

PARENTS and OFFICIALS

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE OFFICIAL

The relationship between parents and on-ice officials is often a tenuous one. Parents are primarily concerned with the safety of their son or daughter, and if they are watching a game in which they fear the safety of their son or daughter is at risk, they are not in a position where they can jump on the ice to protect their loved one.

Rather than looking to blame the other teams players or the coaches for not respecting the safety of their child, they focus on the official. This is where it is important to have a better understanding of the role of an official.

In some respects it is acceptable to focus on the official if players are put into positions of danger, as the on-ice officials mandate is to make the game “fair” and “safe”. By calling infractions that, in their judgement, cross the line in regards to fairness and safety, the official is attempting to make the game fair and safe, and the CHA calls on all officials to follow these guidelines.

However, parents and players should be reminded that officials, in general, can only react to what HAS happened, not what might happen. If a player is injured as a result of an illegal play, the official can only react by calling the appropriate penalty, but can not prevent the infraction from taking place in advance. The onus does then fall on the official to make the appropriate call, and with proper training and the opportunity to develop their officiating skills, this will happen more often than not.

Ideally, the official will set the tone early in the game of what is and is not acceptable, and players will adjust accordingly. However, if players decide to take justice into their own hands, the CHA has clearly mandated that officials should call all infractions that cross the line of “fair” and “safe”.

Officials are also to focus on the whole game while parents tend to see everything that their child does on every shift they are on the ice. Because of this, officials may miss an infraction that happened to their child that is obvious to the parent, but the official may have been focusing elsewhere at the exact time their child was on the receiving end of some infraction.

At lower levels of minor hockey, officials are encouraged to call penalties as they happen. Judgement should not be a major factor for young officials, and a penalty that is deserved, should be called regardless of the game situation. Penalties should be applied to the “letter of the law”.

Often officials at the lower levels are young and just learning the “art of officiating”, so mistakes will be made. Is it acceptable to yell at officials when they make mistakes? Do you yell at the players every time they make a mistake? Why is it that nowhere else in the country except a hockey arena is it considered somewhat acceptable to yell at other peoples kids? Please consider your actions and give the officials a chance to learn the skills needed to officiate.

As well, are you sure you know the rules as well as the officials. Take the test below which asks some basic questions that every official should know. If you fail, perhaps you would be wise to brush up on your rule knowledge.

The CHA has far too much turnover in the number of officials from year to year. A big reason for this is abuse from parents. Much of officiating is learned from experience, and if we can reduce the amount of officials who quit, the quality of officiating overall will improve. Every time a kid quits officiating, they are replaced by a rookie who ends up making the same mistakes that the person who quit made. This continues the cycle that continues to see too many inexperienced officials working games they are not as qualified to work as the CHA would like them to be. Please give officials a chance to improve. That is what the CHA's Shared Respect Initiative is all about, respecting the role of all participants of the game – players – coaches – officials –parents.

Too often it is the “vocal minority” that creates the biggest problem for officials. Most parents do not yell at officials. The CHA calls on the “silent majority” to stand up and prevent verbal abuse of officials from the stands. Minor Hockey Associations are encouraged to adopt parental “Fair Play” policies that include penalties for parents that abuse officials. For copies of this policy, feel free to contact the Manager, Officiating.

In higher levels of competitive hockey, officials need to practice more judgment and game management skills. In these games, the “spirit of the rule” can take precedence over the “letter of the law” scenario described previously. Officials are instructed to ensure they call all “IMPACT” penalties. Impact penalties are anything that seriously threatens the safety of another player (Check From Behind, High Stick, Slash, Spear, Butt-End are some examples) or penalties that deny a player a reasonable scoring opportunity. As well, officials may make calls earlier in the game that set a standard he would like to maintain regarding various situations, such as interference, holding, body checking, etc.

