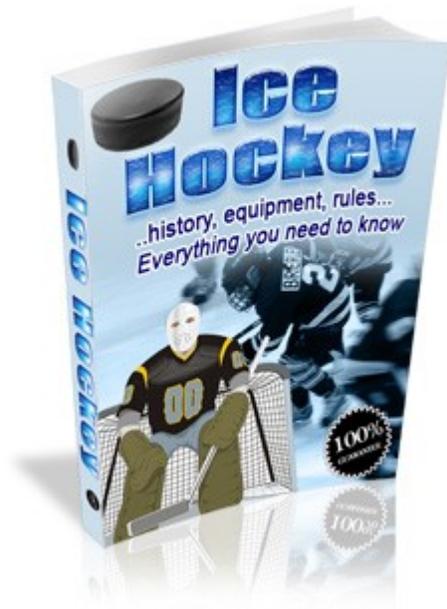


# Ice Hockey 'The Game'



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## **Ice Hockey International Competitions**

Professional ice hockey players do not always find themselves on their home ground. With so many different competitions it is easy for a team to become involved in a variety of international competitions throughout the world. This may not necessarily be the case with semi-professional teams, but if you are with a professional ice hockey team it is more than likely you will find yourself travelling around the world to compete. The more popular your team the more likely you are to become involved in international competitions. The reason you will not necessarily find this to be the case with semi-professional or amateur teams is because many of them involved players who are not full-time athletes and therefore are not free to travel around the world on a regular basis.

When a player is part of the team for the Olympic Games competition, he or she will of course need to be wherever the completion is held. However, this may be an international competition or it may be on your home ground depending on the host for that year. In the past, this competition was strictly for amateur athletes and was designed to give them recognition for their skills. Ice hockey was not always a part of the Olympic Games but in recent years it was added as a permanent fixture to the program. Prior to that ice hockey was only a part of the Winter Games instead of being added along with figure skating competition. Becoming a part of ice hockey international competitions can help an up and coming athlete show his or her skills on a wider scale.

How effective are international competitions? It depends whether the competition is international or just conducted locally. Those ice hockey competitions that present themselves to a worldwide audience will help athletes who are just breaking into the field of ice hockey gain acclaim and be seen by a wider audience. That doesn't mean world renowned athletes should not embark on the international competition road by any means. However, if you are an up and coming athlete in the ice hockey circuit you can meet with others who will be able to help you accomplish your goal and help you refine your hockey skills so that you will have a better chance of winning an international competition. Winning at home is certainly something of which to be proud but if you can win an international competition you are in a better position to achieve status as a professional athlete.

## **Professional or Amateur – Which One Are You?**

In any kind of sport there are two different kinds of players—the professional and the amateur. It's easy to identify the professional player because he or she is the one competing for various metals and awards throughout the world. The name is a household word and that person's picture is plastered on every billboard or sports magazine. When someone speaks the name you immediately know to whom they refer. Of course, in between you will find many sports teams with semi-professionals as well, mostly on the college level or in minor leagues as in baseball. Some people are content to remain an amateur ice hockey player while others are so good at the game that they move forward to become professional players.

You can ask yourself whether you are an amateur or professional but the real question is in which direction do you wish to travel? You may be an amateur but if you have a professional mindset you have what it takes to work your way up to a professional ice hockey team. Everyone starts out as an amateur. It will be non-competitive at first and as you become better at ice hockey you can begin to compete on an amateur level. The real excitement comes in

winning competitions, but you will not be ready for that until you know everything about the sport there is to know. Certainly much of your knowledge will come from experience but you at least want to know those things that will help you win the game.

You do not want to make a decision about becoming professional until you have had enough competition under your belt as an amateur to know you have what it takes to compete in the world of professional ice hockey. There is a big difference between playing amateur and professional ice hockey and not everyone is able to play professionally. It may be because they don't have the ability to learn the moves necessary or simply because they cannot withstand the stress of constant competition. Whatever the case may be it's important to understand where you fit into the sphere before you attempt to make any moves. Assess your own abilities and then analyze yourself to determine what it is you seek when you play ice hockey. You must have a professional mindset in order to succeed in the world of professional ice hockey.

## **Beyond the Game: Developing Sportsmanship**

The game of ice hockey is very competitive and as such, it's important to develop skills other than just playing the game. Unless you have, interpersonal skills and the ability to get along with people, you will not be very well liked in or out of the rink. No one likes a nasty player nor does anyone like a sore loser. It is disappointing to lose a game but it is not the end of the world. Never act as though your life depends on winning each game. No matter how good you may be you will at one time or another come across a team or player that is better than you are—that is why it is called "competition."

