



Fair Play Policy

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Fair Ice Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all team personnel, parents, and players understand the directives set by the association regarding ice time. The intent is to provide explanation and interpretation – **not to prompt parents/players to begin scrutinizing the number and length of every shift**. As explained below, there are a number of factors that can impact ice time, and it is important to know what those are to ensure the policy is properly understood and applied as required.

Fair ice time directives:

1. SRMHA is committed to having as many players as possible play at a level of competition suited to their skills and abilities.
2. All players will receive fair ice time. No coach will sit a player for any duration unless it is for disciplinary reasons.
3. Goalies at all levels will receive fair ice time. The method of sharing games will be clearly communicated to the players and parents.
4. Coaches are to rotate all players through Special Teams for the 1st half of the season during games and practices before defining Special Team Units. This is to be communicated to the players and parents at the start of the year.

What does fair ice mean?

With a few exceptions (as noted below) fair ice is quite simply defined as equal ice – coaches must strive to ensure all players receive the same amount of playing time in a game, be it exhibition, league, or tournament. Registration fees are the same for all players within a division, hockey is a healthy form of recreation, and all players have the right to receive equal playing time. SRMHA considers fair ice a core component of a team – regardless of individual skill level all players are part of the team, and as such should be provided an equal opportunity to develop and contribute to the success of the team.

What are acceptable reasons for coaches to deviate from the fair ice policy?

A player's ice time can be reduced for disciplinary reasons – repeated violations of the Players Code of Conduct are a good starting guide. As well, repeated penalties involving risk of injury (e.g., checking from behind or to the head, cross-check, slash, etc.), and 'bad taste' penalties (e.g., unsportsmanlike, roughing after the play, etc.) may be considered disciplinary reasons to sit a player for a period of time. Duration must be dependent on, and directly proportional to, the behaviour. For example, a 'bad taste' penalty could result in sitting for a single shift, whereas disrespectful behaviour toward team personnel or a teammate could result in sitting for the

remainder of a game. At the same time, there will be practical instances throughout the season where ice time will be different amongst players in any given game. Although SRMHA expects the spirit of the fair ice policy to be adhered to consider the following:

- All teams have more players playing in the forward position than defence position. While teams at younger age divisions are encouraged to rotate players through positions, teams at older divisions normally have players in set positions for the season. In this instance, the defence players will obviously have more playing time than the forward players (and for that matter, a single goalie on a team will have the most playing time).
- For games with numerous penalties, line rotations can sometimes be difficult to organize or maintain, and because of these circumstances it's not uncommon for some players to arbitrarily end up with more, or less, playing time.
- Depending on the skill level of the opposing team, players can sometimes get "boxed in" to their defensive end or alternatively, generate sustained pressure in the offensive zone. Both situations can make it difficult to change lines within the expected shift lengths set by the coach (e.g., 1-minute shifts, etc.)
- If a team is tied or ahead/behind by a goal, one strategy that coaches may draw upon is to "shorten the bench" to protect a lead or attempt to tie/win a game. In other words, coaches may play the more skilled defence or forward players within **the last five minutes of the third period and overtime**, to achieve the desired outcome. Coaches are expected to have a number of strategies to draw upon to defend a lead or tie/win a game and are encouraged to not solely rely on the strategy of 'shortening the bench' every time – it should be on a selected basis as described. However, if a coach expects this strategy will be used during the season, he/she is strongly encouraged to:
 1. Have a discussion with parents/players at the beginning of the season so it is clear that should such a decision be made, it's for the net benefit of the team (i.e., Penalty Kill and Power Play – Special Teams):
 2. Wait until the second half of the season to determine if it's even a strategy that would truly benefit the team:
 3. Impart such decisions amongst different players throughout the season - skilled players can often surprise.
 4. Ensure that the strategy is communicated on a regular basis to the players affected to help minimize players being ostracized.

What are unacceptable reasons for coaches to deviate from the fair ice policy?

Acknowledging that ice time can vary amongst players for the reasons noted above, the following are examples where coaches are NOT ALLOWED to purposely reduce ice time in a league, tournament, or play-off game:

- If the team is behind one or more goals in the first or second period, or in the third period with more than five minutes to play in the game.
- If a player misses one or more practices, games, or team events without proper justification such as inclement weather, illness, personal or professional reasons which are to be communicated to the Coach/Manager prior to the event.

What to do if you have concerns regarding ice time?

First and foremost, take the time to determine if your concerns are warranted – always allow a minimum of 24 hours to pass before taking any action. Ask yourself if the ice time may have varied beyond the control of the coach. Consider the examples listed earlier as a guide. If you still have concerns, ask to speak to the coach (remember the 24-hour rule if you are feeling frustrated). SRMHA is very fortunate to have a number of dedicated and skilled volunteer coaches in our association that openly welcome and encourage questions and/or the opportunity to discuss concerns. The work of a coach is very busy during a game, and it may simply be the case he/she was unaware there are inequalities in ice time. The coach deserves an opportunity to discuss and explain in a mutually respectable manner; and an opportunity to address and correct in the future if inequality indeed exists. If you are not satisfied after discussions with the coach, it is recommended that you document the inequality and then contact a member of the SRMHA executive (see contact information on the association website at www.srmha.ca). The executive can arrange a meeting with you and the coach to further discuss or meet separately with the coach if required.

What can happen to a coach that persistently violates the fair ice policy?

If discussions occur with a coach regarding concerns over fair ice and the coach persists in violating the policy, the executive is empowered to suspend a coach *for not providing fair ice time*. If this occurs, the Disciplinary Committee will investigate, conduct a hearing, and if need be, render a disciplinary decision that could involve a set suspension time period.