



## The Worm Has Turned!

What a thrill to watch the Stanley Cup Playoffs with the numerous exciting goals and high level of skills on display. Finally the leadership in the NHL have given the game back to the skilled players. You will notice a quick exit from the league of those players who are long on muscles but short on skills. This will open the door for more skilled players to participate at the top levels but for the near future that will not be North American players until we refocus our energies on developing the fundamental skills of our players and helping them learn the concepts of the game. The European players will fill the void in the next few years but we can change that trend.

The current state of the game is a reflection of the attitudes and permissiveness of the top league but now that has all changed. The college game was quick to adapt to the new commitment for allowing the skill players to actually use their skills. Now it is up to USA Hockey and the National High School Federation of High School Associations to follow suite and give the game back to the kids. There is evidence that they are moving in that direction.

The National Federation of State High School Associations has just adopted the following addition to the rule regarding Interference:

“Rule 6-22-2: (Add): Obstruction, defined as use of stick or body to interfere with an opponent away from play of the puck, shall be penalized under this rule.”

PENALTY: MINOR

Rationale: Defining and adding “Obstruction” to this rule and identifying the penalty (MINOR). The use of the body or stick or “clutching and grabbing” in this way has taken away from the speed and skills of the game of hockey. Creating such a rule provides an avenue to crack down on these tactics and encourages a more skilled brand of hockey. Collegiate leagues as well as the NHL have recently taken steps in this direction.”

The Federation also is trying to reign in coach behavior with this addition to the unsportsmanlike behavior rule:

“Rule 6-1-11: (Add): “No player, coach or bench personnel shall use any obscene gestures or racial/ethnic/gender slurs directed at officials or others during the warm-up, during the progress of a game, during the intermission or after the game.”

In the attached article [“Kids, you Owe the NHL”](#) you will see that Hockey Canada at their annual meeting in late May of this year have embraced the rule changes at the NHL

and are adopting them for all youth hockey in Canada. We can only hope that USA Hockey, Minnesota State High School League and Minnesota Hockey will follow for this upcoming season. This will take some time for the participants to adjust as a new philosophy for the game is imposed. The article, "[Refs: Parents May Not Like It](#)" details what Hockey Canada is planning in order to implement these changes for the upcoming season. The biggest concern is the parents and their reactions.

As coaches we have our work cut out for us because we can now see the future. It will certainly take a couple years to make this transition but smart coaches will start moving this way immediately. These changes mean that the players and teams with the best skills will prevail.

There will be a new expectation from the parents and players that their coaches teach the skills that the players need to excel. This means skating, puck handling, passing and scoring. It means we have to teach players to understand the game and the inherent on ice relationships between teammates that make the game what it is. The game is moving forward for the first time in many years and as coaches we need to move forward with it. The old ways will not get it done in the future.

Coaches will need to be better versed in the art of teaching fundamental skills, communicating effectively with players and parents, and passing their knowledge of the game along to their players. It will be up to you to embrace these changes and protect the honor and integrity of the game. If you want to get a head start on some of this, visit the following link [www.positivecoachalliance.org](http://www.positivecoachalliance.org) and order the book "The Double-Goal Coach". While you are there you should snoop around their site. It is very powerful and important information for coaches.

Coaching youth sports has many opportunities to teach important life lessons to your players. Many of the lessons you can teach will carry over into other parts of your players lives whether it be family, school and eventually work. Take a couple minutes to read the article by Michael A. Town entitled; [Coaches, Judges have much in common](#).

**Here is question that I hope you will reply to:**

Would you like to attend an on ice session in your community devoted to learning how to teach skating and puck handling skills? If yes please be sure to identify your association. Use [halt@minnesotahockey.org](mailto:halt@minnesotahockey.org)

On behalf of the kids, thanks for all you do.

See you at the rink

Hal Tearse  
Coach in Chief Minnesota Hockey  
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