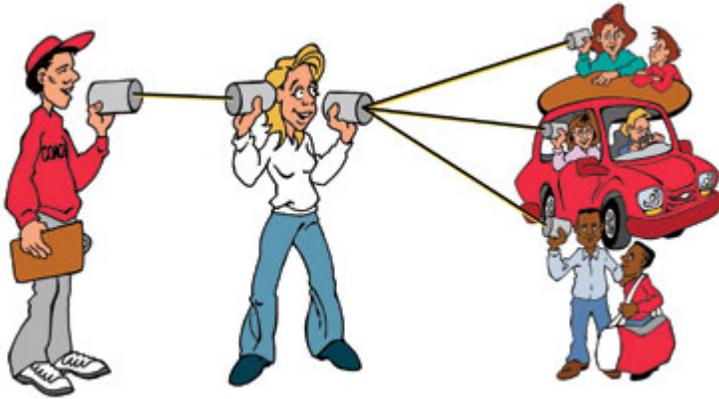


From USA Hockey Magazine

Jacks (and Jills) Of All Trades



*Team Managers Do More Than Telephone
Trees And Team Parties – Much Morec*

By Bob Schaller • Illustrations by Mike Curti

The image of two of Shattuck-St. Mary's players checking their way along a moving walkway at Chicago's O'Hare Airport remains indelibly etched in Larry Horstman's mind's eye. Even seven years later, he can vividly recall how one player's board pass and visa dangerously dangled out of his unzipped coat pocket as he slammed into his teammate.

Despite Horstman's command to zip up the coat, the kids "kept being kids," and by the time the team reached the gate for its flight to Amsterdam, with a continuing flight to Moscow for an international youth hockey tournament, the travel documents were long gone.

Not even on the ice yet and Shattuck was already playing a man down.

Somewhere over the Atlantic Ocean, the team received word that the player's visa and boarding pass were found, and the boy was on his way to Moscow via a flight from Poland, if all went well.

During the team's layover in Amsterdam, another player lost his passport before boarding the connecting flight to Moscow.

"Being in a foreign country, trying to get all that arranged ..." Horstman said in recalling the bureaucratic nightmare.

The second player's passport was eventually recovered, and the flight landed in Moscow. Much to Horstman's surprise – and relief – he saw a familiar face: The player who had been left behind in Chicago.

"I wasn't off the plane two minutes and he walked right up to us," Horstman said. "Of course, he was smiling ear to ear."

Such is the life of a team manager, where things change from day to day, and even minute to minute. The job doesn't come with a set of instructions forcing most to make it up as they go. Even the most grizzled veteran finds new challenges lurking around every corner.

(The Hockey Source, a USA Hockey licensee, has created a Team Manager Training Program for individuals, teams and associations. To learn more go to TheHockeySource.tv.)

The team manager is the glue that keeps a team together and the coach from going insane. Whether it's booking holiday travel or arranging post-game snacks or finding a spare left skate 10 minutes before a game, being a team manager is a thankless job that features more ups and downs than a game of Chutes and Ladders.

Veronica Hon has seen a lot in her four years as a team manager for the Anaheim Lady Ducks. She sees part of her job as being a facilitator and acting as a shield that allows the coaches to concentrate on running the on-ice show.

"You have to be able to let the coach do the coaching," said Hon. "The team manager is a liaison to the parents in that regard."
And coaches really appreciate that.

"Part of my job is convincing parents that I need answers either way," said Jim Gray, team manager for the Rampage Double A Midget-minor program in Colorado Springs. "Paperwork is one of the bigger aspects of the team manager's job."



?By taking care of the details that come with running a youth hockey team, the team manager allows the coach to concentrate on player development.

USA Hockey recommends that all youth and girls' teams have a manager, and requires it for all National Championship-bound teams. According to the USA Hockey Annual Guide, "The team manager shall be the custodian of all documents necessary for credential review prior to participation in invitational tournaments, and District, regional and National Championships."

That's why Stephen Petrucci, a coach and team manager for national tournament regular South Shore Dynamos in Boston, enlists a parent each season – usually a mom, he says – to help handle the organizational aspect. But he cautions team managers not to get too many people involved because that adds "confusion" and it ends up creating more work, not lightening the manager's load whatsoever.

As important as being the keeper of the paperwork is, Horstman said is takes a back seat to being the facilitator of information and the liaison between the parents and the coach.

“The biggest challenge is communication; keeping everyone informed and on the right track,” he said. “You’ve got to be well organized. You’ve got to treat everybody like they are important, but there can’t be any kind of partiality because that creates more problems.”

“Just keep everyone well informed from the beginning of the season to the end, and things will go more smoothly,” added Petrucci.

While being a team manager may seem like a thankless job, Gray says he doesn’t do it for the pat on the back or the public acknowledgement that may come from parents and coaches. He does it to ensure everything goes right for the kids on the ice.

“You won’t make everybody happy,” said Gray. “For the most part, parents thank me, and my coach always does.

“You have to know that you are making the parents’ experience more enjoyable by all the logistics you do, but the big thing is knowing that you are helping the kids play a great game that gives them good experience on the ice, and great experiences to take into the rest of their lives, whether that’s on the ice, or off it.”

Bob Schaller is a freelance writer in Laramie, Wyo.