

ANTIGO YOUTH HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
FAIR ICE POLICY
Adopted 9/06

The AAYHA supports fair ice time for all players. Coaches are encouraged to use their best efforts to give ice time fairly.

Meaning of “Fair Ice”

“Fair ice” does not mean “equal ice” in each game. The flow of the game, penalties, power play’s and penalty killing may occasionally result in unequal playing times in a particular game. In addition, some teams may carry two lines of defense and three lines of forwards that will obviously result in different playing times between defensemen and forwards. Further, coaches may choose to use certain players during the last few minutes of a close game to give the team its best chance to win. This could result in some players finishing the game with more ice time than other players. On the other hand, coaches are encouraged to fully use all players. Use of all players in “specialty” situations (e.g. power play’s, penalty killing, etc.) develops AAYHA players and is strongly encouraged. For these reasons, ice time may not be equal in each and every game, but should be roughly equal over the course of the season.

Level of Play:

The level that a team plays may also have an impact upon playing time. “Mite” level teams should have nearly equal ice times among all players. On the other hand, “Midget” level teams may be in more games where ice times differs among players and may require the stronger players on the ice more at end of some games. However, even among the older teams, the goal remains to give all players roughly equal amount of ice and a variety of game experiences, taking into account the competitive nature of play.

Motivation/Discipline:

Motivation and discipline may also affect ice time. Coaches may use a player’s ice time as a motivation/disciplinary tool, either for violations of team rules, repeated failures to follow directions or lack of “hustle” during a game. When this occurs, the coach should explain to the player how he/she failed to meet the coach’s expectations and the impact that this will have on the player’s ice time. As is always the case, motivational/disciplinary actions should be applied consistently and without reward to the perceived “importance” of a player to a team. A coach at his or her discretion

may suspend a player for up to one game. However, any such disciplinary action by the coach beyond one game must be approved by the AAYHA board.

Goalies

In general, the “fair ice” policy applies to goalies. However, it is left to the coaches to decide how to rotate goalies on teams with more than one. Coaches may choose to play both goalies in one game. The coach may also choose to play goalies game-by-game. In the latter situations, coaches are not required to play goalies in alternating games. Coaches may choose to play a goalie in consecutive games so long as the games played during the course of the season roughly even out between the goalies. This is not considered disciplinary action, as discussed above, and will not normally involve the AAYHA Board.

Policy Discussion:

The AAYHA purpose is to promote the enjoyment, recreational and competitive benefits of youth hockey. It is also our organization’s goal to develop hockey players. We believe that these goals are best accomplished with a “fair ice” policy.

The AAYHA have teams at varying levels within each age group. The team selection process is intended to place players on teams appropriate for the skill levels and with players of roughly equal capabilities. If a player is good enough to be selected for a particular AAYHA team, then that player is generally good enough to receive a fair share of ice time on that team.

“Fair ice” time should not be confused with “equal ice” time. Coaches are not expected to “count minutes” during a game to ensure equal ice time for all players. Coaches are generally expected to run through their lines in a consistent manner. The flow of a game may cause some lines to play longer shifts on occasion. Further, penalties, power plays and penalty killing may impact ice time. However, these factors should tend to even out during the course of the season.

While the AAYHA do not believe in a “win-at-all cost” approach, winning is important to the organization, the team and the players. Further, each player on a team has strengths and weaknesses. For that reason, coaches may choose to use the players who give the team the best chance to win in the last few minutes of the game. This decision should not be automatic and should be based upon particular game situations. For example, if a team is ahead by a goal with two minutes to play,

the coach may decide to put his/her better defensive players on the ice. In the next game, if the team is behind by a goal in the last two minutes of play, the coach may decide to put his/her better offensive players into the game. However, in the end, the decision is left to the coach following the guidelines of this policy.

Different levels of play require different views of what constitutes “fair ice.” As general rule, the younger the players, the less reason there is for differences in ice time. At older levels, there may be more game situations requiring certain players to be on the ice more of the time in some games. All coaches, players and parent’s want their team’s to win. However, this must be balanced with goal of developing hockey players.

Ice time is often a great motivator for players. Coaches are free to fairly use ice time as motivational/disciplinary tool for their players. Sitting a shift, a period or even a game is within the coach’s discretion. The reason for the action and the coach’s expectations should be explained to the player at that time. However, use of loss of playing time as a motivational/disciplinary tool should be applied fairly and consistently. Repetitive problems and resulting loss of ice time should be discussed with the parents. However, any loss of ice time beyond one entire game indicates a more serious problem. AAYHA policy requires that any suspension of a player by a coach longer than one game must be approved by the AAYHA board.

It should also be noted that playing time for goalies is obviously different from “skaters”. Coaches sometimes split a game between goalies. Coaches sometimes play goalies in alternating games. Some coaches play the less experienced goalie against weaker teams. It is up to the coach to decide the proper goalie rotation. However, the concept of “fair ice” still applies to goalies. Coaches should still attempt to balance out the playing time between the goalies. Goalies may miss consecutive games without it being considered a “suspension.” On the other hand, goalies are subject to disciplinary and motivational actions as well. If a goalie does miss more than one game as a result of such action by the coach, AAYHA board approval is still required.