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Q&A from NJP

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Covering New Jersey High School Ice Hockey

THE COACHES CORNER

This edition features

BISHOP EUSTACE ASSISTANT COACH & FUTURE NHL HALL OF FAMER

KEITH PRIMEAU

Describe your roots in hockey?

I began playing hockey at age 5. My father coached me every year except 1 year he coached my brother Wayne.

Who was the greatest influence on your career?

My father had the greatest influence and impact on my career, as he is who I spent the most time with and where I learned the game.

What are your best memories of your pro career?

I feel extremely blessed to have had the opportunity to play professional hockey for 16 years. My fondest memories would be playing in the Stanley Cup finals, winning a gold at the World Championships, playing for Team Canada in the 98 Olympics and playing in 2 all-star games.

Do you feel coaches have a responsibility to be role models for their players?

I don't know if role model is the correct word as much as teacher. So many lessons can be taught through the game of hockey not only about the sport itself but in life.

Tell us about your son Corey?

Corey is a Bishop Eustace graduate and currently attends Neumann College as a sophomore.

How different do you think growing up in Toronto compared to New Jersey is for kids who play hockey?

The opportunities are similar as is the level of play, there are just so many more players in Toronto that they never have to leave home in order to continue their hockey careers. That is what we are working on trying to change.

High School hockey is extremely competitive. Coaches receive pressure from many sources to develop a win at all cost philosophy. How do you find ways to build character in "all" of your players when this mindset exists?

Those in charge must check their own ego at the door and understand the game isn't all about winning but about teaching. If you are prepared to carry that mindset you are in the right place if you are not, you are missing the true meaning or role that has been bestowed upon you.





How do you motivate your players?

Motivation to me is an internal characteristic. I can say whatever they think or I think may motivate them, but in reality a player needs to find a way to motivate himself. I am there to help facilitate his on ice ability but the player needs to register himself on the emotional scale.

Can you speak about what distinguishes the Bishop Eustace hockey program from other schools in the state of NJ?

Bishop Eustace is a co-ed preparatory school that is firmly entrenched in their beliefs as an academic institution first and athletics follows. Students come to Bishop Eustace for a great education and if they are fortunate enough to play ice hockey those educational values are continued at the rink, where learning is most important.

Which seniors do you expect to be your key players for next season?

Our senior core will include: Chris Gentile along with Sam Gerulsky, Zach Green, Matt Toy, Conall Guckin, Conor O’Kane and solid goaltending of Nick Casella and Kyle VanOsten

You are paired with Head Coach Mike Green at BE. Tell us about Coach Mike?

I began helping Mike when my oldest Corey played at the school. Mike has done a wonderful job for the Eustace Ice hockey program, but for me, more importantly the impact he has had on South Jersey Scholastic Ice hockey. Mike and I have a great working relationship, because he has no ego. As an educator he sees the value in learning from others and so when I am able to be around he gives me the flexibility to speak without any hesitation and his full support on my thought process.



If there was one thing you could change to improve your program at your school, what would it be?

The one thing might be the ability to recruit kids for our program but as well as the institution. Bishop Eustace really is a school full of students who genuinely want to be there.

Having a coach that was an NHL legend must be pretty intimidating for some of your players. We imagine most Eustace players are big Flyers fans and some of your greatest years were spent with Philly when these kids starting following hockey in their early teens. Describe the dynamic with your players?

I think the longer I am around the less impact it has on their psyche. They respect the fact that I am able to speak from firsthand knowledge, but less intimidated by who I am.

Describe your work at the Durham Hockey Institute?

DHI began as my summer hockey school program along with my brother, brother in law (former flyer Derrick Smith) and a few other friends, but has grown because of the ability to impact so many more players, in more ways than just hockey camp. So, I am an owner but also an instructor and teacher

The DHI Cup is coming up in October. Tell us about this showcase?

As I stated earlier, the only difference between Jersey and the Delaware Valley is the amount of opportunity kids from our region get to be seen and exposed to junior and college programs around the country. The DHI Cup is an attempt to reward those kids who have stayed home to finish school, not race off and play junior hockey with any future guarantee and bring some attention to our great players right in their own backyard.



How important is it for a high school senior with hopes to advance their hockey careers to get an opportunity to participate in a showcase like the DHI Cup?

The first thing is the support of the Philadelphia Flyers. Not only their financial support, which allows the game to be free of charge to the participants, but the last 2 Cup games, general manager Paul Holmgren has attended. Since there is no charge, there also is no politics involved. This truly is about the players and nothing else.

Club hockey and High School hockey schedules often collide in New Jersey. What is your philosophy regarding commitment to both clubs?

The two can co-exist but not until in every instance and situation both parties agree that they are there for the athlete. If they have the athlete's best interest in mind than making it work isn't all that difficult, but to ask an athlete not to attend a practice but there is an important game 2 days later, really doesn't make much sense to me.

