



# IS YOUR CHILD BEING SHORTED BY A SHORT BENCH?

It happens at the same time every year when there seems to be a new trail of broken hearts, bruised egos and shattered dreams.

No, it's not from the wins and losses that come during this crucial time of the season, with its "do-or-die" games, key playoff match ups and league championships. Rather, it comes when coaches put winning ahead of playing all the players on their team fairly.

Sure, everyone would rather win than lose, but at what and whose expense might those wins be coming?

"I think that at the youngest levels, for sure Mites and Squirts, all of the players should get equal ice time," says Drew Famulak, associate head coach at Ferris State University.

"First and foremost, the primary goal should be to develop hockey players, whether they are first line or third line players."

The philosophy on playing time varies from team to team and coach to coach. Some parents and coaches may decide at the start of the season that the policy will be to start out using each line as fairly as possible, and shortening the bench in tournaments or other "big games." While this may sound like a good idea in October, the reality of the policy will sour when it's your son or daughter anchored to the bench during those games and tournaments.

So how should you deal with gross inequities in playing time, especially when it's your son or daughter who is affected? How will you react after watching your son



or daughter sitting for three periods, crying in the car on the ride home or sulking through dinner? What will you do?

For many of us the temptation may be to set up camp in the arena lobby and wait to unload on the coach after the game. Or launch a campaign to make other parents sympathetic to your Peewee's plight. Or blister your coach's ears

with loud phone calls or send venomous e-mails.

The reality is that crunch time is not the right time in the season to finally discover that your coach or association has a win-at-all-costs philosophy. That time was back in September, when you were all excited because your son or daughter made the Triple A team even though he or she was probably better suited to play on the Double A squad.

"The team coaches should be following the player development policy of the club or organization," says Famulak.

"That policy will differ from group to group, so it's a matter of choice and asking the right questions at the start of the season."

While that all sounds well and good, it is of little comfort when you're sitting in the bleachers watching your son or daughter squirming on the bench across the way.

As Famulak points out, it should be a goal of all coaches to develop hockey players on all lines. College and professional teams regularly skate three lines, including the championship teams.

A trophy in the hand of a player who didn't skate a shift in the championship game may not mean it was a successful season. ❖

## COACH OF THE MONTH



### PAUL DOLE

South Shore Seahawks Youth Hockey

Paul has been coaching in the South Shore Seahawks Youth Hockey program in Massachusetts for a number of years.

With four children playing at various levels, Paul is busy coaching all of their teams. In addition, Paul leads the Seahawks instructional cross-ice program, which includes six teams.

He is also an instructor with the Seahawks Learn to Skate program. His dedication to youth hockey and his desire to give back to the game earned him Coach of the Year honors from the association.

## GOOD SPORT | Take Lots Of Pictures

By Dan Saferstein

I have come to appreciate all the pictures my wife takes at games and tournaments.

She takes pictures of our children, their teammates and friends, parents of their teammates and friends. We have become friends with a number of these parents. I have even become friends with a couple of their coaches. It makes any journey so much richer when you can make friends along the way, and I'm sure these friendships are what I'll remember most when my children's competitive sports days are over.

When I look at older pictures, it occurs to me how many people our children have met through their sports activities. In addition to their teammates, they've also gotten to know players on other teams,

some who now play on the same team as they do. Over the years, all the little rivalries seem to fade and I'm left with a feeling that we are all a part of the same community, the same sports family. There are people with different political leanings, people who I probably would never have gotten to know if we hadn't had children on the same teams.

The other day, I looked at my son's team picture from a recent tournament and felt so glad for him. I didn't feel glad because they were holding up a trophy and had ribbons around their necks. I felt glad because I knew he was standing alongside friends who he would remember the rest of his life.

To learn more, go to [DanSaferstein.com](http://DanSaferstein.com).

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

USA Hockey's most popular names among girls and boys playing hockey:

### BOYS

Jacob, Matthew and Michael

### GIRLS

Emma and Emily