

Overall

There has been a definite divide this season with the Southern and Northern teams regarding disciplinary issues. The Northern sector has had one of the quietest seasons, whereas the Southern teams have seen a large spike in match penalties, resulting in suspensions of over 6 games.

Where discipline is concerned, everyone has their individual opinion on an incident, may have a short phone video clip and feel extremely aggrieved at a decision made. Within the discipline team we have worked extremely hard to work within a consistent approach, whilst keeping an understanding that every incident is individual, the consequences behind the incident that provoke the behaviours, but also the antecedent from an offence. Where an offence is reckless and could endanger other players there is always a necessity to ensure all the information that can be sought from the officials is done, then a disciplinary panel will assess, use the guidelines as a starting point for a suspension and consider the implications of a suspension. It is not, and never has been the intention of the disciplinary team to take away the privilege of playing ice hockey, indeed if anything it is to hopefully give the minimum suspension and see the players back on the ice as quickly as possible, but if an offence is committed, then a suspension cannot be deterred.

I would like to thank teams for their patience and understanding again this season. Some weekends there has been as many as 15 suspensions to work through, some of which are more complex than others and require more intervention. Timescales are frustrating for teams as they want to know as soon as possible the length of a suspension for a player or players. I always normally try to ensure you receive all documentation by the Wednesday of the following week, but there are occasions where it is longer than that. Obviously, once a player receives a match penalty they are suspended for at least one game, but I appreciate some weekends teams have games on both the Saturday and Sunday and want to know where they stand. I will endeavour to continue to inform teams as soon as possible, but please understand there are times where it will be later than Wednesday. The ruling states that you don't ice any player until you hear from the disciplinary section and the red flag ensures this can't happen.

Discipline document

Over the summer the discipline document was reviewed to reflect where change was necessary, allowing transparency for teams to understand the procedures of discipline and give a clear overview of the points systems, fine notifications and general management of teams and players. This was uploaded onto the website and can be accessed from there. The link is here for ease of finding the report:

<https://eiha.co.uk/discipline/>

Offences

This season the increase of higher suspensions has been grown over the season with checking from behind or checking to the head being two that appear to be on a regular basis. As everyone knows, checking is part of ice hockey, but there are limits to the level of checking that is considered sportsmanlike and within the spirit of the game and these offences have stepped over that line. For next season these types of offences will continue to hold higher suspensions and it is down to team managers, coaches and personnel to ensure the players are suitably equipped to check within the regulatory standards of the game and not with reckless endangerment.

Interestingly when an offence of this nature has been reviewed, it has been comforting to know that both teams have generally been supportive of the decision made and can see there is room for further training and development.

Red flag

The red flag system is still working very well. Once a player receives a match penalty, or reaches an accumulation of point limit a red flag will be placed against the player until the suspension is served in full at the level they receive the suspension in. This can, for some players mean a considerable amount of time not playing if they receive a suspension in a junior league or U20, where games are sparser than the senior leagues which can be frustrating for players and teams who are wanting to ice players into two or sometimes three teams. It can be a huge learning curve for some younger players and one they hopefully will not repeat.

If a red flag is placed against a player who is also a coach or official the suspension applies to all categories. They cannot ice, coach or officiate until the suspension is served in full. Again, this has caused upset and grievance over the season, but within the code of conduct it clearly stipulates that all involved will abide by the rules of competition and disciplinary boundaries.

Fines

There has been a sharp rise in the numbers of fines sent out to teams last season. This has meant an increased amount of time spent by Irene chasing outstanding fines where they have gone over the timescale given on the paperwork. Please see below the updated information on fine payments as it could have serious implications for teams who do not supply us with the correct personnel to deal with such matters, or who do not follow this procedure.

13.4 Fine payment

If payment is not received within the 28-day period from date of invoice, the Discipline Chair will issue one final email reminder. An administration fee of £20 will be added to the outstanding balance at this point with a further email reminder from the Discipline Chair. If payment is not received within 5 days from this point referee allocation will be withdrawn for future fixtures until payment is received in full.

I am hoping this will bring down the numbers of points reached by teams and reduce the number of fines.

Contact details

Please ensure you keep the league administrator up to date with contact details for your team as I get numerous emails from personnel who are not on the contact sheet asking about suspensions. I will not share with anyone not on the sheets unless I receive a prior email from the current contact to do so. I had an instance where a parent contacted me directly asking regarding a suspension of a junior player insisting he was part of the club management team. This could be a GDPR or even safeguarding issue and something we must be cautious to protect information shared.

Individual points

Just to remind everyone that it is important you keep a note of your points on players, mainly for accumulation of points. If a player ices on a Saturday and receives points that takes them over 10 points for instance, and then has a game on the Sunday and ices again without being aware they are over their limit it could end with the team forfeiting the game. The discipline sheets are generally

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worked on from Monday morning, so a Saturday game would not normally be assessed until then. If a match report comes through early, a red flag will be placed immediately as a holding procedure to stop that player being selected, but if it is an accumulation issue, it is your responsibility to note.

Finally

As last season is now a distant memory and the current season is very much upon us, I am not about to share previous data or accrual of points within this document.

All that is left to say is have a great discipline free season, I appreciate hearing from the disciplinary panel is never an email you wish to receive!

Many thanks for your ongoing support

Lynn Faber
Disciplinary Secretary