

**Coaching Expectations and Fair Play Program**

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# Coaching Expectations and Fair Play Program

The following document outlines BDMHA's coaching expectations and the Association's vision of fair playing time.

## Participants Expectations

All aspects of the BDMHA Coaching Expectations and Fair Play Program are mandatory and cannot be disregarded, amended or circumvented by any participant (coach, player, parent or official) through any agreements formed by any participant or group of participants.

With fair play, everyone is accountable for their actions. If participant behaviour is inappropriate at a game or in another rink, or if the team behaves inappropriately at any game, then the participant(s) will be accountable for their actions.

As part of playing in two main HRM leagues, which includes paying leagues dues, all associations with the HRM have accepted Central Minor (competitive) and Metro Minor (recreation) polices, regulations and operating standards. Specifically related to this Fair Play Program, you can review the HRM the links for "[CMHF Rink Behaviour Policy](#)" and "[MMHL Mission Statement](#)".

Enjoy the great game of hockey which the children enjoy and want to play.

## Key Factors of Fair Play

1. Bedford Minor Hockey believes that all players within our association regardless of skill level deserve the opportunity to play in all situations in order to maximize their development.
2. BDMHA identified a need to inspire and support coaches to continue to develop all players' skills rather than focusing on developing strong players and forsaking those deemed to be weaker.
3. BDMHA endorses the [Hockey Canada Fair Play Code](#) for Players and Coaches. Line three of the Hockey Canada Fair Play Code for Coaches states:

***"I will ensure that all players get equal instruction, support and playing time."***

4. BDMHA believes that development comes from experiencing all situations.
5. BDMHA is dedicated to creating an environment that has a strong focus on the player and what they are taking away from the game at any given time. If the player's experiences are negative, they are less likely to continue on in the sport and will be more likely to seek other recreational activities.
6. BDMHA values player development over game results.

## Fair Play Expectations

It is not acceptable for a coach or assistant coach to remove a player from a regular rotation on the ice in order to gain an advantage over their opponent. We ask that all coaches embrace the spirit of the Fair Play Program and encourage the development of all players to succeed in all game situations.

Fair Play maintains that all players receive fair ice time during every game. Equal ice time is impossible to achieve due to the nature of the game. If a player gets a penalty or a team-rulerelated disciplinary suspension, that playing time missed will not be made up. Players forfeit that portion of their playing time on the ice when they receive a penalty or team-rule-relateddisciplinary suspension. The time spent in the penalty box or on the bench due to a team rule related disciplinary suspensions will not be made up during the rest of the game, nor during other games.

Bedford Minor Hockey also realizes that minute for minute playing time is not a reality due to the complex nature of the game of hockey. Situations will arise where it may be necessary for a coach to make difficult decisions involving their players. The following points are included to assist coaches and help them determine if action is required.

1. Safety
  - A player is/has been injured
  - A player has become a target by opponent(s) etc.
  - A player is not feeling confident in certain game situations
  - A player is not confident about a certain play the coaches request ➤ A player feels not prepared mentally or physically

When the above instances take place it is imperative that the player be communicated to directly and coached through the issues along with communication with the parent. Bedford Minor Hockey does not expect any of these instances to become chronic. We believe that most issues can be solved through open lines of communication and the display of mutual respect.

## 2. Disciplinary Reasons:

If a player intentionally displays poor conduct towards his coaches, teammates or opponents or is in breach of [BDMHA Code of Conduct](#) the coach has the authority to use playing time as a discipline tool.

As outlined in the BDMHA Constitution, ARTICLE XV - COACHES / ASSISTANT COACHES / MANAGERS - DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES:

A player may be benched of all or part of a game at the discretion of the Coach for disciplinary reasons, i.e.:

- For abusive or foul language directed at players, officials or spectators
- For all actions which are deemed to be detrimental to the welfare of the team as a whole

The reason for the benching must be clearly communicated to the player and where appropriate discussed with the player's parents.

Based on the severity of the incident coaches should use their best judgment as to the amount of shifts a player should miss.

