

Be A PLUS

Hockey has a very telling statistic, the infamous plus/minus rating. It's simple, really – if a player is on the ice when his/her team scores, the player gets a 'plus'; conversely, if a player is on the ice when his/her team gives up a goal, the player gets a 'minus'. Generally speaking, the players with the highest plus/minus ratings are most always the best all-around, two-way players. The teams with the highest plus/minus rating are always among the elite.

Where would we be in the ratings if we had a 'plus/minus' rating for parents? What if, for every positive contribution made by a parent to their team or association as a whole, a 'plus' was given? An hour of time volunteered to help meet a needed task; a word of praise or encouragement or thanks to a deserving player, coach, referee or volunteer.

What if, for every negative detraction a parent unnecessarily burdens their team or association with, a 'minus' is given? A vulgarity screamed at a player, coach, referee or volunteer; a back-stabbing cut or a gaggle of groundless gossip; a self-centered stance without regard for how it affects others in the 'ripple' so often created.

No doubt, many in our association would be highly rated in such a plus/minus ranking. But to achieve greater success as an association, to better develop our youths' hockey skills and life skills in a positive, enjoyable environment, we would all do well to raise our plus/minus ratings this year.

Ever wonder how more than 400 players get put on teams where their skills are best suited for competitive challenges and opportunities for development? Countless hours are spent by volunteer evaluators, volunteer coaches, volunteer level coordinators, a volunteer tryout director and volunteer hockey operations directors. Is the tryout process perfect? Of course not! Can the tryout process get better? You bet! But, with very few exceptions, players find themselves on the right team. For those who help make tryouts as good as they are, a most heart-felt thanks. For those who have suggestions and ideas to make tryouts better, please come forward and help make things better for future tryouts. We welcome your input and contributions.

Ever wonder how hundreds of hours of ice time are allocated to 6 bantam teams, 2 U14 girls team, 3 peewee teams, 2 U12 girls teams, 4 squirt teams, 1 U10 team and 12+ mite teams? Again, countless hours are spent by an ice coordinator, girls' hockey director, mite directors and other volunteers to see that all teams are treated fairly, early and late hours are spread evenly and our wonderful ice facility is properly utilized. The Herculean effort requires coordination with District 3, coordination with tournaments, coordination with High School games and practices, and coordination with outside events and activities. Even now we are still working to schedule remaining practices because we have not yet received the game times from District 3. Is it perfect? Sorry, but no. Can it get better? Sure. But please recognize the selfless effort and outstanding job being done by those dedicated volunteers who have given so much of their time and talent for the benefit of so many. Better yet, bring your ideas and expertise and help coordinate ice time for the future.

Ever wonder how 400+ players, 75+ coaches and 25+ teams are registered with USA Hockey? While some complain about having to stop in for registration, hundreds of hours are spent by the registrar to ensure all of the necessary team rosters, coach certifications, background forms, medical waivers, insurance coverage and other paperwork is in place for the season. Is it inconvenient to take an hour or so out of our busy schedules for registrations? Some would say, YES. Have you thanked those who have taken geometrically greater amounts of time to accomplish these necessary tasks? Let's hope so. Better yet, volunteer to help going forward.

Ever wonder how tryout numbers get handed out or Pirate gear gets ordered, set up and sold, or how fundraisers get organized to help keep the already high costs of hockey down? Ever wonder how our gambling operations are run? These and many other unsung contributions are made by dedicated members of the hockey board. If you know of a better way to raise money or a better way to help out, please share your thoughts and your time.

Ever wonder how the pre-season clinics get organized and staffed to get players ready for the pre-season tryouts or how the goalie clinics get organized and scheduled to help develop hockey skills during the season? The ACE director and goalie director work to arrange ice time and instructors to put on the clinics for the benefit of our youth players. Didn't like a drill? Clinics too long or too short, or too many or too few? Bring your ideas and your suggestions and let's make the clinics even better.

Ever wonder how NMYHA tournaments get scheduled, teams get recruited to play, referees get scheduled and EMT's are found? Ever wonder how hundreds of hours of concession stand duties are scheduled, how food get ordered and stocked, how cash gets taken to the bank? Through the dedicated and sometimes frustrating efforts of tournament directors, concession and cash directors. Significant profits are made and reinvested into reducing costs and into hockey development for your children. Have you volunteered to help out at a tournament or to pick up a couple extra concession stand hours? While we all have other things to do, the intrinsic rewards of helping reap untold benefits.

Ever wonder how the website gets information to keep the association well informed? The communications director and the marketing director work hard to get the information needed and wanted by parents and players out in a timely and accurate fashion. Are there delays and bloopers from time to time? Just like the journalists who are paid, the volunteers are not without errors. Overall, however, the association and the teams have immediate access to the website containing a myriad of information from ice schedules to meeting schedules to clinic schedules to points of general information. Want to make it better? Bring or journalistic talents and write an article for the website.

And so it goes if one thinks about all that needs to be done to make for a successful hockey association and an enjoyable hockey season.

The equipment director spends countless hours juggling jerseys, medical kits, puck bags and water bottles to see that our teams are properly equipped. Did you and will you return your jerseys, clean and on time... and with a smile?

The sponsorship director spends hundreds of hours shaking the trees for donations to help subsidize the costs of hockey. Do you patronize our sponsors? Do you say thank you for their support? Do you know someone or some company who would help sponsor a NMYHA team this season?

Over the years, the mite directors have organized the mite roundups, the mite jamborees and the mite coaches to make our mite program the envy of other associations and one of the best mite programs in the state.

By and large, we are very fortunate as an association. We have a beautiful facility in the CAC. We have a most talented and special group of youth hockey players. We have worked hard to better coach our coaches. We have worked hard to develop our hockey skills through pre-season and in-season clinics. The season of hockey ahead of us is full of opportunity. How unfortunate it would be not to make the best of it. Give a helping hand when needed or asked. Offer a kind word or sincere thank you when deserved. Be part of the solution, not the problem, when confronted.

Be a 'plus' and this will be the best year ever, individually and collectively, for you, for the players and for NMYHA. Board meetings are held the 1st Wednesday of each month. See you there!

Your NMYHA Board

By Mark Lange,
Bantam A Head Coach & Hockey Operations Director