

Referee is Only Human

A referee is only human and mistakes will happen. Verbal abuse of the official is simply not acceptable. It spoils everyone's enjoyment of the game and sets a terrible example for the players.

Remember why we're here. It's for all the positive things team sports can teach our children. And just as important, it's for the fun of it. Referees are there to ensure the game is safe and fair for all players.

If you have criticisms or concerns, please voice them through the proper channels.

WITHOUT REFEREES, NOBODY WINS!

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 their qualifications and is there anything to be said in their defense?

In the first place, the IDEAL referee must be letter perfect in the laws of hockey and their interpretation. Unlike judges in our courts, he/she 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 by taking shifts off sitting on the players bench, 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 league management alike expect too much of minor hockey 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 own team. Yet contrastingly, a judge has his judgment appealed and his decision repealed without loss of prestige. No less than perfection is expected from the versatile hockey officials who sometimes can just a kid who also loves the game.

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 player's trip, charge, cross check or high-stick opponents 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 referee on the ice has to call the play instantly; they can not wait for the crowd to tell them and they can't see what goes on behind their back. Neither can they ponder over border line incidents in a private chamber or delay a decision momentarily while waiting to see an instant replay. Referees just do the best they can based on years of experience and coaching from senior seasoned officials. They don't expect to be popular; but should have the right to be recognized as the representative of Hockey Canada (the rule/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.