



SHANE BOWLER

Getting Up to Speed with the New Standard of Officiating

With the 2006-2007 season upon us, we are all aware of the changes being implemented in minor hockey through the new standard of officiating. We in minor hockey must understand what is going on with the new standard and that there are not new rules being established but rather old rules being applied more thoroughly and more precisely. As with all changes, there will be an adjustment period where everyone from the officials, players, parents and most importantly the coaches will have to adapt to the "new game." The coaches are going to be the most important component in the transition through this adjustment. Coaches must set the tone in promoting and teaching the game the way it is now going to be officiated. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways but especially through what is being taught and worked on during practices. Coaches must come up with drills that emphasize the skills necessary to succeed in today's game.

To prepare for this I took an officiating course to better understand what rules are being enforced and to understand how the officials are allowing the game to be played. I would recommend this to all coaches. I believe the essential skills to practice and develop are skating, puck possession, body positioning, stick control, along with special teams. These skills can be developed through a variety of drills and situations that should be applied in every practice. An officiating course based on the "new game", will allow a coach to structure practices based on the application of the rules as they are now going to be enforced.

The first thing I would emphasize to my team would be the importance of speed in today's game. All players must be able to skate with speed to be effective this season. Try to have all team drills progress from lower speeds to top speeds with pucks to develop both skill and confidence in your young players.

Hopefully as the players' speed develops so will their puck possession skills. This can be attained through a variety of player versus player battles throughout different zones on the ice. For example, 1 on 1, 2 on 1, 2 on 2, 3 on 2, etc., in all three zones of the ice. These kinds of drills are most effective because, as a coach, you are working to develop your players' skills on both the offensive and defensive side of the puck.

On the offensive side of the puck you want to stress to your players to attack the defensive player's goal with speed because the defending player is rather restricted in what is allowed now with the rules being applied more strictly. On the defensive side is where skills such as body positioning and stick control must be taught and stressed. This

season, a defender is not allowed to use their stick to impede an opposing player anywhere on the ice in any way. This is why body positioning and stick control are crucial in keeping your team out of the penalty box. Players must be taught that when they are back checking, they must be parallel to the offensive player in order to be effective. One must use their speed and body position and not their stick to defend. In front of your own net, defensemen must use body positioning and control of their sticks in order to control the front of the net. No longer are defensemen allowed to cross-check or "steer" an offensive player from the front of the net. Defending players must learn to use their body positioning to fill "shooting lanes" and utilize their

Continued on page 30...

Sample Practice relative to the "new standard of officiating" 60 Minute Practice

Time	Drill or Situation	Purpose
10 min	Warm-Up and Stretch (Skating circles or shooting drills)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase heart rate and get blood flowing • Stretch after muscles are warm
10 min	Battles in Different Zones (1 on 1, 2 on 1, 3 on 2, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offensive Puck Possession • Defensive Body Positioning • Defensive Stick Control • Speed
10 min	Defensive Zone Coverage (Odd and even man situations in Defensive Zone)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defensive Body Positioning • Defensive Stick Control • Speed
20 min	Power-Play and Penalty Killing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special Teams must be productive
10 min	Skating and Conditioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed • Stamina • Quick Feet

Chalk Talk

...continued from page 27.

sticks to fill the "passing lanes" in order to be effective in staying out of the penalty box and to keep the puck out of their own net. These battle drills should be done every practice in some form and have all players play on both the offensive and defensive side of the puck for effective skill development.

I don't believe the adjustment period will be that long or difficult because our young players are smart and skilled enough to adapt quickly. But, during this period for a team to be successful, power-play and penalty-killing units

must be effective. With a short season in minor hockey, if a team does not adapt to the new standard, special teams could determine a team's fate. This is why at least early in the season, I recommend spending a considerable amount of time developing both the power-play and the penalty-kill. Practice all situations on both sides of the puck that could potentially arise. For example, 5 on 4, 4 on 3, 5 on 3, and when the goalie is pulled, 6 on 5, 6 on 4, 6 on 3. Early in this season, more often than not, special teams will determine the outcome of the games.

With the "new officiating standard" the game will change dramatically for the better over time. Coaches must be at the forefront through education and practice in helping our players adjust with speed, puck possession, body position and stick control in order to succeed in this new game.

Shane Bowler is a former head coach in the OPHL and is president of the Hockey Institute in Toronto. He was formerly an All American hockey player and assistant coach at the University of Alabama in the mid 90's.