



HEP and Checking from Behind

Let's get this issue into the proper perspective. Checking from behind is the single most dangerous play in ice hockey and it has no place in the game. One would be hard pressed to defend this action whether the incident was "accidental" or "intentional." The net result is still the same. The player checked could suffer a catastrophic injury resulting in paralysis.

It seems that some people in the game feel that applying the minutes against the HEP thresholds is unfair and that the penalty should be minimized for HEP in order to preserve the Fair Play point for the offending team. That thinking is a mistake and misguided.

As coaches, it is your responsibility to teach your players to be safe on the ice. You need to teach players how to approach a puck from an angle (angling) rather than straight on if it is against the wall. You need to teach your players that checking from behind is not only against the rules but potentially extremely dangerous to the other player. Then show them how to make the play so that they do not put anybody at risk. Once again this is an issue of angling and using approach lanes to the puck.

To help you teach these concepts, Minnesota Hockey has produced a DVD called Introduction to Body Contact. To get a copy of it, along with several other skills videos, contact your District Head Coach by using the links on the front page of the E-Newsletter or on the Coaching page of the Minnesota Hockey website – www.MinnesotaHockey.org. USA Hockey also has an excellent booklet by the same name and it can be found on the USA Hockey website, www.USAHockey.com.

Another responsibility of a coach is to educate parents on the inherent dangers of a check from behind. You are the day-to-day link between your parents and Minnesota Hockey. The Hockey Coaches Code of Conduct makes you responsible for helping parents see why this infraction is so severe and the loss of a Fair Play point is insignificant compared to the many other potential outcomes of checking from behind.

Please remember that whether accidental or intentional, the penalty is extremely serious and needs to be thought of as such. Every time the penalty is called it is a teaching moment for you as a coach. How you react is critical as a role model for the players and for team parents. For HEP to reach its deserved full potential, we need your support. After all, this is for the good and safety of the kids.

See you around the rink.

Hal Tearse
Minnesota Hockey Coach in Chief
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