



To the WRL Ringette Community

The Winnipeg Ringette League now has a month remaining in the regular season followed shortly thereafter by playoffs.

In recent days, several reports have come to my attention which gravely concern me. Spectators, game officials, coaches, players, local association volunteers and WRL council members have submitted these reports – so there have been accounts from all perspectives of the game. Unfortunately these reports are painting a disturbing, negative picture of our sport, in what should be a very positive environment.

These reports specifically mention threatening, harassing, and unsportsmanlike behaviour from spectators, coaches and players, which is directed at our officials, players and fans. Screaming at a random individual in a shopping mall, swearing at a fellow attendee in a Church or threatening a passer-by on a sidewalk are not normal behaviours we experience in our day to day lives. So I ask: would society find it acceptable for any of these actions to occur at an arena during a sporting event?? When the jerseys and equipment come off – striped or otherwise – these are our daughters, sisters, mothers, neighbours, friends, classmates, colleagues, and society as a whole. The number of incidents are increasing rapidly. This is not acceptable, nor will it be tolerated.

The WRL Constitution specifies four objectives of the league. The first two are “to encourage and foster ringette”, and “to provide a wholesome and rewarding experience to those participating in the sport.” These objectives are guiding principles for our league and sport. The ringette community must uphold these values.

Please note the following excerpt from the WRL Rulebook (pages 22 & 23):

- a. *If spectator behaviour is harassing an official or having an effect on the game, the following process will be followed: a. **No warnings are required for the ejection of any spectator(s) nor for bench staff should the on-ice official judge it appropriate – this is entirely at the discretion of the on-ice official and MUST be actively supported by ALL bench staff.***
- b. *The on-ice official will attempt to determine which team the spectator(s) in question belong to.*
 - i. *If this is not possible, the responsibility of the following statements falls upon the home coach and ALL spectators will be ejected.*
- c. *The on-ice official will then approach the coach of said team and instruct them to remove the spectators from the audience.*

d. The timekeepers will put two minutes up on the clock. The clock will start running at the instruction of the on-ice official.

e. If the coach is not able to remove the spectators from the audience within the two minutes on the clock, their team will default the game.

Any game official that needs to invoke the above rule will have the full support and backing of the league and Council.

I strongly encourage everyone to be involved, play hard, be competitive, strive for excellence, and to loudly cheer for your team. But let's all do it with respect, good sportsmanship and in the spirit of the game!

Good luck to all teams as you prepare for playoffs!

Sincerely,

Vince Sward

President, Winnipeg Ringette League