Top women’s hockey coaches criticize CIS refereeing policies

LARREN MILLET
The Daily Herald (Winnipeg)

WATRROD (CUP)—Hockey, officiating can make or break the game. It can extend the speed and pace by the number of penalties doled out, or it can be the catalyst to bring a weaker team equal to a stronger one. Complaints from coaches about the level of officiating at this year’s national championship have for CIS policies to move towards refereeing to women’s hockey into the spotlight.

“This seemed to be the worst year ever for refereeing,” said Alberta head coach Howie Draper, whose team finished fourth at this year’s championship.

“It was a substantial improvement in the quality of refereing; it was by far the weakest I have ever seen at this competition.”

“It’s a shame that they choose the CIS nationals to develop referees because it’s not the place that it should happen,” he continued.

“While it may not affect the sport directly, there might be some unhappy coaches and players. It can be very equalitying, and you could end up losing a national championship as a result. It could be detrimental to a particular team.”

“MAGG was the best team, and Laurier deserved to beat us when they did,” Draper added, referring to the Golden Hawks, who were in turn downed by McGill in the final.

“I’d like to see the development of female referees, but there has to be a level. I’m not sure what that might be.”

In addition to dissatisfaction with the experience level of referees at nationals this year, Draper feels that the Hockey Canada policy that women’s hockey at the national level must be officiated by female referees is problematic.

“If it were up to me, developing female officials aside, I would want the best officials—male or female,” he said. “Unfortunately, we would like to see female referees refereing our games. The problem is there are not many female referees at the level they need to be at. But for them to get there, they have to get games of that level to develop.”

McGill head coach Peter Smith agreed. “But I think the referees are doing the best they can [...] It’s a lot easier for somebody standing behind the bench to look at what’s going on than someone standing on the ice in the middle of the action.”

Walfred Laurier Head Coach Rick Osborne is arguing that the referees currently in place for CIS women’s hockey aren’t the best suited to the level of play.

“I don’t think Hockey Canada appoints their best to the CIS. We tried to see the same people year after year. It can be frustrating,” Osborne said.

Theoretically, in front of an audience, Coolidge, University of Ottawa’s head coach and a former referee herself, believes that the main problem for female referees is that they are not given enough support and supervision in their training.

“We have some young women who are so keen but get little supervision. Rarely do they even see a coach sitting in the stands giving them feedback.”

“It is widely believed that the sport of Royal Shrovetide football, played since the 12th century on Shrove Tuesday in Derbyshire, England, has its origins in the tossing about of a severed head after public executions. The game has very little in common with the actual sport of football. Teams score by hitting the ball against the mill stone three times in a row.

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Freehold rules that are critical for CIS

The Daily Herald (Winnipeg)

OTTAWA (CUP)—Rumours that the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University will leave CIS and join Division II of the NCAA have prompted some university athletic directors to consider in Canada is to say it is time for changes within CIS.

In January, the NCAA approved a pitch project that would allow Canadian schools to apply for membership into Division II. Schools have until June 1 to apply for membership. UBC and SFU are the major schools considering applying for Division II membership director in Ottawa, said that they have yet to make their decision, and UBC did not return calls to the Ottawa or the Gateway as of press time.

Dick White, director of athletics at the University of Regina and former CIS president, said CIS has to be more creative to help keep players and university officials in Canada.

“We need to find some solutions to problems that student bodies are having,” he said.

Increased scholarship flexibility is an issue the CIS needs to consider, White argued. Right now, he said, the most he is likely to be able to fund for one athlete in tuition and fees—under the current rules, things like textbooks and living expenses are the athlete’s responsibility.

He added that players may have to apply for 80 per cent average to be eligible for any athletic scholarships.

“We can’t compete financially with NCAA schools,” White said. “It would be nice to keep Canada’s top athletes in Canada.”

And travel costs are big reasons why UBC is considering joining the NCAA, according to Joseph Keogh, coordinator of athletics at Victoria, said that not only is it expensive, but it is also a constant financial headache for the NCAA.

“Trek is not Ontario, where there are ten schools within three hours, he said.”

The West has many more schools that are competing against each other, and this is a problem.”

McGregor, chief executive officer of CIS, said the organization will re-evaluate its policies at the end of the year as a standard part of their yearly membership meeting in June.

“Certainly, we do not want UBC to leave us,” she said. “They are one of our most successful members.”

But McGregor also said CIS would not bend ever backwards to accommodate schools that are considering leaving for the NCAA.

McGregor said that she thinks the CIS compares favourably to NCAA Division II and that she doesn’t see the move as an attractive option.

“It is a financial move at best,” she said.

However, McGregor also said that the CIS board of directors would recommend that schools should not be allowed to be members of both the CIS and the NCAA at their annual meeting.

More will be known soon, as UBC will call Canada West by 1 April if they plan to leave.

No Stars in Stripes

Women’s hockey has a refiling problem, say its coaches.

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