

# Top women's hockey coaches criticize CIS refereeing policies

LAUREN MILLET  
The Cord Weekly (Wilfred Laurier)

WATERLOO (CUP)—In hockey, officiating can make or break the game. It can control 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 put CIS policies towards refereeing in women's hockey into the spotlight.

"This seemed to be the worst year ever for officiating," said Alberta head coach Howie Draper, whose team finished fourth at this year's championship. "I was very, very disappointed in the quality of refereeing; 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 just not the place that it should happen," he continued.

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

"McGill was the best team, and Laurier deserved to beat us when they did," Draper added, referring to a semifinal loss 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 better way. I'm just 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. "Ultimately, we would like to see female referees refereeing 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



FILE PHOTO: PETE YEE

**NO STARS IN STRIPES** Women's hockey has a refereeing problem, say its coaches.

to get games of that level to develop."

"I think it's important to have referees that are comparable to the level of play," 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."

Wilfrid 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 tend to see the same people year after year. It can be frustrating," Osborne said.

Shelly 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 that are so keen but get little supervision. Rarely do I even see a coach sitting in the stands giving them feedback.

"That is where I think we break down," Coolidge said.

"A young fellow on the male side who has potential, there are a number of people who supervise him, coach him to ensure his development to get to the next level. That is where the difference lies."

"I would prefer a mix to ensure that we are getting the best. I would be fine with women referees at nationals if the three or four they assign were the best in the country," Osborne said. "I don't think they are."

CIS rules state that officials for women's hockey are trained up to a level four status, whereas referees for men's hockey are required to have a minimum of level six for university sport.

Officials for women's hockey are also paid only \$70 per game compared to the \$120 per game received in men's hockey.

"They cannot get their level six because they are never going to be working men's CIS hockey or a men's international hockey game," Coolidge said. "So there is no way they can get that."

## CIS needs reform, say athletic directors

SIMON MARTIN  
The Charlton (Carleton)

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 in Canada to say it is time for changes within CIS.

In January, the NCAA approved a pilot project that would allow Canadian schools to apply for membership into Division II. Schools have until 1 June to apply for membership. UBC and SFU are the major schools considering application. SFU interim athletics director Diane St-Denis said that they have yet to make their decision, and UBC did not return calls to the *Charlton* 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 universities playing in Canada.

"We need to find some solutions to problems that member schools are having," he said.

Increased scholarship flexibility is an

issue the CIS needs to consider, White argued. Right now, he said, the most he can fund for one athlete is tuition and fees—under the current rules, things like textbooks and living expenses are the student's responsibility.

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

"We can't compete financially with US schools," White said. "It would be nice to keep Canada's top athletes in Canada."

That and travel costs are big reasons why UBC is considering joining the NCAA, according to James Keogh, coordinator of athletics at the University of Victoria. Keogh said high travel costs are part of the reality of playing in the Canada West conference.

"It's not like Ontario, where there are ten schools within three hours," he said.

While the two other major BC universities have yet to make a decision, Keogh said the University of Victoria is not interested in joining the NCAA.

"Our goal is to compete in Canada," he said. "If UBC and SFU depart, it would certainly leave a massive void

in the CIS."

UBC is UVic's main athletic rival in most sports. Keogh said their departure would definitely hurt Victoria financially.

Marg 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 over 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 lateral move at best," she said.

McGregor also said 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 tell Canada West by 1 April if they plan to leave.

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