## 3. Meaningful Games

As per BDMHA constitution, ARTICLE XV - COACHES / ASSISTANT COACHES / MANAGERS - DUTIES and RESPONSIBILITIES,

At the competitive level for U13 or higher, a Coach may assume responsibility for unequal ice time in the final 4 minutes of the third period of a meaningful game in a situation where a loss in that crucial game would significantly affect the opportunity for the team to participate in further competitions, i.e. playoffs or tournament play.

A Coach is encouraged to clearly communicate his reasons, for unequal ice time, to the team at the earliest opportunity.

**NOTE:** BDMHA feels the only meaningful games would be Central Minor Championship Semi Finals and Final games. Also, Hockey Nova Scotia's Day of Champions/Provincial Championship game. There should be no other games that would be classified as meaningful and justifies shortening benches.

Regular scheduled league games or exhibition games are **not** considered meaningful games at any point in the season. All teams make the playoffs / provincial play downs, and the placement in regular season will not negatively impact a team from continuing into playoffs or provincials, therefore no regular season games are considered a meaningful game. For clarity, the final period rule for U13 competitive and above is not applicable for any regular season game.

4. For all teams at any level, U11 through U18, C to AAA, in the last 4 minutes of any meaningful game, the coaches may shorten the bench. This should only be followed if there is a chance to lose, tie or win the game and should not be followed if the outcome of the game (win/lose) is known – aka high scoring variance games.

Note: The foregoing also applies to Goalies.

## Coaching Staff Expectations

All coaching staff must encourage and foster SAFETY and RESPECT during all hockey activities. No matter how important a game seems to be at the time, treat all participants with respect including the opponents and the officials. Maintain your self-control at all times. Demonstrate self-control to your players, a mature attitude, and appropriate communication skills.

As coaching staff you must demonstrate respect for the officials and their decisions. In many cases, the officials are also learning their game. Do not expect Professional Level calibre officiating.

Ensure you play all your players during every game and that each player receives fair ice time. Regardless of how important a game is, all players have to know what it is like to play under pressure situations, not only the higher ability players. You are a coach of a recreational hockey team, regardless whether the team is AAA, AA, A, B or a registered recreational team, all of

BDMHA teams fall under Minor Hockey Rules and Regulations and all teams within Bedford are considered “recreational” hockey. HNS Elite Hockey and Elite Hockey Rules are not followed nor are “Elite Teams” managed under Bedford Minor Hockey, Elite hockey is for Major U15, Major U18. You are also not coaching a paid professional team. You are coaching kids!!

Coaches are expected to adhere to the following:

- (A) Do not assign less-skilled players less game-time. Conversely, do not assign players with more skill more game-time.
- (B) Do not assign less-skilled players more game-time in the first part of any game in order to assign them less game-time in the latter part of any game. Specifically do not build a game plan that allows the ability to ‘shorten the bench’ declaring fair ice for all players.
- (C) Ensure all players are given equal opportunity to experience ‘special teams’ (penalty-kill and power play) situations. Do not assign special teams duty to specific players, but to all players as evenly as possible during each game.
- (D) Where two goalies are assigned to a team, the expectation is goaltenders are to be rotated evenly on a game-by-game basis or split the games. In rare situations and at coaches discretion it is allowable to have the rotation switched where a goalie does end up playing back-to-back games but the same opportunity must be provided to the other goaltender where he/she plays back-to-back. The coach can’t perform this action (back-to-back games) in the final two games of a tournament or provincials / playoffs where one goalie is played in a “semi-final” and the same goalie is used in the “finals”, we don’t want to remove goalies from the game of hockey, we don’t have enough as it is and our minor games are 100% dependant on having goaltenders. Also one goalie is not to be played for 3 games in a row, including provincials, playoffs, tournaments, meaningful games etc unless an illness with a goalie or other reasonable circumstance, ie discipline reason or a team only has one goalie. Like players, if a goalie is ill, has an injury, is away on vacation, has incurred a team disciplinary action or is suspended that is lost time that does not have to be made up in fair game playing time. Rotation simply continues when the goaltender returns to play in these circumstances. In these cases of goalie call-ups it is possible the team goalie plays multiple back-to-back games but this should be communicated up-front to the call-up goaltender that this is the intention as the goalie might decide not to play as a call-up for multiple games. Although in cases where a goalie call-up is required for multiple games (i.e. a long term injury), BDMHA would like the coach to review the game schedule and insert the call-up

