



# Canadian Amateur Hockey Association Bulletin

**BULLETIN NO.:**

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## INFORMATION BULLETIN

**TO:** BRANCH PRESIDENTS  
BRANCH EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS  
BRANCH TECHNICAL DIRECTORS

**FROM:** J. McDONALD  
MANAGER, COACHING

**SUBJECT:** H.D.C. COACHING COMMITTEE - POSITION PAPER ON  
BODYCHECKING/BODY CONTACT

As per your request in the 1991 CAHA A.G.M. minutes, please find enclosed the H.D.C. Coaching Committee's position paper on the subject of Body-Checking/Contact in Minor Hockey.

On behalf of the Coaching Committee, I would ask that this paper be circulated as widely as possible in order to ensure a clear understanding of our position on this issue. This distribution may include coaches, officials and administrators of the game.

Due to staff turnover at the International Hockey Centre of Excellence, the N.C.C.P. video on "Checking" will not be available until further notice. It is anticipated that this video will greatly enhance the "checking" module at the N.C.C.P. "Coach" Level. Please be advised that it will be distributed immediately upon completion.

Comments or questions related to the position paper may be directed to my attention at the national office.

Yours in Sport

Jamie McDonald  
Manager, Coaching

enclosed

JM/lsh

CANADIAN AMATEUR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

COACHING COMMITTEE

A

POSITION PAPER

ON

BODY CHECKING/CONTACT IN MINOR HOCKEY

May 13, 1991  
Position

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## 1.0 POSITION OF CAHA COACHING COMMITTEE

The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association Coaching Committee believes the primary focus of minor hockey to be the encouragement of participation, development of the individual both in technical skills and the person, to effect long term participation and enjoyment of the sport.

Therefore, the position of the CAHA Coaching Committee is that "Body Checking" should be removed from the Pee Wee category (12-13 years) and replaced with a "Body Contact" ruling. Body checking should be re-introduced at the Bantam category (14-15 years). The reasoning behind this position is based upon available research and statistical information, an understanding of growth and development of young children and an appreciation for progression teaching of individual skills leading to body checking.

### 1.1 PURPOSE OF THIS POSITION

The future of minor hockey in Canada relies on our abilities to provide an environment that fosters enjoyment and self fulfillment through skill development and safe participation in the game. The Coaching Committee is concerned with the great differences in individual physical growth at the Pee Wee level. This, coupled with the sudden change of no body checking in one division to full contact in the next division may result in increased opportunity for serious injuries.

It is our feeling that a gradual progression of teaching checking skills as follows would foster growth in our game through improved skill development in a safe environment.

ATOM - increased concentration on skating skills  
including balance, agility and angling skills

PEE WEE - body contact (see 4.1 for definition)

BANTAM - body checking (see 4.2. for definition)

Cont...

## 2.0 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE FOR THIS POSITION

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of body checking at the Pee Wee level and injuries, have been discussed at all levels of Amateur hockey for many years. Much research has been completed with experts and the medical profession telling us we should not have body checking at this age. Body checking in hockey is an emotional issue and many believe it to be sacred. But we must make decisions that will improve the game for all participants so they may enjoy the game in a safe and fun environment.

### 2.2 HISTORICAL TRENDS 1980-1991

1980/82 - Hockey Ontario completes an injury study of Midget and Junior A hockey players. Some of its recommendations were:

- i) A need for greater education of players with regard to giving and receiving body checks.
- ii) A need for coaches to encourage proper methods of giving body checks, when to give them, and how to receive checks.
- iii) A need for stricter enforcement of the rules by officials especially high sticks, unnecessary (intimidating) roughness, and late checks.

1983 - Dr. Tator identified factors as possible causes in spinal injuries resulting in recommendations on coaching, officiating, equipment and fitness considerations.

1984 - Dr. Tator provided supportive facts indicating most spinal injuries occur as a result of being checked into or falling into the boards head first.

1984/85 - Standing Rules Committee of the CAHA adopted a more restrictive interpretation of the Boarding Rule (50A).

Cont...

- 1986
- CAHA Stickwork Survey resulted in strong recommendations to deal with stickwork rules, training of coaches and improved communication.
  - QIHF initiates survey of body checking at Pee Wee.
- 1 - Found that, on the average the biggest Pee Wee players are 2 times stronger, 2 times heavier, 30 cm taller and an impact force 70% greater than the smallest Pee Wee players.
  - 2 - That Pee Wees playing with body checking average 12.4 penalty minutes per game.
  - 3 - That Pee Wees playing without body checking average 9.0 penalty minutes per game.
  - 4 - Significant findings on the injury side show fracture rates as follows:
    - AA teams with bodychecking  
1 fracture per 7.5 games
    - CC teams with bodychecking  
1 fracture per 22.5 games
    - CC teams without bodychecking  
1 fracture per 263 games
- 1988/89 - Hockey Ontario provided a major study of hockey injuries from Atom through Senior hockey.
- 1 - A major finding at the Pee Wee level was that the injury rate for teams that body checked was 7 times higher than for non-body checking teams. It was also twice as high for Representative teams verses House teams.
- Over 50% of injuries were due to body checking or colliding with another player; 12% of the injuries occurred when a player was hit from behind.
  - 83% of injuries resulted in an average of 1.4 nights in the hospital.
  - 29% of injuries resulted in an average of 3.19 days away from school.