In the course of officiating the game, officials may detect infractions that are penalties based on the “letter of the law” scenario, but do not cross the line in regards to the “spirit of the rule”. For example, if one player hooks an opponent in the neutral zone, but the opponent immediately stops any effort to continue skating, should the hooked player be rewarded for giving up. If two players exchange stick work that is not violent or flagrant, is the intent of “fair” and “safe” violated? If a player skates up the ice and crosses the red line and then shoots the puck in so he can go off the ice on a line change, but just after he lets the shot go he is hooked, a penalty can be overlooked as the player accomplished what he intended to do, and the penalty was not flagrant.

The time of game and other factors may have to be determined, but on many occasions the official could overlook this type of play because the rules of “fair” and “safe” have not been compromised.

Below you will find various pieces of information relating to officiating and parent involvement. I encourage you to read on and give the issues more consideration. I welcome your feedback.

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PARENTS PENALTY QUIZ

1. What is the determining factor for offside at the blue line?

- a) Position of the puck
- b) Position of the players' skates
- c) Position of the players' stick
- d) Position of the players' body

2. The puck is shot by a player standing behind the centre red line. The puck goes down through the goal crease and then over the goal line. State Referee's decision.

- a) Wash out the icing
- b) Icing

3. With the puck along the boards, a player, who is about to be checked, turns, creating contact from behind. Should a Checking from Behind penalty be assessed?

- a) No
- b) Yes

4. List the five criteria required for the referee to award a penalty shot?

5. The Referee has signaled a delayed Minor penalty for Checking from Behind on a player of Team A. Team "B" scores before the play is stopped. The Referee would:

- a) Washout the Minor penalty but assess the Game Misconduct penalty
- b) Washout the penalties to Team "A" as Team "B" scored
- c) Assess Minor penalty and a Game Misconduct for Checking from Behind
- d) Washout the goal and assess both the Minor and a Game Misconduct.

6. Team "A" is serving a Minor penalty. The Referee signals a delayed penalty to Team "A". Team "B" scores a goal prior to the stoppage of play. Which penalty expires on the scoring of the goal?

- a) The Minor penalty on delay.
- b) The Minor penalty being served.
- c) No penalty expires.
- d) Both penalties expire.

Answers to penalty quiz

1. b

2. b

3. b

4.

a). The attacking player must have **CONTROL** of the puck

b). The puck must be **OVER** the centre red line

c). The attacking player must have no **DEFENDING** player to pass, other than the goaltender

d). The attacking player must be fouled from **BEHIND**

e). The attacking player must be denied a **REASONABLE** scoring opportunity

5. a

6. b

CANADIAN HOCKEY ASSOCIATION **SHARED RESPECT INITIATIVE**

The Canadian Hockey Association's "Shared Respect Initiative" is designed to make the game more fun for all participants. It specifically targets the problem of abuse of officials, but it applies to all participants.

Keeping players playing and officials officiating the game is an important step to improving the game. One of the major concerns of the CHA is the drop out rate of players, coaches and officials who leave the game as a result of "abuse". Many good young players leave the game at an early age, many good coaches stop volunteering their time and every year, and 30% of active officials quit the game each year.

The loss of a player, official or coach, due to abuse hurts the entire game.

The loss of 10,000 officials in each season, and difficulties in recruiting new ones, puts significant strain on the entire hockey program, because officials that leave the game are replaced by a new official with no experience, and it leaves significant shortages for qualified officials at higher levels of hockey. The main reason for officials leaving the game is the "abuse" factor.

Canada continues to produce some of the best officials in the world, but in order for Canada to retain its position as a developer of top officials, it is important that the number of officials who leave the game must be reduced significantly, and that recruitment of officials must be made easier. Reducing the level of abuse will go a long way in achieving these goals. Respect for the game, the participants and the officials is key!

The "SHARED RESPECT INITIATIVE" calls upon all parties to respect the other participants in the game.

WHEN RESPECT IS SHARED – WE ALL WIN!

RESPECT

We all want it!

