



USA HOCKEY

CROSS-ICE OFFICIATING GUIDE

October 2010

Introduction

The American Development Model (ADM) provides age-appropriate guidelines and curriculum to hockey associations across America to help more kids play, love and excel in hockey. And, if it is good for the game, it should be good for officials, as well.

One commonly asked question is where do the officials fit into the American Development Model, especially in the younger age groups where newer officials often gained valuable experience? The answer to that question is the officials can play an integral role and with the proper guidance are a part of the game that can grow and prosper within the ADM. This guide is designed to provide valuable information to both local officials' groups and youth hockey organizations to best work together for a common goal – creating a positive environment for all participants to enjoy the game of hockey.

Overview

This Officiating Guide is not a mandate to use officials during cross-ice games played through the Red, White and Blue Hockey Program. Ultimately, it is still up to the youth hockey organization and the coaches involved to do what they feel is best for their program within the ADM framework whether that includes using officials for **8U cross-ice games** or using the coaches as 'refs'. **Either is acceptable.** For those associations that want to work together with local officials' to invest in the future of officiating in their respective area, this Guide will provide them with the information and resources to successfully do so.

The use of an official is not something that has to be an entire season thing, either. A youth hockey organization may decide to add a little spice to the program for the second half of the season or maybe only use officials for their game days occurring on weekends. Since it is not a mandated practice, there is no right or wrong way to incorporate officials into a program.

Benefits of Using an Official for Cross-Ice Games

For the officials, the benefits are numerous and will play a critical role in the future development of younger officials. Having a younger official skate during the designated game days provides a valuable opportunity for these newer officials to put on their sweater, pick up their whistle and go out and learn some basics of officiating in a positive atmosphere.

They will drop some pucks, work on their skating skills, learn to position themselves out of the way of play while establishing the best possible view of the play and make some minor decisions (goals, etc.) that will give them confidence and experience they can't get at a seminar.

This format also provides an excellent opportunity for a more experienced official to mentor the new official and assist them in honing their skills while either skating with them on the ice or watching from the stands and talking after the game. Most importantly, the official will have fun while preparing to advance to full ice games with more confidence and better skills.

On the player side of things, having an official on the ice for the cross-ice game will give the feel to both the players and the parents that a real game is taking place. The coaches will be able to focus on working with the players to promote skills and having fun. It is also an investment in the future as the officials who participate in this environment will be better equipped to have success down the road at higher levels.

One concern is the belief that having an official on the ice will mean more structure that will partially diminish what the cross-ice game is meant to accomplish. Whereas the potential does exist for a more structured environment, you will notice in the procedures portion of this Guide that this does not have to be the case and, in fact, the main objective will always be to get the kids playing and having fun as quickly as possible.

The purpose of the official on the ice is not to create more stoppages or structure, but instead to provide them with an opportunity to hone some positioning and skating skills. The flexibility as to the logistics of the game still exists and it is imperative that the coaches outline the desired protocol with the officials prior to the game or season. The intent is for the officials to go with the flow in this regard.

The second concern involves payment of the officials and this is something that also calls for common sense and flexibility. Each situation may be different and there is no mandate or set fees that must be paid – this is something that should be worked out between the officials' group and youth organization prior to the season. Regardless, it should not be a cost prohibitive venture to pay a nominal fee to the official and chances are it is a cost the youth hockey organization can easily absorb or share with the officials' group.

Officiating Procedures for Cross-Ice Games

Once again, flexibility is the key word here and this section will attempt to present several different ways to manage a game that are commonly used. There is no absolute right way to handle every possible scenario and as long as the official knows what the expected protocol is prior to the game, it should not be a problem to adjust and keep the game moving.

Face-offs - In most cases, each new shift (signified by a buzzer or coach's whistle) or beginning of a period will start with a face-off in the vicinity of the center area for the space being used. As with any face-off in these games, the most important thing is to get the puck in play as quickly as possible. The coaches should be hustling the players into the face-off area and as soon as one player from each team are ready to face-off,

drop the puck and let them go. The position of the other players not facing off is not critical.

