

Hockey talk: the conversation continues with a referee's perspective

Local referee Chris Reed has been a hockey player, coach, is a hockey parent, a referee and has witnessed hockey from every aspect. He has also witnessed a tremendous change over the years in every community involving hockey parents, hockey players, coaches, their relationships with referees as they continue to deteriorate and he feels it profoundly.

Noting the situation is not exclusively a problem that only Shelburne suffers from, Reed hopes for a brighter future in all arenas encapsulating an environment where kids can be provided with positive examples of behavior and role models to guide them to a bright future whether that is in hockey or not.

From a referee's perspective, Reed knows there are a few things parents in the stands and coaches do not see on the ice. 'I'm more than comfortable to admit I made a mistake on a call. Things happen much quicker on the ice than in the stands or on the bench,' explained Reed.

As most Police officers will tell you, witnesses to a crime rarely experience the identical information when they relate the experience and hockey video clips have confirmed many times people 'were so sure' of what they saw and then find they have to admit, it never happened or it happened completely differently to what they thought they saw.

Reed continued, 'How parents and coaches react to questionable situations filters right down to the kids on the ice. The past is the past but moving forward, when stuff happens, people need to take a step back and look at the big picture. Over reacting sends the wrong message to our kids.'

Behavior is learned and Reed has seen this happen as he hears parents yelling and swearing, name calling, followed by the young players mimicking the behaviour towards referees, noting he sees this behavior in most arenas. 'I'm not targeting individuals on the ice, it's not what we do,' Reed points out that players on the ice cannot easily be heard in the stands, 'If a kid swears at me seven games in a row, eventually that kid has to get a misconduct call. We can only call penalties that are there.'

It's a humble hope from a man who loves his community and compels Shelburne forward with his positive message, 'The future I hope for regarding parents and coaches is the setting of proper examples in terms of respect towards the game and all those involved. When things are done properly, benefits to kids are great. If parents set the right example it will transcend to the kids.'

Reed is not naive in his hopes for the future for the game of hockey, stating, 'Everyone has to work together, and with time we continue to make changes until this is no longer an issue.'

There has been a lot of feedback as a result of last week's hockey article and Shelburne might be the only place on the planet actually thinking and working on situations, reflecting and placing our youth above all else. Important to keep the dialogue going and confronting situations head on with adult, positive negotiation tactics is long overdue.

A mysterious phenomena that for some, simply entering an arena gives them licence within a subculture where unacceptable behavior anywhere else, is allowed in an arena, creates a strange set of circumstances where even they would admit they are not 'like that' anywhere else. Case in point: If a cashier in a busy grocery store makes an error at the till, it is rare that cashier would face the wrath equal to that of an incensed hockey parent, coach or fan. The entire idea is ridiculous especially if our children are present. Logically, the incident could be rectified, and so why shouldn't a referee be extended the same courtesy especially as the children of our nation watch on?

As a person who grew up in a hockey family and community, I am not new- to any of it. As a parent who raised kids in baseball, basketball, soccer, and having played many sports myself, I highly recommend the following advice:

'Life happens. When life happens to you, things are out of your control. How you choose to behave and react when life happens to you is entirely within your control, and life will undoubtedly happen again.'

By Alex Sher