Everything you do says something about you. The Canadian Hockey Association's "Shared Respect Initiative" asks you to consider your role in showing "Respect" for the game, and the people involved in making this the great game it is. How much do you RESPECT the game of hockey and all its participants? Take this simple test to see how you rate. Check off the statements that apply to you.

The safety of the participants in the game is more important than the final score.

I may not cheer for the opposition team, but I will also not cheer against them or verbally abuse them.

I value the contribution of the coach in developing the players talents, even though I may not always agree with their methods.

I understand that officials do not make the hockey rules, they only apply them.

I understand that children learn from adults, and my behaviour reflects what I want children to learn.

I understand that officials are responsible to ensure that the game is played in a safe and fair manner for all participants.

I understand that players, coaches and officials are learning the game, and mistakes will be made in the learning process.

I understand that the biggest reason for players and officials quitting the game is abuse.

(How did you rate? If you checked off 0 – 2 – Step back and check your motives for being involved in the game; 3 – 4 – on your way; 5 – 6 – almost there; 7 – 8 – outstanding)

When players, coaches, parents and officials recognize the value of each person's contribution to the game, the game is better for everyone.

WHEN RESPECT IS SHARED – WE ALL WIN!

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LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT A HOCKEY REFEREE

Let's "take a look" at the official who is alleged to be responsible for the inability of players to score goals and teams to win games. He is the living barrier who mysteriously transforms victory to defeat. What are his qualifications and is there anything to be said in his defense?

In the first place, the IDEAL referee must be an apt student, who is letter perfect in the laws of hockey and their interpretation. Unlike judges in our courts, he must see the crime, identify the offence and hand out the sentence - not later in the day, tomorrow or next month, but all within seconds.

Next, the IDEAL referee must be a good skater and physically sound. A player can get frequent relief, but officials must be on the ice for the entire game. Moreover, hockey officials are expected to act as peace officers and prevent crime by restraining angry players who are intent upon "beating up" their opponents.

An IDEAL referee, and there is no such person, should have the speed of a sprinter, the endurance of a marathoner, the tact of a diplomat, the mind of a professor and the unruffled demeanor of a supreme court judge. It would also help if he had 20-20 vision and was stone deaf.

Fans, players, coaches and management alike expect too much of officials. Few players ever think their sentence was deserved; coaches shriek in anguish at a borderline off-side call; and fans view with alarm, every decision that goes against their favorites. Yet contrastingly, a judge has his judgement appealed **and** his decision repealed without loss of prestige. No less than perfection is expected from the versatile hockey official.

It is an old but valid argument that referees don't make the rules; they are merely agents charged with the responsibility of enforcing the laws as provided by the rule book. The fact that players trip, charge, smear or high-stick is not the referee's fault any more than a police officer is responsible for the actions of offenders who break society's laws.

Few men are so constituted that they can suffer silently while they are publicly criticized. While it is unlikely that hockey's governing bodies will do much to ease the referee's life while the sport is enjoying a prolific boom, it does seem that there should be less official criticism of referees and linesman. For instance, it isn't fair to second guess them with slow motion film. The man on the ice has to call the play instantly; he can't wait for the crowd to tell him and he can't see what goes **on** behind his back. Neither can he ponder over border line incidents in his private chambers or delay a decision momentarily while waiting the instant replay. He just has to do the best he can based on his years of experience. He doesn't expect to be popular; but he has a right to be recognized as the representative of the law makers and to be spared from public humiliation and criticism from those who are themselves involved in the development of the sport.

Certainly, hockey cannot exist without officials; so we had better learn to live with them and, who knows, we might even learn to like them.

RULES / INTERPRETATIONS

SOME COMMON MISTAKES OR MISCONCEPTIONS OF PARENTS

1. Off-side (two line) pass

- Skates are the determining factor, not the puck. The puck may cross two lines as long as the player has at least one skate touching the line, they are not offside.

2. Icing

- Why is icing sometimes waved off?
- Lack of effort by defensive player, player turned the wrong way and turning the right way would have ensured they had a chance to play the puck, defending team is in the middle of a line change and team icing puck should not be punished for the other team's action

3. Too Many Players on the Ice

- This must be an intentional play! If the puck just hits a player coming off the bench it is not too many players.

