



## **Important Notice to All KTMHA/SMHA/NKMHA (“Association”) Members, Coaches and Players: Code of Conduct Reminder (Respect for Officials)**

With playoffs beginning in the New Year and emotions running high, some folks appear to be forgetting that minor hockey is a game involving children and that first and foremost, the Ontario Minor Hockey Association Code of Conduct requires all spectators, bench staff, parents and players to treat all Officials (i.e. Referees and Timekeepers) with respect.

In recent weeks concerns have arisen regarding inappropriate behaviour and verbal abuse towards our Referees. As a reminder, all Members should be aware of and comply with the Code of Conduct set out in the Association’s Rules of Operation, which all Members are obliged to abide by as a condition of play. A copy of the Code of Conduct is available online on each Association’s website.

Given the importance of this issue, the Association is asking all coaches to review the Code of Conduct again with their bench staff, players, and parents.

The Code imposes strict requirements for all players, bench staff, parents and spectators, which obligates everyone to conduct themselves in a manner which exhibits fairness, integrity and mutual respect.

In terms of the Referees, all bench staff are required to interact with them in a positive and professional manner. Similarly, parents, players and spectators are required to respect the decisions of Referees, and not question those decisions in a rude or aggressive manner or otherwise subject Referees to verbal or physical abuse, insults, bullying, harassment, or intimidation.

All too frequently it seems, Referees in various leagues are being subjected to abuse and harassment. Recent studies have revealed that 90 per cent of Referees have been subjected to various forms of abuse, resulting in a 30 to 40 per cent annual turnover rate and a shortage of experienced Referees in many hockey associations. The problem has become so serious that some associations have had difficulty scheduling games due to an inability to find qualified Referees.

Most of our Association’s Referees are Members of King Township, Schomberg or Nobleking Minor Hockey, or are children of our Members. Many of these Referees have grown up in our community and have played hockey in our Association as children. They are your friends and neighbours and are contributing to the success of this Association and your child’s hockey career in an important way. No Referee is perfect. They cannot see everything that occurs on the ice and given the complicated rules that govern hockey and the fast pace of the game, mistakes are bound to happen. There will always be situations where “grey areas” arise when the application of a certain rule may be in question, and there is a legitimate process for protesting the decisions of Referees – by contacting the Referee in Chief.

The fact that you may not agree with a Referee’s call does not provide you with free license to yell at, threaten or publicly demean them.

This is particularly serious when adult coaches and spectators abuse younger Referees in the junior age groups like IP, Tyke, Novice and Atom. In no situation imaginable is it ever acceptable for an adult man or woman to be yelling over the glass or off the bench at a teenage Referee. In these junior divisions especially, younger less experienced Referees are learning as much about their own role as an on-ice official as the players are about basic skating and shooting.

We expect all Members to respect these Referees for the important role that they play, recognize that the younger Referees especially are learning their role and gaining valuable game experience, and ask that you treat them as if they were your own child or neighbour.

The Association stands behind its Referees 100 per cent, and will support any call they make, including decisions to eject abusive players, coaches or spectators.

All situations involving the abuse, harassment or bullying of Referees will be treated seriously and investigated by the Association, resulting in disciplinary sanctions up to including, suspension and/or revocation of Membership privileges in the Association and/or the OMHA. In extreme cases the Association reserves the right to refer a matter to the police for investigation and will not hesitate in having problem individuals banned from our arenas.

The combined KTMHA, SMHA and NKMHA Board of Directors appreciates the cooperation of all Members in ensuring that we promote and maintain a safe and respectful playing environment for everyone.

Yours truly,

Jay Rider  
Risk Management Director