

THE HOCKEY MOM

By Christie Casciano Burns

The Golden Rule Of Hockey May Be Knowing The Rules Of The Game

**ICE IT! DUMP IT IN! SHOOT THE PUCK!
THEY WERE OFFSIDE BY THREE FEET!
ARE WE WATCHING THE SAME GAME HERE REF?
GET A RULE BOOK!**

These are just a few of the many cries that can be heard echoing around the rink from vocal parents sitting in the stands. How many times during the average youth hockey game have you heard some combination of the above?

Maybe those parents would best served by heeding their own advice and carefully looking at the rules. If you can't promise to bite your tongue, at least have an informed opinion.

Here's a classic example of a widely misunderstood one, that's been around a long time, and we still get it wrong.

USA Hockey Rule 624.c "If the officials shall have erred in calling an "icing the puck" infraction (regardless of whether either team is shorthanded) a face-off shall occur at the end zone face-off spot nearest to the location of the puck when play was stopped."

Benjamin Ringrose, manager of the USA Hockey Officiating Education Program, says "this rule has been in place for the better part of 20 years. And yet, it's not uncommon for coaches and parents to scream "That face-off is supposed to go to center ice!"

"It never ceases to amaze me that this still happens a lot despite the fact that it's grassroots hockey with less-than-perfect officials," Ringrose said. "You can't convince me this is the first time they have seen this rule."

Aside from rules that we are all familiar with (or should be familiar with), we're at the unique juncture in youth hockey where the game may look a little bit different to those who may not have been involved in some time or even since their own playing days.

USA Hockey has enacted a number of changes prioritizing safety and skill development. Offsides and icing have been altered to emphasize puck protection and playmaking. On the impact of the transition, Ringrose said, "Changes to icing (while shorthanded) and offsides will take a little time to learn and adapt. However, I don't think it will take nearly as long as people think.



We're at a point now where most boys and girls have grown up playing under these rules."

"One of the changes that will definitely go "against the norm" will be the fact that "injuries" are no longer the main factor when considering minor penalties vs. major plus game misconducts. Now officials will judge the infraction itself and assess a major plus game misconduct if the actions "recklessly endanger" the opponent. This takes a difficult burden off the officials who are not doctors or trained medical staff, and have no idea whether the player is "injured" or "shaken up a bit."

Now it's as simple as watching the play and determining whether the stick or body contact "recklessly endangered" the opponent.

"We might see a little uptick in five minutes plus a game misconduct penalties this season, and parents will need to understand that their kids are now held to a higher standard with respecting and protecting the opponent," Ringrose said.

It certainly took some adjusting when the NHL did away with the redline. At the time, it seemed inconceivable. The entire game would be different. Well, the game was different in that it's now way faster and even more fun to watch.

Nothing USA Hockey has rolled out is even close to as drastic as that seismic shift, but we still have to remember when we're sitting in the stands or standing behind the bench that the game has changed. There may be a period of adjustment and it may look a little bit different than we're used to but remember the driving force behind these changes – skill development and our children's safety.

The next time you're tempted to yell out at the referee suggesting they've made the wrong call, take a breath and think about it. Remember, that referee is someone from your community who loves the game so much they voluntarily signed up to get yelled at for a couple of hours out of their day just to be around it.

I would also wager they know the rules full well and if they did make a mistake, hey, they're human, too. We owe it to our kids and the game to get on board and do our part in supporting this transition. ☆

COACH OF THE MONTH



DUSTIN TIMM

Age 33

Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Tampa Bay Lightning coach Jon Cooper once said the secret to coaching success is having a understanding wife, a loyal dog and a great goalie. Dustin Timm has the first two and he's working to develop the final piece of the puzzle.

As hockey director for the Cedar Rapids Youth Hockey Association and assistant coach of the USHL team, Timm works tirelessly to develop a hockey culture that is the envy of the junior hockey circuit.

A native of Davis, Calif., Timm developed a passion for the game in roller hockey before transitioning to the ice. Over the years he has worn just about every hat in the business as his passion for the game has grown.

"I've been fortunate enough to be with the RoughRider program. They've given me a lot of opportunities in different positions to develop as a person, a leader and a coach," he said.

The culture created in Cedar Rapids starts at the top with team owner, Jeff Jauch, and GM and head coach Mark Carlson, and runs throughout the organization.

"Everyone's bought in and sees the vision. Just having a great group of people that we work with every day," Timm said, "that's what makes me keep coming back to the rink."