



Rebounds-November 2007

Hal

I agree with and support what you say below;

"Personally I believe we can find an alternative to the traditional AAA system that provides opportunities for the advanced level players in the winter and still retain the integrity and benefits of association based youth hockey."

However, what I would like to see in the next "thoughts from the bench" is a call to action and solicitation of help from those who care about saving our associations and non AAA hockey. I would also like to see MN hockey provide some transparency to the issues it is facing, and when and in what forum they are addressing them. There are too many issues to face it seems without involving members. Let's address an issue, enlist help, receive input, provide deadlines and make decisions. Redistricting, private school programs, freedom to choose associations. These are huge issues that need to be handled in a timely fashion with transparency or the landscape will change around us, without the direction of those of you with the greatest knowledge.

Thanks,  
Dave Larkin

Hal:

I enjoy your e-newsletters and have saved a number of articles and resources to incorporate into my coaching. Thank you for sharing with the hockey community.

I am writing to encourage hockey parents to get involved and make a difference. If folks are frustrated with ice times, youth hockey expectations, or other issues in their local associations, they can help seek solutions. For example, get involved with your team as a coach or manager, join an association board (or at least attend the board meetings), and communicate your priorities to the association leadership. Many voices aren't heard because they aren't engaged or don't share their ideas with the appropriate people.

As a C-level Squirt head coach the previous two years, I have told my parents and players that they should set priorities and need to make decisions that support the health and happiness of their family first. I support families who miss games or practices for church, school, theater, vacation, a Wild game, or just to get a break in a 6-month season. Too many times the pressure comes from the coach, and I've tried to model behavior that doesn't directly (or indirectly) punish a player for choosing something other than hockey every other night of the week.

As a parent of a player, I've told my own child that he ultimately makes the choice. I inform him of potential consequences and any issues that affect others, including commitment to the team, but it is his decision to attend practice or a game. Our only requirement is that he communicate with the coach(s) regarding any upcoming absence. If we as parents allow the game of hockey to dictate our schedule, then we've already told our children what is important to us.

I understand the letter writer who shared the following comment with you: "I think many parents are scared to do anything because then they will be labeled as non-committed and be relegated to 'C' teams." Although this is true for many, I wish we could see it as a positive. What's wrong with a less intense hockey experience on a "C" team? The players can have fun, learn and play a sport that all ages can enjoy (at least in Minnesota). I can't change the demands and commitment that youth hockey asks, but I can decide my response and adjust my expectations accordingly. Take your family to church, go to a movie, or stay at home and skip hockey for a change!

Sincerely,

Troy Loken