



Ken Reinhard

Referee in Chief, Rocky Mountain District
4663 Sidonia Court, Fort Worth, TX 76126
Cell: 817 994 7818 email:ken@kkjreinhard.net

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To: Reggie Hall, Randy Kanai, Tim Reckell, Kathleen Smith, Steven Thompson, John Heinrich

cc: Chris Kenney, T.C. Lewis, Mark Servaes, Geoff Pashkowski, Steve Henderson, Ron Groothedde, Brett Campbell, Bobby Noyes, Jim McKenna, Bryan Eisentraut, Kelly Colyer, Bob Williams, Daryl Henley

RE: Protective Equipment

This past weekend in Dallas there was a tournament involving Tier I teams from within and outside of our district. The issue of protective equipment and the referee's responsibility reared its ugly head again. With State, District and National tournaments closing in on us, I thought it best to review the protective equipment requirements for youth players as they relate to helmets, facial protection and mouth guards. I want to be proactive and head off any issues.

PLAYER HELMETS- All helmets must be H.E.C.C approved and have a current validation sticker affixed to them. All helmets must have ear protection in place. These are "plastic" type covers that protect the ears. All helmets must have chin straps. A chin strap is not tape, string or any other type of "lanyard" material. Chin straps must be properly fastened. Properly fastened means buckled/snapped to the ear loops of the helmet and snug. Snug is defined as not more than 2 fingers of gap between the chin and the strap. USA Hockey has no specific rule on this measurement, however the intent is to wear the helmet properly and securely. A chin strap hanging down will not secure the helmet to the player's head and places the player at risk.

PLAYER FACEMASKS- All facemasks must be H.E.C.C. approved and attached to the helmet with all manufacturer's provided clips and mounting hardware. No alteration of the facemask is permitted (i.e. cutting out bars, removing the chin cup, etc.) Altered equipment is illegal equipment.

An image of an approved helmet follows on the last page.

GOALKEEPERS HEADGEAR & FACEMASK – Goalkeeper’s headgear and facemasks must be H.E.C.C. approved. The helmet and facemask carry separate approvals. Form fitting facemasks are not approved. The issue that generates the most discussion is the Cat’s Eye goalkeeper’s mask. There is an H.E.C.C. approved version and pro style version that is NOT approved. The key test is if you can get a puck or stick blade through the any holes, it is not an approved mask. Goalkeepers are also required to have a chin strap and it be properly buckled/snapped.

An image of a goalkeeper headgear follows on the last page.

MOUTH GUARDS – All players (including goalkeepers) from 12U -18U boys and 12U -19U girls are required to wear a COLORED (no clear) internal mouthpiece that covers all the remaining teeth of one jaw.

A few comments if I may. With regards to goalkeepers facemasks. When we find the Pro Style Cat’s Eye mask, we usually get excuses like “ I’ve played with it all year and no one has said anything”, “ I didn’t know this was illegal” , “ It had a H.E.C.C. sticker when I bought it”, or the best one I heard last week “ The officials in XXXXX said it was OK”, etc.. The officials can’t address those things, so that is not going to make the problem go away. The mask will be removed from the game. The other elephant in the room is mouth guards. Mouth guards can only be altered in such a manner to make sure they fit properly. Mouth guards chewed down to flat pieces of plastic, cut down to the point they don’t resemble mouth guards are going to draw attention; particularly when a player is arguing a call or wearing it like hood ornament on his/her facemask. Wearing the mouth guard means in the mouth while on the ice, including through the line changes. Also, the excuse for not wearing one “I got hit and it popped out” is not going to hold water. I work for the NHL off ice and sit at ice level. Those players hit harder than any youth player and their mouth guards do not “pop out” onto the ice. In order to do its job, the mouth guard needs to be fit properly. Please make sure your players and coaches understand this.

I don’t expect the officials to be the equipment police. That is to say, they are not going to line players up and check them, nor are they going to go looking for violations. It is the responsibility of every player to wear the required protective equipment and it is the coach’s responsibility to make sure the players are following the rule. If a piece of equipment is found to be illegal, the official will follow the proper procedures outlined in the rule book on how to address it. Please do not put the officials in this position. Trust me, they don’t want this on their plate as much as a coach or player doesn’t want it called.

Let’s have a great championship season and if there are any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,

Ken Reinhard

H.E.C.C. Approved Players Helmet



Goalkeeper's Headgear



Note the difference in the eye holes between the certified version and non certified version. The certified version has more closed spacing