If the game protocol (which will be decided by the coaches as to whether face offs are used or whether the ref/coach just introduces a “new puck” after goals or frozen pucks) calls for face-offs after other stoppages a similar process shall take place in the designated area with an emphasis on getting the puck in play as quickly as possible.

Goals – When the puck enters the goal, the officials can simply signal a goal and work to get play going again quickly. In some scenarios, the coaches will want a center face-off after a goal while in other cases the official may simply throw a puck off to the side and allow the kids to play. There is no recording of who scored or any other statistics that are necessary.

Frozen pucks – When play needs to be stopped for a goalkeeper freezing the puck, for a player falling on the puck, the puck is frozen along the boards or the puck leaves the playing area, the official can either conduct a face-off in a designated area or can throw another puck off to the side to allow play to continue. This determination should be made by the coaches as to how they want things handled prior to the game.

The official should always carry multiple pucks with them during the game that they can use to get play going again quickly. There should not be any delay in the game while the official goes to retrieve a puck. Either use a new puck to conduct a face-off or throw one into play and then retrieve the original puck at a convenient time while play is going.

Penalties – Very seldom will there be a situation that occurs that require the official to stop play for a penalty. When minor infractions occur, allow play to continue and the coach is more than likely going to address the action with the player during the next shift change. For a more severe infraction that involves an injury potential action, the official may stop play to quickly assess the penalty and then allow the coach to address the player regarding the action while the official gets the puck back in play.

Keep in mind, coaches will also likely be on the ice during these games and working with players. If a player gets injured, allow play to continue unless a dangerous situation exists with play around the injured player. A coach will likely skate to the player who is on the ice and assist him/her in getting back into the play or onto the bench for a change.

Positioning – The fundamental positioning principles outlined in the Basic Officiating Manual should be followed during these cross-ice games with the only differences being a smaller ice surface and no distinct ice markings.

After a face-off, the official should check in both directions and then backward c-cut away from the face-off location to the referee skating lane along the edge of the ice surface (may be boards or may be rink dividers). As play moves up and down the ice, the official will follow play roughly 10-15 feet behind in the referee skating lane. If play

is on the same side of the ice, the official should be closer to the boards or dividers. When play is on the opposite side of the ice, the officials can come off the boards 10-15 feet in order to be closer to the play and establish a presence.

Just as in a game on a full sheet of ice, the official should hustle to get to the goal line as play converges on the goal and then work the goal line area based on the location of the play to establish the best possible field of vision and also stay out of play. The official should always strive to keep all players in front of him/her at all times and also move closer to the goal in scoring situations to get the best possible view as to whether a goal is scored or the puck is frozen.

The primary positioning focus for the official in the cross-ice game is to stay out of the play and to maximize their field of vision. The level of play should be conducive for the official to get a feel for play and proper positioning provided they work hard and are always hustling. Each official working the cross-ice game are reminded to review the Basic Manual for the fundamentals of positioning and follow the procedures outlined.

Conclusion

The American Development Model provides a great opportunity for younger officials to get their feet wet officiating in a positive atmosphere and can also create a better environment in which the kids play the game. Youth hockey organizations are encouraged to work with local officials' groups to create an environment where opportunities are provided for officials to develop their skills at the same time players are doing so. Most importantly, in working together, both players and officials can have fun with hockey and foster a lifetime enjoyment of the game.

Here are some key points to remember about the Red, White and Blue Hockey Program that coaches, parents and officials should keep in mind:

- At 8U, the primary focus of cross-ice games is a FUN and an age appropriate competitive environment. Coaches, parents, and officials are jointly responsible for ensuring this positive environment exists for players.
- Activity at this age, players moving their feet and handling pucks, is paramount to the player's development and enjoyment of the game. As such, limited stoppages in play are keys in allowing the players to be skating for the better part of every shift. Keep the players moving!
- Rarely will there be a reason for an official to call a penalty and stop play. In most instances if an infraction occurs, allow the play to continue and expect the coaches to use the situation as a teaching opportunity either on the spot or when the player changes.
- Have FUN, keep the players moving and Red, White and Blue Hockey will be a fantastic experience for all involved.

For more on Red, White & Blue Hockey visit ADMKIDS.COM