

RECOVER · PILLAR SERIES

MORE ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER: THE TRUTH ABOUT OFF-SEASON ICE TIME

Every player wants to improve, so the answer seems simple: more ice, more games, more camps. But one of the biggest mistakes young athletes make is believing they need to play hockey 12 months a year to keep up.

An NHL/NHLPA survey found 98% of NHL and PWHL players played another sport between ages 5–14, nearly 80% kept playing multiple sports to 15–18, and most didn't specialize until around 16. Athleticism comes first – and it transfers back onto the ice.

01 YOUR BODY NEEDS A BREAK

Hockey is repetitive: every stride stresses hips, groins, knees, ankles, and lower back. Without recovery, small aches become chronic injuries. A few weeks away from skating lets your body heal, reduce inflammation, restore mobility, and prepare for another season. You don't get better constantly breaking your body down – you get better when it has time to adapt.

02 THE OFF-SEASON BUILDS ATHLETES

The season is for competing; the off-season is for improving – building muscle, strength, speed, explosiveness, and mobility, and correcting imbalances. That's nearly impossible while skating five or six days a week. Come September, you don't want to have just maintained. You want to come back transformed.

03 OTHER SPORTS MAKE YOU BETTER

Soccer, baseball, lacrosse, volleyball, basketball, golf, tennis, track, mountain biking – different sports challenge coordination, balance, agility, reaction time, and body awareness, and expose you to new teammates, coaches, and competitive environments. That builds well-rounded athletes – and well-rounded people.

04 AVOID BURNOUT, BE DELIBERATE

Athletes rarely quit because they lack talent – they quit because they stop enjoying it. Even pros take time away. Take 2–4 weeks completely off after the season, then return gradually with a focus on technical skill development, pairing a few quality skates each week with strength training, speed work, mobility, other sports, and recovery.

> **Ask yourself** Not "how much hockey can I play?" but "how can I become the best athlete possible?"

TESTIFY TAKEAWAY

THE BEST PLAYERS DON'T JUST DEVELOP AS HOCKEY PLAYERS. THEY DEVELOP AS ATHLETES.

The athletes who reach the highest levels aren't the ones who play the most hockey at the youngest age. They build a broad athletic foundation, stay healthy, avoid burnout, and keep loving the game.