

Optimist Junior Interclub Curling League

2.B.2. COACHING PROTOCOL for Optimist Divisions 2, 3 and 4

Updated October 19, 2017

Optimist Junior Curling is a great opportunity for kids to learn the game and put their skills to the test in game situations, however, there is a feeling that we are not developing the Curlers' game skills & etiquette as well as we could.

Concerns from Curlers, Parents and Coaches:

- Want to play 8 end games
- Too chaotic on the ice at times, many of the kids are playing games for the first time and do not know the proper procedures/etiquette
- The newer / younger the players are, the more confusing it is for them
- Kids that are serious about the game lose interest because of lack of discipline on the ice
- Every other sport allows constant contact between the coach and players, why do we throw our youngest kids out there with no guidance or support?
- While the rules state "No coaching behind the glass", it happens, and is almost impossible to prevent
- Kids do not know when to call timeouts or how best to use them
- Many kids can't remember details of the last end, let alone 2 or 3 ends back, which means hard to discuss strategy, issues/concerns during timeouts or the mid-game break

Suggestions to Improve Divisions 2, 3 and 4

- The Coordinators Meeting at the 30 minute mark is for the Coordinators / Parent Reps, not the coaches. Let the Coaches coach. This is the reason that each team must have a Designated Coordinator. If a club has multiple teams, the Designated Coordinator may represent multiple teams but they must report to their fellow club teams not represented.
- Allow coaches on the ice for the entire game
 - o Benefits:
 - Monitor etiquette
 - Help with pace of play, such as where kids are supposed to be positioned, what to do when waiting to throw
 - Discuss strategy with the Skips
 - If they observe anything incorrect being done or said, they can intervene right away to prevent minor issues from becoming a major problem.
 - o Concerns:
 - The Coach will call the game, not the kids. If a Coach does this, they are only hurting the development of the kids.
 - Constant discussions will slow down the game
 - Some teams may have a more knowledgeable Coach which is perceived as an unfair advantage for their team

- Guidelines for on-ice Coaches:
 - May only communicate with their own skip/ players while the other team is throwing. Once the rock comes to a stop, no more discussion unless a timeout is called. If a timeout is called, regular timeout procedures apply.
 - Not allowed during playoff round, and possibly final block games
 - If a team does not have a Coach (or a Coach with knowledge of the game), they still need to have a Parent out there, so that Parent can observe and learn the game and no to ensure there are no concerns a Coach is breaking the Guidelines.
 - If the other team does not have a Coach or Parent with curling knowledge, then the Coach on the ice should also help the other team. As Coaches, it should be our goal to develop all the players, regardless of which team they are on. They may be the opposition today, but in a couple of years, they may be a teammate of your player.
 - A Coach has to pick one end or the other and stay there for the complete end (unless a timeout is called).
 - Coaches cannot call ice, cannot call for sweeping, and cannot call shots. It is still the Curlers' game.
 - Get to know the other Coaches and discuss and work with each other to make improvements/changes as necessary.
 - One option, that Coaches can decide on if they want, would be that the Coaches stay at opposite ends with one Coach helping all the throwing players of both teams and the other Coach helping both Skips. The Coaches' roles would alternate each end depending on the direction of play. This may work well if both Coaches are from the same club.

- How to interact with the Skip:
 - Encourage them to think about the shots they're calling and not just random calls.
 - After a shot is thrown, ask the player what they were thinking when they made the shot. It is not necessarily important that they made the same call as you would, but did they put some thought into the call? Did they follow a line of thinking and reasoning?
 - If they flashed a take out, or sailed a draw through the house, ask them if they know what went wrong and how to adjust? Did the thrower just miss the broom, were they heavy, were they light, or does the Skip need to adjust where they put the broom?
 - In advance of the Skip calling a shot, ask them what options they have, and what are the pros and cons of each option. Try to avoid steering them to a specific call before the shot. After the shot, is better to review your opinion of the pros and cons with them. At this level, they will often get another chance at the same shot.
 - It is not necessary to communicate regarding every shot. Let them come to you with questions, if they have any.
 - Remind them that you are not out there to judge them but, instead, to be there as a knowledge resource.

Plan to get your team involved in each year's **November 11th Coquitlam Optimist Club "Walk for Youth" – 75% of your funds come back to your home club** junior program.