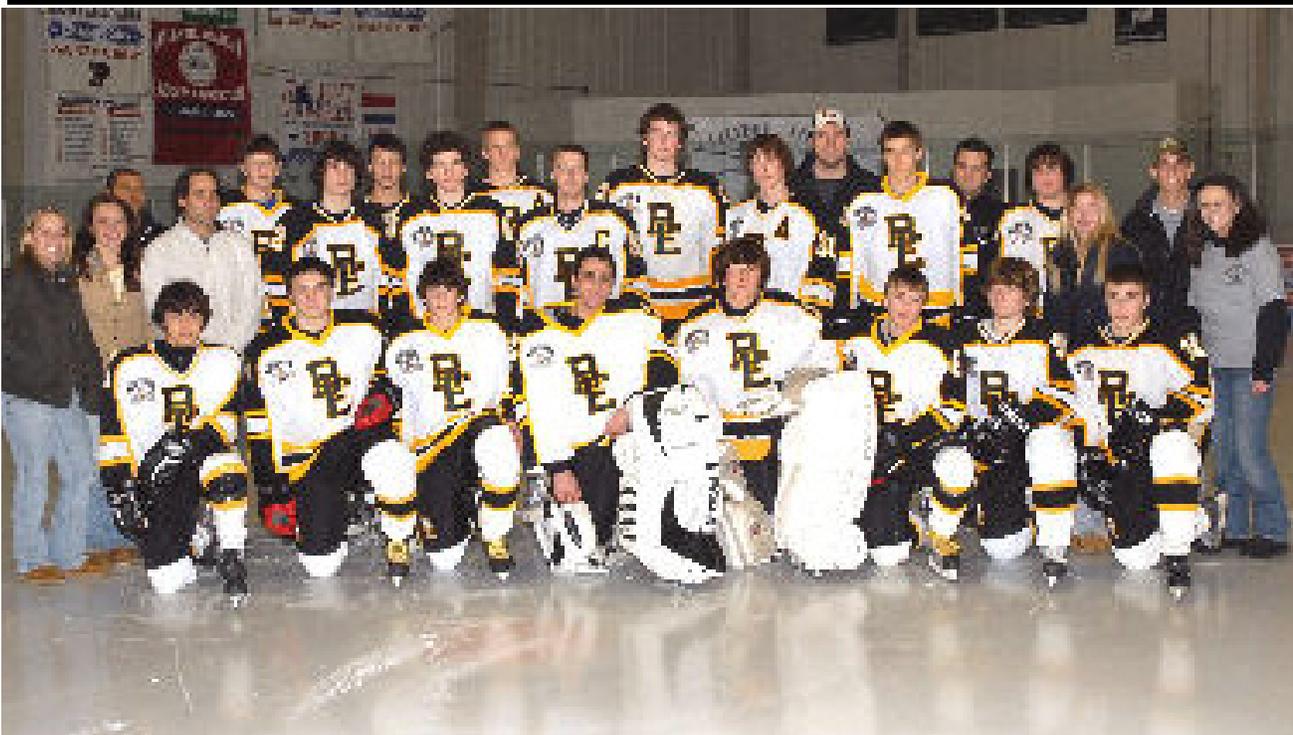
It is not uncommon for top public high school players to jump from public school teams to private or prep schools to advance their careers. In your experience, do players always benefit from these transfers?

I believe there is a benefit to players playing on top prep school teams. The level of play will be considerably better from a depth perception and the level of exposure, will be greater as well.

In your opinion, when is junior hockey the best alternative to playing for your high school team?

I don't know if there is a right and wrong answer here. I believe if your goal is to play division 1 ice hockey, you need to finish high school at home that means playing high school hockey. Everyone is in a rush to get there, but very few arrive and the path isn't any quicker playing junior as sophomore as universities don't want to see you until you are done school and played a year of junior hockey after graduation.

EUSTACE ICE HOCKEY



Bishop Eustace is one of our favorite NJ High school teams to reach the NJ frozen four this upcoming season? What will the team need to do well do get there?

Obviously we will need to get the solid goaltending we expect along with avoiding injuries. With some of our transfers we have better depth than we did at the end of last year, so anything less than a final four will be a disappointment.

What advice do you have for parents of NJ High School hockey players as they prepare to have their child enter college?

The parents play a huge part in their future planning. Be proactive about being in front of schools of interest. Let them know their child would like to attend their institution but would also like to be a part of the hockey program.

What advice do you have for current players that want to continue their hockey careers after high school?

They also need to be pro active. Research programs that would be a good fit for them and be sure to let them know.

In your opinion, what makes a great Coach?

Someone who is a teacher and is capable of delivering a message.

You played under some great coaches including Scotty Bowman, Paul Maurice, and Ken Hitchcock. Is there a coach that you try to emulate and which is closest to your coaching style and philosophy?

I am a huge Ken Hitchcock fan. I think aside from delivery, the message I send is the style that I learned from Hitch.