4. Face-Offs

- Why do centres get thrown out of the face-off circle?
- Feet location – not in designated area, sticks placed in neutral zone, back players encroach into circle, centres stick not down or stopped. It's all part of being fair? Should we allow one team to gain an advantage? No!

5. Checking From Behind

- Even if player turns, the onus is on the checker to avoid the hit. Officials are to err on the side of caution. We must get rid of this cheap, dirty play! What if it was your child on the receiving end?

6. Delayed Penalties

- Possession and control must be obtained by the offending team before the whistle is blown, not just a touch of the puck or a deflection off a goaltender.

7. NHL rules vs. CHA rules

- What you see on T.V. is not necessarily the rules that are used in minor hockey. NHL has different rules, procedures, and different application guidelines.

ARE YOU FRUSTRATED WITH THE OFFICIATING IN THE GAMES YOU WATCH?

I receive many emails from parents concerned about the officiating in their part of the country and asking what can they do about it.

There are no easy answers but there are some steps you can take.

First of all, ensure you have a good knowledge of the rules and CHA procedures for officials. Your complaints will not merit much consideration if it is apparent that you don't have a reasonable knowledge of the game.

For example, complaining that an official is brutal, but not being able to explain what about their game is bad will do little to merit further action. Even the best officials are accused of being bad because the parent does not understand the role of an official. Complaints should be in writing and be specific. "This official is bad because they do not show any desire, do not hustle, are lazy, do not move to the net when there is a close play, are always out of position, etc." Only when complaints are specific can they be followed up on.

Take time to talk to your local Referee-in-Chief about the officiating. Express your concerns about the game being fair and safe, and the need for officials to call the game accordingly.

Have a "parents" meeting and invite the officials. Encourage the officials to improve their game. Officials will be open to hearing your viewpoints if presented in the correct manner and situation.

Give the officials a break now and then. We are all learning the game, and we know we make mistakes. Harping on them is not how we will improve. As well, we are human. Racing home from a tough day at work or school, gulping down a sandwich and racing to the arena does not always allow us to prepare physically and mentally as well as we should for the game. Sometimes we will have bad games, but hopefully we will also learn from them and improve the next time. Yelling at the referees will not help your team win!

If you have other ideas, I would like to hear from you.

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THE "F" TEST

This exercise is designed to show how two people can be shown the same thing yet see it differently. Conflict can arise when a coach or player perceives an event differently than the officials. An understanding of this phenomena will help parents appreciate where officials are "coming from". This, in turn, will help both parties maintain a positive attitude towards the game and it's participants.

Below you will find a page with the "F" test. Look at it for a maximum of 30 seconds and determine how many times the letter "F" appears in the saying.

How many do you see?

Continued below.

THE FINISHED FILES ARE
THE RESULT OF YEARS
OF SCIENTIFIC STUDIES
COMBINED WITH THE
EXPERIENCE OF MANY
OF THE YEARS TO COME.

How many did you see “F’s” did you see?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

At this point everyone has the right answer based on how they viewed the situation...until proven right or wrong.

The correct answer is 7. Go back and review if you had a different answer.

One reason for the discrepancy in answers could be the way our subconscious has been trained to perceive things we see. For example, most of us have learned to read "OF" in its phonetic fashion as "OV". Knowing this it is easy to understand why we don't all see the "F" in "of".

There may be a variety of reasons you did not see 7.

- a) We all look at the same things yet see them in different manners.
- b) Some people concentrate better than others. It is extremely important in officiating to pay attention to details. However, how you and I see the same event can be very different.

In the same way, coaches, players, officials and spectators can also see things in a different manner.

It is important to understand the above, because by doing so, we will be better able to understand why officials may see things different. Officials must also know that coaches, players and parents will see things differently from themselves, and knowing that will help them establish a good rapport and gain the respect of the players and coaches.