

The hockey drills and the hockey games followed roughly the same patterns and principles during the Super Mario period, there were exercises like the "sun" (Swedish name for the drill), players entered from the corners, with pass from the diagonally opposite corner, in other words and linked to the game controller, left to right and right to left, shoot with the "A button".

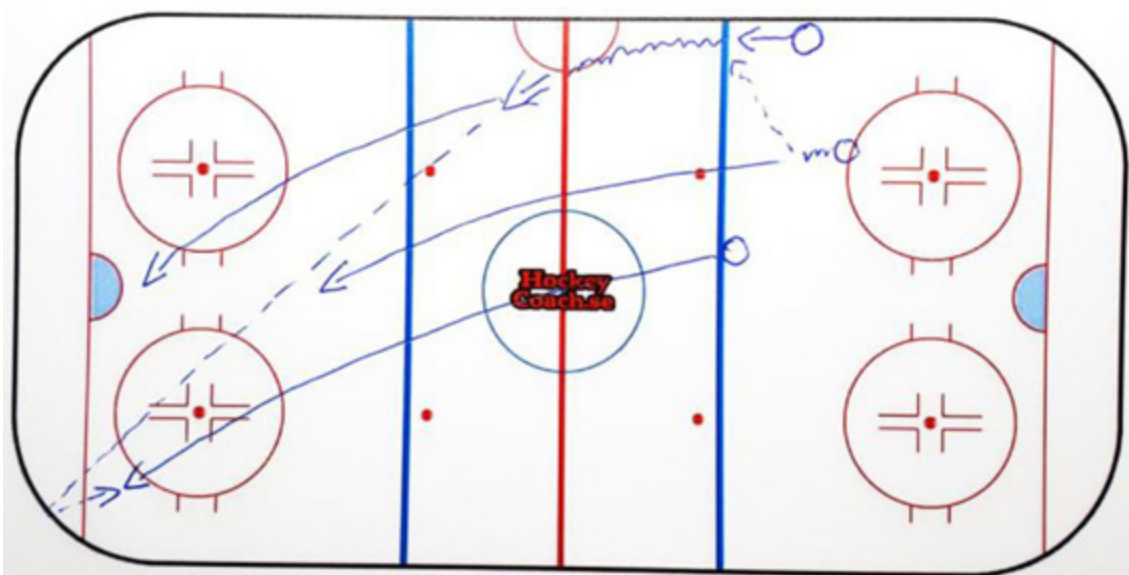


Hockey exercise "The sun", simple activity, but at a high pace, and a lot of waiting.

Hockey practice "McDonalds" (named by 21st-century players, who still have run the drill), the same principle as for "the sun", not particularly match-like or challenging, is often used for, for example, warm up.



The game during the hockey games (e.g. NHL) was preferably up with a pass from your own zone to a player or using the board, get close to the red line, dump the puck diagonally, chase it in the attack zone. Below a typical Dump and Chase drill, without defensemen drawn into the drill.



NHL inspired Dump and Chase exercise, from Super Mario time.

The NHL inspired hockey drill linked to the game controller would be, left on the steering cross, pass button, left, shoot

or pass button, left to follow.

That was little gaming history linked to hockey and how it connects back to the game controller. I can honestly say it's about this level, I master the game world, I'm familiar with the Nintendo set of controls on the game controller and must therefore also apply it for example in modern NHL games on the game console, if I supposedly want to lose one NHL match against one of the sons on the Xbox, you who are a little familiar knows that you can set NHL 94 settings on the control. Then you only have a few buttons and levers to keep track of.

Unfortunately, I can see that too many leaders / hockey coaches are stuck in this "one dimensional" layout from left to right, pass, skate and shoot, as I wrote in the introduction, but with the big difference that most players skate good, but much can certainly or if you want, unfortunately, be signed to the development of better equipment (skates and sticks), to go on the leather is no longer a common phenomenon and has been replaced by the word "bender" (in Sweden as well) and does not always have to be connected directly with poor skating.

Since I made the reference to the equipment, we can only look at some comparative images of equipment from the later part of the Super Mario time and from today.



Bauer 90 (from the 90s) and the Bauer X900 (2017)

The modern skate is so stable and light that you simply cannot go on the "leather".



The same goes for hockey sticks, although then it was the sticks that were hard! Above a shortened wooden stick for a younger player in the 90s, of about 600 grams and below a

junior stick with soft shaft (flex 40) and a weight of round 300 grams.

Now we have managed some console game and hockey history connected to each other and can from here take the step into the present and the Xbox and PS4 generation.

Xbox and modern console games