



## **Fair Ice Policy**

The purpose of this briefing is to outline KMH's fair ice policy so that all team personnel, parents and players understand the mandate set by the association regarding ice time. The intent is to provide further explanation and interpretation – ***not to prompt parents/players to begin scrutinizing the number and length of every shift*** . As explained below, there are a number of factors that can impact ice time and it is important to know what those are to ensure the policy is properly understood and applied as required. The association encourages open and respectful communication between parents, players, coaches and officials.

### **So what does fair ice mean?**

**With few exceptions (as noted below) fair ice is, quite simply, defined as equal ice – coaches must strive to ensure all players receive the same amount of playing time in a game, be it exhibition, league or tournament. Registration fees are the same for all players within a division, hockey is a healthy form of recreation, and all players have the right to the same amount of playing time. KMH considers fair ice a core component of a team – regardless of individual skill level all players are part of the team, and as such should be provided an equal opportunity to develop and contribute to the success of the team. History has repeatedly shown that a good coach 'rolls the lines' and benefits with a much improved team as the season progresses. It is important for all players to feel they are a valuable part of the team.**

### **What are acceptable reasons for coaches to deviate from the fair ice policy?**

A player's ice time can be reduced for disciplinary reasons –repeated violations of the expectations outlined in ***Kitscoty Minor Hockey's Turning Point Program*** for players would be an example of behaviour that could be punished by the reduction of ice time for a player.

Repeated penalties involving risk of injury (e.g., checking from behind or to the head, cross-check, slash, etc.), and 'bad taste' penalties (e.g., unsportsmanlike, roughing after the play, etc.) may be considered disciplinary reasons to sit a player for a period of time as decided by the coach. Duration must be dependent on, and directly proportional to, the behaviour. For example, a 'bad taste' penalty could result in sitting for a single shift, whereas disrespectful behaviour toward team personnel or a teammate could result in sitting for the remainder of a game.

It is also expected and understood that there will be practical instances throughout the season where ice time will be different amongst players in any given game. KMH expects the 'spirit' of the fair ice policy to be adhered to, but we will also give consideration to the following:

- Some teams may have more players playing the forward position than defence position. While teams at younger age divisions are encouraged to rotate players through positions, teams at older divisions normally have players in set positions for the season. In this instance, the defensive players will obviously have more playing time than the forward players, although playing time should be fair within each position- forwards, centres, defence, and goalies.
- For games with numerous penalties, line rotations can sometimes be difficult to organize or maintain, and because of these circumstances it's not uncommon for some players to arbitrarily end up with more, or less, playing time due to the imbalance caused by the penalty situation
- Depending on the skill level of the opposing team, players can sometimes get 'boxed in' to their defensive end or, alternatively, generate sustained pressure in the offensive zone. Both of these situations can make it difficult to change lines within the expected shift lengths set by the coach (e.g., 1--minute shifts, etc.).

If a team is tied or ahead/behind by a goal, one strategy that coaches may draw upon is to 'shorten the bench', to protect a lead or attempt to tie/win a game. In other words, coaches may play the more skilled defence or forward players within the last ten minutes of the third period in a (must win) situation where the outcome of said game directly dictates whether the team will or will not advance to the next level. Coaches are expected to have a number of strategies to draw upon to defend or tie/win a game, and are expected to not solely rely on the strategy of 'shortening the bench' every time – it should be on a selected basis as described. However, if a coach expects this strategy will be used during a game, he/she is strongly encouraged to:

- have a discussion with parents/players so it is clear that should such a decision be made, it's for the net benefit of the team;
- impart such decisions amongst different players– those perceived as “less-skilled” players can often times surprise;
- ensure at no time does any player feel ostracized by the strategy if it's used.

## **What are UNACCEPTABLE reasons to deviate from the fair ice policy?**

Acknowledging that ice time can vary amongst players for the reasons noted above, the following are examples where coaches are **NOT** allowed to purposely reduce ice time in a league, tournament or play-off game:

- If the team is behind one or more goals in the first or second period, or before ten minutes of the third period in a (must win) situation where the outcome directly dictates whether the team will or will not advance to the next level.
- If the team is on a power play or penalty kill- *All players should be taught how to play in power play and penalty killing situations and be given the opportunity to gain experience on these specialty teams. Even though the coaches may not choose to continue to 'roll the same lines' through power play or penalty kill, it should not always be the same players that sit out.*

- If a player missed one or more practices, games or team events.
- If a player arrives late to a game or forgets a piece of equipment.
- If a player appears disengaged in the game or makes a 'bad play'.

Most minor hockey players do not drive themselves to the arena; therefore it is unfair to discipline a player for the mistake or error of the parent. We expect coaches to consider all circumstances before reducing ice time and understand that players will not always be at their best and that they will make mistakes. This is the "coachable moment" for corrections and players should not miss ice time or be sat because of it.

## **What to do if you have concerns regarding ice time?**

First and foremost, **take 24 hours** to consider your concerns. Some questions to ask yourself include:

- Did my child mention this? Is my child upset? Did my child ask **not** to be played?
- If this a "one off" where the coach simply made an error?
- Has it happened repeatedly? And if so, what are the circumstances?
- What do you believe the intent of the coach was?

If **after 24 hours**, you still have concerns, ask to speak to the coach. Please remember that the coaches have full time jobs and families, so please ensure your request provides options to meet or talk on the phone with some different times. If your request takes place over the phone, please **DO NOT** expect that the discussion take place immediately as it may not be a suitable time for the coach.

KMH is fortunate to have a number of dedicated and skilled coaches within our association that openly welcome and encourage questions and the opportunity to discuss concerns. The work of a coach is very busy during a game and it may simply be the case that he or she was unaware of the inequalities in ice time. The coach is watching and keeping track of the whole team, while you, as a

parent, only have one (or two) child(ren) on the ice. The coach deserves to discuss the situation in a mutually respectable manner. If an inequality did exist, then the coach deserves an opportunity to address it and makes changes, if necessary.

If your conversation with the coach does not adequately address your concerns please contact your team manager and then division director. If needed, other meetings can be set up to further discuss a solution to the problem.