

Hockey Officiating in Recreation Sport Services

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Patrick Myers

3772217

Professor John Byl

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Brock University

Looking at the topic of officiating hockey in a recreation sports service departments; we can assume that there are pros and cons as well as strong and weak points within the system. Whether it is because of the attitude of the participants or lack of knowledge by the official there are many problems that could arise which is why I will be looking at how hockey officials are trained and instructed and also personal factors that tie into the officiating aspect. After looking at this I will try and make suggestions according to the literature that I have found to be able to minimize the risks and problems from the standpoint of the officials that may happen in the game.

Hockey Canada's mandate and mission is "Lead, Develop, and Promote Positive Hockey Experiences". Hockey officials have a big part in upholding this statement as they are the people that need to make sure the game is fair and safe for all participants involved. Creating a positive hockey experience will allow participants to develop life skills that will help them throughout their lives and not only in sports. In hockey, there should be fair opportunities for all people regardless of age, gender, colour, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. The same applies to the officials of the game as well. As an official within a recreation sports service, there needs to be proper instruction to address and be prepared for any and all situations that may arise during the activity. Knowing the rules and how to enforce them are very important aspects that need to be taught to officials through training courses. Hockey Canada's Officiating Program requires all officials to undergo a re-certification test every year in which they must pass with a score that depends on their officiating level. If they do not pass, they don't officiate. This allows them to keep the best and most competent officials on the ice knowing that the rules and regulations of the game will be called correctly more times than not. Recreation

services should take the same approach and teach their officials the rules of the game so that they are able to correctly address situations as they happen throughout the course of a game.

Many of the books and articles from the universities touched on similar points and related to each other overall. One major key point is of the importance to promote teamwork and the belief that working together as a group in society we can accomplish bigger and better things than one person can individually. This is the reason there is a rule book created for the game of hockey so that the game is played the same no matter the age or location. This will allow for players and officials to strengthen their skills within the game as they know the rules and regulations of which they need to follow. Each recreation service can modify some of the rules if they deem it necessary for their league, but the fact of having a book that encompasses everything will aid in the overall technical aspect of the games being played. Looking at the consistency of officiating, there is an instruction and supervision program in place to make sure officials are following guidelines that were established to suit the game to its potential. Good instruction and supervision is the key to success in any officiating program. Recreation services need to establish a program similar to this so that their officials are prepared and knowledgeable about the sport they are officiating so that there are never any protests regarding wrong rule applications. Each recreation service should appoint a supervisor that would need to make sure they are prepared to spend time with officials and discuss each performance. One of the most important responsibilities of a supervisor is that they are there to assist the officials to become better. Also, the fact that they are there to see any severe infractions will aid in the decision for the suspension that will be applied as the more witnesses the better.

Along with what has already been mentioned, this is one of the strongest points from the articles was the following:

“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 cannot 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.” (Weinberg, 1990.)

This statement speaks volumes regarding how some people view officials. Some understand that they are there to penalize infractions as they happen whereas others seem to think that the official is there to eliminate all infractions from happening and when something does happen, those same people seem to put the blame on the official for letting an infraction happen. If we tried to apply that same thinking to a life scenario, would it be fair for a parent to blame a police officer for their child getting into a car accident? I think not.

Some of the major challenges in officiating hockey in a recreation service can be salary, expectations and qualifications of individuals. Minor hockey rates are higher than what most universities pay their intramural officials. Therefore if there is a referee that is debating doing a novice game or intramural game, the novice game will pay them more so they might decide to take that game instead. In conjunction with this, game times for most intramural leagues are late at night and therefore once again, would you rather officiate an intramural game at 11pm for \$10 or a novice game at 6pm for 17\$. This obviously only applies to officials that are registered with Hockey Canada. On the other side of the coin would be a person who is knowledgeable in Volleyball and Hockey, if they both pay the same for intramural leagues but volleyball is at a more convenient time slot, that individual may pursue that option. Some of the institutions also required individuals to have first aid, if a person didn't have it would a school be willing to cover

the cost for the official because if not then that might be a determining factor of whether the person sticks with officiating hockey or decides to quit because it may cost them more than they will make. Expectations of officials are to know the rules and enforce them, but this needs to be taught to individuals that have no previous experience. Clinics or instruction courses need to be planned accordingly to make sure that all officials of the sport have the same knowledge needed to officiate the game properly.

If you ask officials what they dislike most about officiating they will clearly tell you that the amount of abuse they must face is a major factor as to why they consider or actually leave the game. If this is indeed true, then what are we doing to assist officials as they attempt to overcome or deal with the issue? We need to provide more assistance and learning opportunities to these officials when they are first learning what officiating is all about, we will end up with better officials. Officials who are given more opportunities for accessibility from their schools will stay in the game longer will get more enjoyment out of officiating because of the help that is given to them, and as a result the rest of the participants in the game will benefit from the increased quality of officiating.

References

Weinberg, Robert. (1990). *Psychology of Officiating*. Champaign, IL : Human Kinetics Publishers.