where applicable, playing a lower placed team, a non-meaningful game etc. The call-up goalie needs to be treated respectfully and fairly for making the commitment to the team. The overall fair play intent looks to have equal games played in a full season (regular season, playoffs, tournaments, exhibition games) assuming they were healthy, not suspended, did not incur team disciplinary actions, attended all games and were not away for personal conflicts (school trips, study time, vacation) etc.

## **Additionally**

- Do not lose control of yourself in front of the players.
- There is absolutely no need for foul language, anywhere near your players.
- Give every player fair and equal treatment during practices, games and any other activities you are in charge of.
- Your main goal is not to win titles, but to ensure your players have fun and maintain their love for the game of hockey.
- Always encourage, foster, and maintain SAFETY and RESPECT.
- Don't be the cause for any player to stop playing hockey.
- Control your player's emotions and actions on the ice. As coach you are accountable for your player's actions in the rink!
- Communicate with a player's parents if you are having problems with the player.

## **Accountability and Management of the Fair Play Program**

The Fair Play Program is everyone's responsibility and Bedford Minor Hockey will continue to rely on our coaches and coaching staff to use their best judgment relative to the Fair Play Program. Based on the complexity of the game of hockey and the countless scenarios that arise we trust our coaches, players and spectators to work together and communicate as often and openly as possible. As a parent or guardian, if after 2 or 3 games have passed and you have waited out the 24 -hour rule and you believe your child has not experienced Fair Play you are asked to follow this process.

1. Discuss your concern with your team manager.
2. Try and bring resolution on a team level.
  - a. Note: If you are not comfortable discussing the fair play policy with the Team Manager as maybe the team manager player is perceived to be conflict with receiving additional playing time, BDMHA has created a Parent Concern Coordinator (PCC). This is an individual has many years of experience in minor hockey but no longer has any children in Bedford Minor Hockey and has no

interest in any team or individual within Bedford Minor Hockey. This independent consultant should be contacted first before the executive members.

3. If resolution is not achieved at the team level the team manager will contact the appropriate Vice President (Competitive or Recreation).
4. The Vice President will engage and work with the coaches and parents on resolution.
5. Escalation to the President will occur if not resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

## Monitoring of the Fair Play Program

During the normal course of the season the Vice President (Competitive or Recreation) along with the Hockey Development Professional are viewing and watching numerous games throughout the season. One item reviewed is Fair Play. If Fair Play is not being followed, it is their responsibility to bring this immediately to the coaches attention to be addressed. The majority of incidents are captured in this setting and addressed.

## Investigation

Regardless of the number of training sessions we watch, articles we read or policies we sign we realize that there will still be situations where a coach's will to win may lead them to go down the path of winning at all costs and shortening the bench. After an investigation, if a coach is found to have shortened his/her bench, short shifted their players or played one goaltender over the other the coach will receive.

- (A) 1<sup>st</sup> offence - A verbal warning
- (B) 2<sup>nd</sup> offence - A written warning
- (C) 3<sup>rd</sup> offence - Released from their position as head coach with Bedford Minor Hockey

If a parent confronts or harasses a coach about playing time and does not follow the steps outlined above, that parent will be subject to discipline under Bedford Minor [Abusive Parent Dispute Resolution Policy](#).

## Responsibilities and Promises

As a coach, you have the responsibility to encourage all players to be the best they can be, and provide equal opportunities for them to develop self-esteem and sport skills. When you play



your talented athletes more often, you make other players feel less important and deny them the chance to improve their skills.

