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STATEMENT ON MALE PLAYERS IN RINGETTE

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Our Goal as a community is to welcome male players into ringette in a healthy, constructive way that serves female, and male, players equally.

With that in mind, as the 2022-23 season begins to wind down and the intensity of competition ramps up, Ringette Alberta would like remind all ringette stakeholders to consider the following position statement about the inclusion of male players in ringette.

Currently, all ringette in Alberta is considered mixed, and is not likely to successfully defend a human rights complaint should our sport attempt to ban males from participating.

While we recognize some of our female players do not want to play ringette with, or against ,male players, there are other female players who are indifferent. We also recognize that our male players enjoy ringette for the way the game is played and the unique environment that they do not receive from other sports.

To address these challenges while providing equal opportunity, Ringette Alberta is are working on a solution that will begin in the spring 2023. These initiatives will require support from the ringette community to ensure we have viable female-only, male-only, and mixed options in the future. The plan will address policy, training, competition creation, marketing, and registration. It will follow a multi-year timeline to ensure the male program is off to a good start in the short term and sustainable over the long term.

While these initiatives are underway we expect that all ringette stakeholders uphold these behaviors:

1. Everyone is expected to treat all others with fairness and respect.
2. Parents, spectators, coaches, and players, must treat male players with the same respect as you would treat female players. We ask that you consider how you would like female players to be treated in a sport that is predominantly male.

3. All officials are expected to enforce the official rules of ringette, regardless if the player is male or female. Safety and fairness are our top priorities.

Note: Ringette Alberta's Code of Conduct Policy applies to all registered participants, including parents and spectators. Berating players of either sex is unacceptable. If required, Ringette Alberta will not hesitate to enforce its Code of Conduct, by way of suspension or removal from participation with the potential for additional discipline.

Every stakeholder in Ringette must read and understand the Male Player Inclusion Backgrounder document on the following pages.

Male Player Inclusion Backgrounder

The discussion of how to include male players in ringette is complex and in a female centric sport, often divisive. As more boys and men become interested in participating in ringette, we must find a way to provide an inclusive environment for everyone.

These resolutions must focus on factual experiences and academics. We have summarized below, 5 core considerations for policy and program development. We must not focus on debating the merits of male participation or the perception of fairness or safety.

1. The Perception of Fairness and Safety

Opponents of male inclusion assume male players are stronger and more skilled than female players. This is not always the case. Depending on the age division and tier of the player, this assumption leads to a false narrative of oversimplification and the fallacy of composition.

Safety is primary concern of all ringette stakeholders. Physical contact in ringette is inevitable, therefore good policy should look to address size related discrepancies, regardless of sex. A mid-ice collision of two players, one significantly bigger / heavier than the other, carries the same risk, regardless of the sex of the players involved.

This reality rules out any policy that universally prohibits male participation. Such a ban would be very unlikely to withstand a human rights complaint.

1. Human Rights Legislation

The sport of ringette cannot ban males from participating any more than other sports can ban females from participating. Research in youth sports suggests ringette may prohibit males from participating in female-only programs only if male players have reasonable access to viable male-only or mixed opportunities. Viable male-only programs currently do not exist therefore ringette is considered mixed.

1. Preservation of Gender-Centric Environments

Ringette began as a female sport. Naturally, there is a tendency to want to preserve this female-centric environment. Our challenge is to find a way to preserve what makes ringette unique and special, including its female-centricity while creating an opportunity for males to play.

1. Males Required for Team Viability

From time to time, female-only teams may need to rely on male players to supplement the team's roster. Historically, this has almost been exclusively male goaltenders however; it is unlikely that allowing males to play one position (goal), but prohibiting them from playing other positions, would withstand a human rights complaint. These teams must be designated as mixed teams and

compete against the same. Female-only teams should have the choice (vs. mandated) to play against mixed teams or not. Unfortunately, because we do not have a viable male-only option, we are not yet in a position where we can create female-only competition.

1. Marketing

Ringette is free to decide how to market its product. Developing and providing opportunities for male players to play ringette does not mean ringette has to abandon its female-centric approach and methods. It will mean tailoring some messaging to attract male players to help make a male-only program viable, which will help preserve the female-only option.

Resolution

Resolution will not be achieved through open hostility towards male players or demanding they simply be banned.

Including males in ringette, while achieving a female-only program requires a well-developed plan that involves the cooperation of all local ringette associations, all four leagues in the province (CORA, NAWRA, BGL and Chinook), Ringette Alberta, and individuals throughout the ringette community. Ideally, Ringette Canada and the other provincial ringette associations must also be part of the solution.

Our ringette community can be successful if we pull together for the good of the female players and the male players alike.