

OYHA Equal Playing Time Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this document is to establish the Ozaukee Youth Hockey Association (OYHA) policy for equal playing time for all players and to outline how the association feels this should be implemented by our coaches so they may better plan for their season.

Overall Playing Time

Focus should be on long term player development and building confidence. Shortening the bench does not accomplish either goal, so it is OYHA's policy to do everything possible to provide equal playing time for all players at all levels of competition.

While there may be occasions when certain players may get more ice time in a particular game and it is unreasonable to expect that every player's time is equal down to the last second, coaches should make every effort to balance that over the course of the season.

Playing Time Differences By Position

In the game of hockey, it is not possible to balance the playing time across all positions. A defensive player is likely to get more minutes than a winger and of course the goalie will be on the ice more than any other player.

These differences by position will balance out in different ways at different levels.

10U (SQUIRT): Players should get a chance to play ALL positions (with the possible exception of goalie) through the course of the season. This should balance the times effectively.

12U (PEE WEE): Players should still be rotating positions but as players start to define themselves as a forward or a defensive player, the differences in ice time will be balanced out by the amount of "touches" a player typically gets by position. For example, a forward is likely to get more puck possession than a defensive player despite possibly getting fewer shifts overall.

14U (BANTAM): While positions should never be locked in, typically by 14U, players have found their preferred positions. Again, this will be balanced by the amount of puck possession.

Short Shifting

OYHA does not allow a coach to "short shift" a player. "Short shifting" is defined as cutting the amount of time a certain player or a certain line plays when compared to other lines or players. While not all shifts will be equal, a coach should not intentionally cut a shift short in order to give more time to players he feels have a higher skill level. The expectation of OYHA is that coaches will roll their bench, giving all lines playing time.

Odd Numbers

In a perfect world, every team would have just the right number to fill their lines. However, this isn't always going to happen. When a coach is faced with an odd number of forwards or defensive players, he or she must do their best to adjust through the season to make sure every player gets a chance to be on the short lines and takes their turn on the long lines.

For example, if a coach has an extra forward, and must run two full lines plus one, he or she must make sure that the same kids are not always on the long line. An easy way to do this is to have the extra forward rotate from wing, to center, to the opposite wing each period. Or if the coach prefers, he or she can simply keep track from game to game and make sure it balances out by the end of the season.

Put another way, it is *not* acceptable to place your weaker player on the long line to minimize his or her ice time.

Coaches and parents should put development ahead of short term winning in youth hockey games. Remember, these games are for the player's development, not for the adult's satisfaction. Players do not rise to the occasion; they fall to the level of their training. So make sure every player gets a high level of training and equal playing time.

Acceptable Game Situations Where Ice Time Might Be Uneven

Penalties: Obviously if a player serves a penalty, it will affect his or her ice time. In addition, it is possible that this might also briefly affect the time for that player's linemates.

Penalty Kill or Power Play: OYHA does not encourage the use of specialty lines, particularly at lower age groups, however if a coach feels the need to put together a group for this purpose, it is important that he or she balances that out over the course of the season.

This is not an exhaustive list and this is at the discretion of the coach as long as he or she ensures that the playing time over the course of a season is equally distributed.

Benching A Player For Disciplinary Purposes

Restricting a player's ice time should be a last resort, however, the OYHA does support a coach benching a player for a short period in the following instances:

- As discipline for disruptive behaviour at practice (see also Sample Team Rules on ozaukee hockey.com)
- As support for parental discipline
- As discipline for unsportsmanlike or dangerous behavior on or off the ice
- For missing practice without a proper excuse

Acceptable excuses for missing practice include but are not limited to:

- Pre Excused by family event
- Pre Excused faith or school event
- Illness
- School work

Benching a player for disciplinary purposes should **only** be done after the parents have been informed about team rules and both the player and parent should be informed well in advance of the consequences.

Disciplinary measures should be handed out equally to all players regardless of the player's skill or value to the team. For example, a goalie should not be allowed to play after breaking team rules just because he or she is difficult to replace.

Concerns About Playing Time

If a player or family has concerns about playing time, the issue should first be addressed with the coach. The coach may have a season plan that has not been communicated to players or families. If the concern persists or the player or family feels playing time is an issue the HDC level rep should be contacted. HDC level reps can be found at ozaukee hockey.com. The HDC level rep will be able to help the player, family, and coach navigate the playing time issues.

Consequences

If a coach is found to be short shifting players or violating the Equal Playing Time policy that coach may be removed from coaching the team. OYHA is committed to the development of all skaters and therefore has a zero tolerance policy for players not being treated equally. A coach would be removed after an investigation, and recommendation from the HDC to OYHA Committee.