As a parent, you have the responsibility to understand the challenges of Fair Playing time and speak up if you feel it is abused. Give our coaches some latitude and consider your position over at least 3 games. Please don't bring your stopwatch to the game. We respectfully ask parents to realize that it is impossible for all players to receive the exact same number of shifts or minutes of play time in a single game. Many times the shift length depends on whistles or what end the puck is in. We should strive to have equal and Fair Play time over 2-3 games. As an Association, we promise to put a greater emphasis on the spectator, player and coach's code of conduct as outlined by Hockey Canada, making our expectations clear and concise. We will continue to ensure our teams are as competitive as possible, our coaches are equipped and informed and our players are thriving in a positive environment.

### Q and A's from a Coaching Perspective

(Q) When is a coach allowed to shorten the bench to try and win a game?

(A) A coach is to develop all players in all situations regardless of the game or situation. A coach is expected to allow players to play during all times of the game and not sacrifice a player's confidence and place a greater emphasis on winning.

Note: See last 4 minutes of the game and / or "Meaningful Game" above for the only two exceptions.

(Q) Can a coach develop roles for individual players?

(A) No. A coach should develop **all players** in order to experience all aspects of the game (i.e. power play and penalty kill)

(Q) Is a coach expected to rotate all lines during crucial parts of the game?

(A) Yes. It is important to develop **all players** in all situations in order to maximize their skill level in the future.

(Q) Is a coach allowed to play goalies against certain teams vs going with a rotation?

(A) No. A coach is expected to follow a rotation. Goalies are hockey 'players' and the Fair Play Program apply to them as well.

(Q) Is a coach allowed to pull a goalie and replace him with the one on the bench?

(A) Yes, but only to allow him to regroup, then the expectation **where possible** is to put him back into the game after allowing time for him/her to regain their focus. If the score is out of hand, then he can remain sitting and this is calculated judgement call at that time. You can of course pull your goaltender for an extra attacker at any point in the game.

(Q) Is a coach or assistant coach allowed to sit any player for poor performance ie “bad game”?

(A) No. It is not acceptable for coaches to sit players for poor performance (i.e. having a bad game) this also applies to goaltenders.

(Q) Can a coach manage their bench when they are short players by double shifting players through the lines to make up for the shortage?

(A) Yes but only when they are short players due to attendance. All attempts should be made to “call-up” players from a lower level as the first priority. The expectation is this is also on a rotational basis. For example, if a player is sitting a two game suspension and call-ups are not possible, the same players should not be double shifted for both games. The same applies for specific positions out of the line-up. If a winger is missing, it is expected wingers will have equal opportunity to be double shifted, not moving center to wing and then only double shifting the centers each time. Moving a center is an option and therefore double shifting the centers, but then the next time a winger is missing, a different strategy is to be applied. For Defence, it is well accepted to rotate equally. Let the defence play different sides of the ice. If you are missing a forward and defence, look for an opportunity for a defence to play forward and rotate 4 defenceman. Get creative, but make it equal throughout the year so all kids have a fair share of ice when opportunities are available.

(Q) What about those parents who don't agree with Fair Play?

(A) We ask these parents exactly what they don't agree with. By not agreeing to any of the principles as outlined at the beginning of this document, parents are not agreeing with respect and development.

(Q) Fair Play is going to ruin my player's hockey career?

(A) Win at all costs attitudes and focusing on the development of a select number of players will ruin your child's minor hockey experience faster than Fair Play.

(Q) Can a team be set with a 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> line instead of 3 balanced lines?

(A) Yes. A coach can be creative as he / she wants. That is a coaching decision based on many factors, skill can be one, chemistry another, left and right handed shots or simply friends playing with friends. Anything is possible but all lines must be equally rotated and one line should not see more ice than another line over the duration of 2-3 games.

The Fair Play Program does not change the rules of the game or change the fact that our main focus is on developing our players, not winning hockey games. Professional hockey leagues like the NHL are only about winning. In Minor Hockey, there's no need to shorten your bench. If we take the fun out of the game, kids will lose interest and fewer kids will continue to play. Minor Hockey is about having FUN. There are ways in which a coach can ensure that every kid gets a fair amount of playing time.

Bedford Minor Hockey believes that coaches are our most powerful leaders. They have the ability to set the tone for the season. We expect our coaches to be stewards of this Fair Play Program and support the implementation of it going forward.