The way you react to losing games, losing plays or even calls to play by the coach or another appointed person determine how successful you will be. The umpire may sometimes make calls with which you and your team do not agree but in the role of good sportsmanship, you must accept those decisions without attempting to start a fight over them. Remain calm and understand it is not your decision and the umpire may have seen something you didn't or may feel differently about the way players handled that action. Allowing yourself to get out of sorts over it shows poor sportsmanship, and if you are looking to play ice hockey professionally, you are off to a bad start.

Sportsmanship is something you must develop as soon as you begin playing ice hockey. No matter how many years you play there will be times you will walk into situations with which you don't agree but if you allow yourself to become upset over the little things you will spend your career being a miserable player and will have problems getting along with the other players. You may also find personality clashes along the way, but you also need to show good sportsmanship and at least be civil to everyone in which you come into contact. Remember, you don't have to go to dinner with the other players; you only have to be part of their team or the opposing team. When you make the effort to get along with everyone on your team you will find your experience much more pleasant. Also, treat the opposing team as competition rather than as an enemy you wish to eliminate from earth.

## **Comparing Ice Hockey and Field Hockey**

Ice hockey is based on its sister sport, field hockey. It's easy enough to call them closely linked because they are played almost identically and have similar objectives. Though ice hockey may

be a little more challenging because of its playing area both sports have the similar rules with the final objective being to prevent the opposing team from making a goal. The difference lies in how you obtain that end result and the expertise of the players in being able to accomplish that goal. It's also important to understand in ice hockey you are performing two skills at the same time—hockey and ice skating. You have to be able to concentrate on both at the same time or you will create a potential hazard for yourself and your teammates.

Field hockey involves a ball that must be kicked in order to prevent the opposing team from making a goal. The players can kick or push the ball along the field but they are not allowed to touch it with their hands. Ice hockey on the other end accomplishes the same goal using a puck (round disk) on a field of ice. Instead of sports shoes the players wear ice skates, thus creating a situation much more challenging than that of the field. Of course, one cannot play field hockey when it rains because of the potential for injury because of a wet field, thus ice hockey tends to have less game cancellations, especially if one is playing on artificial ice.

Not everyone who plays field hockey can adapt to playing ice hockey. The key is whether that person is used to ice skating. Even if one has been ice skating for enough time to be experienced on ice doesn't necessarily mean they have the agility to play ice hockey. There is a big difference between playing on a field and playing on ice—some people just don't have what it takes to maintain their balance while playing hockey at the same time. You need to know how to balance yourself quite well or you will not be able to maintain the speed and agility needed to provide the offense or defense your team needs. If you have any doubt about your ability to maintain speed while still controlling the puck you should choose field hockey instead of ice hockey—your future may depend on it.

## **Gear and Equipment Necessary for Ice Hockey**

Every sport has specific equipment and gear that are necessary for playing the game. Some of the items are safety equipment while others are actually necessary for playing the game. On the same note, some of the safety equipment is required while other pieces are suggested or recommended. Outside of the required equipment, the choices are specific to your needs, preferences and budget. Keep in mind that you want to keep your personal safety in mind—injuring yourself in the rink could reduce your earning capacity for many years if not permanently.

One of the most important pieces of equipment is the facemask, especially if you are a goalie. Though it is only required for goalies, there is good reason for others on the team to invest in this essential equipment. For instance if you happen to get in the way of someone's flying or levitating hockey stick, the face mask will protect you from serious injury to your face. Some players even choose to wear helmets because of the potential to fall on the ice and hit their heads. The use of helmets is becoming more popular in many sports activities even those one would not ordinarily think of as dangerous.

For most teams uniforms are standard gear though they may vary from full uniform to just a jersey and socks with the player providing the bottoms to the uniform. Shin guards are also standard equipment for hockey in general whether field or ice though some players may also choose to add other padding as well in case of a fall on the ice. Of course, you also need a good pair of ice skates for the rink. Do not skimp on your equipment because you may find it will

cause more harm than the money you save. Certainly, there is no harm in bargain shopping for clothing but choose the best safety and playing equipment that is available.

Finally, you need a hockey stick and puck. You need to make sure you choose the right size stick for your height. Don't just choose one that looks like you might be able to use it—try it out at least for movement purposes. Hold it in your hands and make sure you can use it with ease. Ask for assistance from someone in the store if you aren't sure about the right hockey stick to meet your needs.

