

January 8, 2020

TO: The Atlanta hockey community at large, officials, players, parents, and coaches.

RE: Bring Civility Back to the Game...We need your help.

What would you do if you were yelled at, cursed at, threatened with physical harm, spit at, pushed and had items thrown directly at you, sometimes hitting you with a force that cuts or bruises you? What if that place was your workplace? Would you return to that toxic environment tomorrow, the next day, or the day after that?

My guess would be a resounding NO.

Welcome to the work environment for the diminishing number of officials who choose to step into the role as the arbiter of a sporting event. As a 37-year veteran ice hockey official with more than a few thousand games behind me, I can tell you that I've had good games and bad games. I've said a few things I wish I could take back. I've made plenty of mistakes and for some strange reason, I continue to accept game assignments and to try to do the best job I can each and every time I step on the ice.

Like you, I watch sports on TV with the instantaneous super slow-motion replay and panel of experts behind the scenes. And sometimes, even they cannot always agree on the call. At this level, there is a lot of money on the line but in the end, one team will win and the other will lose and life goes on.

Officiating has never been easy, but over the past few years, things seem to have gotten out of hand. We are expected to be perfect, to explain and justify each and every call, and perform as if we have access to five different angles on each play and the slow-motion replay.

Recently the shouting, screaming, cursing, and derision from the parents directed at the officials have escalated. Much of this comes from not knowing the rules or being privy to the discussion between the coaches and officials, and the screaming parents in the stands are not helping anyone. The coaches and officials will not always agree, but the game goes on regardless.

Let's bring civility back to the game and maybe teach the kids a lesson in agreeing to disagree. It might help all concerned if you download the [USA Hockey Rule Book](#) and take a look at the USA Hockey Code of Conduct addressing players, parents, coaches, officials, and administrators. This can be found in the preface of the rule book on page xvi.

So, here we are at the amateur level of youth hockey with young impressionable minds watching and absorbing everything that goes on around them. They are learning by watching how "adults" communicate under stress, how their parents behave before, during, and after the

game. I know that the screaming and yelling behavior comes from a very small minority. It not only affects the game, but it is also creating a crisis in officiating.

Working in this type of environment makes it difficult to attract and retain new and younger officials. These are the ones that we need for the future of the sport.

How can you help?

- Walk a mile in my shoes. Before you yell, curse or threaten an official, think about the lessons you are teaching the kids on and off the ice. Let's bring civility back to the game.
- Maybe you are ready to step up and become an ice hockey official. We will welcome you with open arms. [Click to email the GIHOA Recruitment Team and let's get started](#)
- Maybe you know someone who is ready to step up and become an ice hockey official, just let us know. [Click to email the GIHOA Recruitment Team and let's get started](#)
- Maybe your son or daughter is ready to wear the stripes. It's a part-time job that they can take with them when they go off to college, and it keeps them in the game. [Click to email the GIHOA Recruitment Team and let's get started](#)

Ice Hockey is a physical sport where emotions run high amongst everyone involved (parents, players, coaches, and officials). Let's work together to keep this sport safe and fun for all involved.

1. Free USA Hockey mobile Rules App for [iOS](#) and [Android](#). Get it and study it.
2. USA Hockey Rules: [USA Hockey Rules and Resources](#)
3. USA Hockey Video: [Declaration of Player Safety, Fair Play & Respect](#)
4. USA Hockey's Codes of Conduct (Player, Parent, Coach, Official, and Adfministator) can be found in the Preface of the Rule Book (page xvi)

Regards,

Jim Hogan
USA Hockey Official
Georgia Ice Hockey Officials Association Board Member