



HOCKEY CALGARY

Date: May 19, 2016
To: Hockey Calgary Members
From: Kevin Kobelka – Executive Director
CC: HC Board of Directors

SUBJECT: Bantam & Midget Body Checking Decision 2016

Last season (2015-16) Hockey Calgary, in conjunction with the Operations Committee, made the decision to run a pilot program at the Bantam Age category where 'Body Checking' was not permitted within the Bantam 4 division and below. The impetus for this change was initiated based on information provided by Hockey Alberta in 2013 when the decision was made to eliminate 'Body Checking' from all divisions of the Pee Wee age category (11 & 12 year olds).

At that time there were a number of other recommendations communicated such as:

- Create an overall player safety strategy focusing on the reduction of serious injuries in the game at all levels
- Review and improve the Checking Skills program for all coaches
- **Review the removal of 'Body Checking' from Bantam and Midget non-elite streams**

In the ongoing efforts to ensure player safety and keep players in the game longer, Hockey Calgary made the decision to pilot this program. Based on the results of this pilot we are satisfied it was the right decision and therefore proposed that the Bantam program be continued, and it be expanded into Midget.

These proposals were presented to the Operations Council (presidents of all member associations within Hockey Calgary, & other key stakeholders). After lengthy deliberation these proposals were voted on for acceptance for the 2016-17 season. Based on the result of these votes the changes to the leagues within Hockey Calgary will be:

- **'Body Checking' will NOT be permitted within the Bantam 4 division & below within Hockey Calgary league, exhibition or tournament play (same as 2015-16)**
- **'Body Checking' will NOT be permitted within the Midget 5 division & below within Hockey Calgary league, exhibition or tournament play**

While this rule is not being mandated by the governing bodies of Hockey Alberta & Hockey Canada, they are supportive, and Hockey Calgary is aware of numerous other LMHA's within the province and across the country that are moving in this same direction.

Most recently Hockey Edmonton announced that they are removing Body Checking in all divisions of both Bantam and Midget below Division 2. **Therefore, all teams playing division 3**



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and below within Hockey Edmonton will be Non-Body Checking. This is a benefit to Hockey Calgary teams, as it now gives teams more opportunities for out of town exhibition games and tournaments.

Below you will find some findings from the Bantam Pilot Project & rationale for the decision.

Year 1 Review of Bantam NBC

Positive Outcomes:

- **Less Animosity within the crowd** – This cannot be said for every game, but the removal of body checking seemed to bring the tension down for the fan base. You did not hear the cat calls of ‘hit him’ and the overall demeanor of the crowd seemed to be a little more relaxed.
- **Reduction in after whistle incidents** – With the removal of body checking there were less after whistle skirmishes or incidents. Players did not appear to ‘run the pile’, and make a body check after the whistle, this brought the tension down and allowed the officials to keep the game in control and keep the flow.
- **More completed games** – HC does not officially track this stat, but in observations from those involved, League Chairs & League Governors it was determined that there was an increase in games completed ‘without drop clock’ in the Bantam 4 – 7 divisions. The reduction in penalties called, after the whistle incidents, and discussions with coaches led to there being more time on the clock to ‘play hockey’.
- **Better Game Flow** – Games observed seemed to flow better and focused more on ‘skill & creativity’ of hockey versus the ‘dump & chase’, physical side of hockey. Players seemed to have more confidence to handle and carry the puck and make good ‘hockey plays’ versus getting rid of it for fear of being punished by a much larger player.
- **Safer** – HC does not track injuries so we cannot say 100% that injuries in these division are down versus previous seasons. Anecdotally, we believe this to be the case but we cannot say for sure. What the following table does point out is that the # of ‘aggressive’ or ‘contact’ penalties is significantly reduced. Considering that the # of ‘contact’ penalties are down we feel it is safe to assume that injuries, and more importantly ‘head injuries’ are down as well.



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Seeding and League Play - Aggressive Penalties Breakdown

Divisions	Offense	2014/2015	2015/2016	Difference
Div. 4 - 7	Head Contact	600	197	-403 (-67%)
Div. 4 - 7	Roughing	355	267	-88 (-25%)
Div. 4 - 7	Cross Checking	179	129	-50 (-28%)
Div. 4 - 7	Boarding	228	28	-200(-88%)
Div. 4 - 7	Checking From Behind	77	10	-67 (-87%)
Div. 4 - 7	Charging	58	3	-55 (-95%)
Div. 4 - 7	Unsportsmanlike	106	64	-42 (-40%)
Div. 4 - 7	Body Checking	2	468	466

*Information from HC database

Other Rationale:

- Evidence suggests the inclusion of body-checking is positively correlated with a higher rate of injuries (3.35-3.75 times more), more serious injuries (3.30 times the incidence of one-week or longer recovery time), more suspensions, and poor on-ice behavior.
- Body-checking is the predominant mechanism of injury among youth hockey players at all levels of competition where it is permitted, accounting for 45% to 86% of injuries.
- The player drop-out rate increases when body-checking becomes mandatory.
- Rec Hockey Calgary has a growing waiting list and no additional capacity due to the fixed game days.
- Players at the Bantam 4/Midget 5 level and below are less likely to play Elite Hockey in the subsequent season therefore eliminating the need to develop this skill.
- Delaying body-checking until players reach Bantam does not result in a higher injury rate due to the delay, however, the evidence overwhelmingly shows a higher injury rate in body-checking hockey vs non body-checking hockey. Removing body-checking reduces injuries without an increased injury risk to players who body-check in a subsequent season.

Regards,

Kevin Kobelka
Executive Director – Hockey Calgary