

YOUTH SPORT

Building a Foundation for Sport and Life

By Darryl Nelson

The games and skills we teach today are essential for the long term development of the kids that participate in youth hockey in the United States. These fundamental movement skills and traits are the building blocks for competitive success and a life time of enjoyment through ice hockey. Teaching kids these skills today will increase the talent pool of players for future national teams. Also, these types of experiences will begin the education of our next generation of ice hockey coaches. Without a good talent pool of coaches the players have no real chance at developing.

Young people today are being sold short by adults. We are now seeing the first generation of Americans that have shorter life expectancies than their parents. Kids are less active and less healthy than ever before. This is in large part because young kids start learning poor habits. As we know, where one starts has a lot of influence over where one ends up. How can we hope to have a good talent pool of hockey players without basic levels of health and fitness? A look at the statistics is very eye opening.

A group of retired military leaders has started an organization to attempt to reverse these trends. Their concern is that we do not have enough healthy and fit young people to field a strong military. Without a secure nation how will we ever see continued success in athletics? So here are some of the numbers from ***Operation Readiness: Military Leaders for Kids***.

*75% of young Americans 17 to 24 years old are unable to join the military because they failed to graduate high school, have criminal records, or are physically unfit.

*80% of children who were overweight at ages 10-15 were obese at age 25.

*Being overweight turns out to be the leading medical reason why applicants fail to qualify for military service.

*From 1998 to 2008 the number of states with 40% or more of their young adults who were overweight or obese went from one to 39.

*On average, 18 to 24 year olds in America are 34 pounds overweight.

*Our healthcare system spends over \$75 billion annually for medical obesity expenditures. Here is a breakdown of expenditure in different sized states. Wyoming is our least populous state with an expenditure of \$87 million. Michigan is a medium sized state at \$2.931 billion. California, our most populated state, comes in at \$7.675 billion.

