

USA Hockey Zero Tolerance
Verbal and Physical Abuse of Officials
Inappropriate Spectator Behavior

Why Zero Tolerance?

Recently, several negative aspects of today's society have crept into the sport of ice hockey with a vengeance. The increasing number of physical assaults against on-ice officials reached staggering proportions during the past season. There were over 75 reported incidents of direct physical confrontations from a player, coach, or spectator in amateur hockey. These assaults have occurred at all levels of our game.

As a result of the alarming number of physical assaults against officials, the USA Hockey Board of Directors has developed a Zero Tolerance Policy regarding the verbal abuse of officials and inappropriate spectator behavior. Verbal abuse of officials is the first step leading to physical abuse of officials. This Zero Tolerance Policy has been unanimously endorsed by the Youth, Junior, and Senior Councils, the District Referees-In-Chief, and the Coaching Education Program Directors for immediate implementation have unanimously endorsed this Zero Tolerance Policy.

To make ice hockey a more desirable and rewarding experience for all participants, the USA Hockey Board of Directors has instructed the Officiating Program to adhere to certain points of emphasis relating to sportsmanship. These points were written and implemented to maintain a sportsmanlike and educational atmosphere before, during and after all USA Hockey sanctioned games.

What is Zero Tolerance?

Players

A minor penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct (Zero Tolerance) shall be assessed whenever a player:

- 1) Openly disputes or argues about any decision by an Official.
- 2) Uses obscene or vulgar language, including swearing, in a boisterous manner to anyone at any time, even if it is not directed at any particular person.
- 3) Visually demonstrates any sign of dissatisfaction with any Official's decision, in a manner that openly embarrasses the Official and/or challenges his judgement.

Any time that any player persists in any of these actions, he/she shall be assessed a Misconduct Penalty. A Game Misconduct shall result if such player continues.

Coaches

A Bench Minor penalty for unsportsmanlike conduct (Zero Tolerance) shall be assessed whenever a coach:

- 1) Openly disputes or argues about any decision by an Official.
- 2) Uses obscene or vulgar language in a boisterous manner to anyone at any time.
- 3) Visually displays any sign of dissatisfaction with an Official's decision, in a manner that openly embarrasses the Official and/or challenges his judgement. This includes standing on the boards or standing in the bench doorway with the intent of inciting the Officials, players, or spectators.

Any time that a Coach persists in any of these actions, he/she shall be assessed a Game Misconduct Penalty.

Officials

Officials must apply these guidelines in a realistic manner and must be careful not to get overly technical in their enforcement. This policy is designed to eliminate direct confrontations with Officials while still allowing players and coaches an avenue to communicate in a calm and reasonable fashion.

Officials are required to conduct themselves in a businesslike, sportsmanlike, and non-vindictive manner at all times. The actions of an Official must be above reproach. Actions such as “baiting” or inciting players or coaches is strictly prohibited.

On-ice officials are ambassadors of the game and shall always conduct themselves with this responsibility in mind.

Spectators

On-ice officials will stop the game when the parents/spectators displaying inappropriate and disruptive behavior interfere with other spectators or participants of the game. The on-ice officials will identify violators to the coaches for the purpose of removing parents/spectators from the spectators viewing and game area. Once removed, play will resume. Lost time will not be replaced and violators may be subject to further disciplinary action by the local governing body. This inappropriate and disruptive behavior shall include:

- 1) Using obscene or vulgar language in a boisterous manner to anyone at any time.
- 2) Taunting players, coaches, officials or other spectators by means of baiting, ridiculing, threatening physical violence, or physical violence.
- 3) Throwing any object in the spectators viewing area, players’ bench, penalty box, or the on-ice surface, that in any manner creates a safety hazard.

Any violators will be escorted from the facility and not allowed to return until the next day.