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Press Box View:

Just Let Them Play

For three years I've spent a few hours each weekend freezing my butt off at local arenas during hockey season.

No matter how early in the morning, I look forward to being there. I love my children. And I love watching them play hockey. It seems so natural, such a Canadian thing to do.

Minor hockey is about learning. It's about discovering the importance of working as a team.

It's about distinguishing between winning and losing. Wining is the goal, but losing isn't the end of the world, either.

But, obviously been misguided in my wide-eyed wonder at the sight of little legs churning up and down the ice surface in Ottawa's dimly-lit igloos.

Maybe I'm wrong in expecting minor hockey is all about having fun. I've seen too many ugly incidents, too many myopic adults interfering in a kids' game.

Don't get me wrong.

Most minor hockey parents are wonderful. It's because of them the children become involved. And it'd because of them the children stay involved.

Most coaches deserve medals of valour for the crap they endure. They're volunteers who spend so much of their valuable time passing knowledge and values onto others. And most minor hockey executives have nothing but good intentions. They try to set guidelines to keep the fun in hockey, while ensuring there can be a progression of skills levels.

But, there are exceptions. Call them the buttheads. These are the minor hockey parents with their own agenda. They yell obscenities at the referees, swear a blue streak up and down the coaches and, generally, know it all.

There are the minor hockey coaches who want to win at all cost, and they have few moral values. These are the slimebuckets. And there are officials who, without shame, do what's best for themselves.

I'm beginning to think we'd be better off elimination the structure. Sent the kids out onto an outdoor rink, with just sticks and skates. No parents, no coaches. No referees. No need to keep score.

Just let them play, because isn't that what was intended for this game?

Just let them play.