- 2 - Findings at the Bantam and Midget levels showed the injury rate for bodychecking teams was almost three (3) times that of non-body checking teams.
  - 40% of injuries were due to body checking or collisions with another player, 11% occurred with a hit from behind and 11% from hitting the boards.
  - 9% of these injuries resulted in an average of 1.63 nights in hospital.
  - 77% of these injuries resulted in an average of 23.5 days away from hockey.
  - 28% of these injuries resulted in an average of 3.71 days away from school.
- 1989/90 - The Western Hockey League and International Hockey Centre of Excellence released a study of injuries in the Western Hockey League. Statistics showed that 43% of 250 injuries reported were caused by body checking. These body checking injuries resulted in a number of shoulder and knee injuries.
- 1990 - The Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine stated its official position; "that body checking be introduced at the Bantam level (ages 14-15)." Its reasoning from a medical perspective is included in our Rationale 2.3.

### 2.3 RATIONALE FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF BODY CONTACT AT THE PEE WEE CATEGORY AND INTRODUCING BODY CHECKING AT BANTAM

Current research indicates clearly that there is a significant increase in the number of injuries when body checking is introduced.

From a growth and development perspective, the Pee Wee category coincides with a peak growth spurt in males. There is a great variation in size, strength and physical maturation in this age group. Some 12 and 13 year olds may be mature enough to appear as young men, where others have yet to start their growth spurt and are physically very much like small boys. Some Pee Wee hockey players are twice the size and strength of their opponents (Dr. James Sproule).

From a hockey skills perspective a change to body contact leading to body checking progression would allow coaches to concentrate on skating and angling skills at the Atom and Pee Wee levels. When the athlete masters these skills at the Pee Wee level, he will be more ready skill wise to deal with body checking in Bantam.

#### 2.4 BENEFITS OF ADOPTING THIS POSITION

- Would indicate that the CAHA and its Branches have a genuine concern for the safety of those children involved in minor hockey.
- Would demonstrates an effort to reduce serious injuries as a result of body checking.
- Would increase emphasis on the early acquisition of skating and angling skills.
- Introducing body checking at the Bantam category may encourage more parents to enroll their children into minor hockey and may cause players to stay in the game longer.
- A standardized policy across Canada would reverse the trend in declining player registration at the Pee Wee to Bantam transition.
- More minor hockey coaches better able to understand the skill of body checking. This would in turn enable these coaches to better teach this important skill.

#### 3.0 CONCLUSION

It is our feeling that with the removal of body checking and a replacement with body contact policy, our game would improve significantly. These improvement would be in areas of safety, fun, skill development and long term participation.

With an increased emphasis on a progressive teaching program beginning with skating and angling skills at Atom, through body contact at Pee Wee to body checking in Bantam; this will allow



officials, coaches and players to better understand those important skills involved in body checking games. This, will lead to a safer game that can be enjoyed by all participants, but most importantly the player.

#### 4.0 APPENDIX

##### 4.1 DEFINITION OF BODY CONTACT

An individual defensive tactic designed to legally block or stop the progression of the offensive puck carrier. The defensive player may not hit the offensive player by going in the opposite direction to that player. There cannot be an intentional collision of two players going in opposite directions. The body contact must be a result of the movement of the puck carrier. There must be no action where the puck carrier is pushed, checked or shoved into the boards.

##### 4.2 DEFINITION OF BODY CHECKING

A contact established by the defensive player reading and reacting to the movements of the offensive player and positioning themselves to regain possession of the puck. The tactic of checking allows for a legal separation of the puck carrier from the puck by physical contact. This physical contact is allowed in all areas of the ice and the defensive player may check the puck carrier while going in the opposite direction. In other words, contact is not solely determined by the movement of the puck carrier.

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Hockey Ontario, Injury Survey (1980-82).

TATOR, Charles H., MD - Chairman, Committee on Prevention of Spinal Injuries Due to Hockey - Notes and Letters.

CAHA, Stickwork Survey - General Report.

McLAREN, Peter L. - Ontario Amateur Hockey, Injuries Study Overview (1988-90).

CLAYTON, Pat and IHCE/WHL - Injury Report System.

SPROULE, James, MD - Position Statement of Canadian Academy of Sport Medicine and Canadian Medical Association; Presentation to CAHA 1990 AGM in Toronto.

QIHF, 1986 Study of Pee Wee Bodychecking.

3. All regional and national championships from Bantam on up have "body-checking" allowed.
4. Within the branch, both streams could be allowed for all age groups but teams will have to accept the "body-checking" legality if they pursue a provincial title after age 13.
5. The continued promotion of "Smart Hockey" as the basic attitude of the average hockey player. Attitudes are hard to change but not impossible. Perhaps our problem is not "body-checking" but the "hit him" attitude that prevails.
6. The Coaching Committee develop a mini-clinic on checking.

This has proven a difficult task. We hope that this document either provides answers or the basis from which answers can be found.

Respectfully submitted

Kelly Lovering