## **History of Ice Hockey**

Ice hockey is one of the most popular sports and is rather exciting to watch. Those who both play and watch the game can generate a great deal of excitement in the crowd as the competition begins. However not all of the most popular fans are aware of where the sport began and how it developed into the game it is here in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Like other competitive sports, ice hockey has evolved over the years and though most of the original plays and concepts remain some of its humble beginnings have been replaced to accommodate current methodology.

JGA Creighton is credited with devising the rules we use for modern ice hockey in 1875. Although the actual origin of ice hockey is unknown it is more than likely it was developed as a supplement to field hockey, a game that has a history centuries old in Northern Europe. The first game of hockey played under Creighton's rules was in Montreal, Canada and over time it was evolved into not only an Olympic sport but also the most popular of the team sports that take place on ice.

During the game of ice hockey each team is comprised of six players wearing ice skates unless except during a penalty. The object is for each team to successfully knock the hockey puck into the opponent's net. This play is rather challenging because the net is heavily guarded by a goalie whose job is to prevent the other team from making a goal. The concept is the same as that of field hockey except it takes place on ice, a much more difficult feat. There is similar equipment but geared toward the needs of each sport independently.

The Glaciarium was the first ice rink with mechanical refrigeration. It was built in 1876 by John Garngree in Chelsea, London near King's road. A machine called a Zamboni keeps ice rinks smooth and clean in the modern ice hockey and ice skating age. This makes it possible for everyone to enjoy ice skating, ice hockey and other events that take place on ice no matter what the weather is outside. It gives everyone an opportunity to enjoy winter sports even during the heat of summer.

The first goalie mask was developed in 1960 by a Canadian goalie in collaboration with Fibreglass Canada. The puck is a disk that allows opposing players to score goals during the game of ice hockey.

## **History of Ice Hockey as an Olympic Sport**

The first time an Olympic ice hockey tournament was held was in 1920 during the Summer Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium. It was fairly new as an organized international sport at that time with the International Ice Hockey Federation only created in 1908. In 1914 ice hockey and several other winter sports were added to the list of optional Olympic sports from which Olympic organizers could choose if they wished to do so. Only three months before the 1920 Summer Olympics started the decision was made to include ice hockey in that year's Games.

There are several factors that contributed to the decision to include ice hockey in the 1920 Olympics. For one thing five nations had made commitments to participate in that year's tournament but the Palais de Glace stadium in Antwerp refused to allow anyone to use the building for figure skating unless the Olympic committee also agree to include ice hockey. The 1920 Olympics is viewed by the IIHF as the first Ice Hockey World Championship. Since then the two events have occurred at the same time and until 1968, each Olympic tournament was also counted toward the World Championship. The first time a world Championship was held as an individual event was in 1930.

When the Olympic Games first commenced the intention was to draw in amateur athletes and as a result any players that were part of the National Hockey League or any other professional leagues were excluded. The first Winter Olympics was held in Chamonix, France in 1924. The 2207 edition of the Olympic Charters states that Winter sports include any sports activity that must be practiced on snow or ice. As a result, both ice hockey and figure skating were guaranteed permanent placement in the Winter Olympics program from the commencement of the first edition and proceeding forward. After the IOC included the Winter Games a permanent event in the Olympics, it occurred the same year as the Summer Games until 1992. After that, the time for the Winter Games was changed to the third year of each Olympiad.

The inclusion of ice hockey in to the Olympic Games has likely caused more interest in the sport as a whole—at least for those who follow the Olympics. Some who may not have seen an ice hockey game prior to its permanent inclusion in the Olympics may be responsible in part for the continued interest in the game over the years.

## **History of Sledge Hockey**

Sledge hockey (or sled hockey as it is also known) is a type of ice hockey that was designed specifically for people who have physical disabilities that prevent them from playing ice hockey the conventional way. It allows those who are unable to use ice skates to play the game to still participate in enjoying and playing ice hockey. It is currently one of the most popular sports activities in the Paralympics Games. There is little doubt that the invention of the sledge has made activity possible for those who would not ordinarily be able to continue playing ice hockey because of a disability. History has shown that those with disabilities who remain active are less likely to stop enjoying life and instead look for ways to compensate for their disability.

The sled that is used to play ice sledge hockey was invented in the 1960s by two men from Sweden who were interested in still playing ice hockey even though they had developed a physical disability. The design of the sled includes blades from two skates mounted on a metal frame to allow the puck to slide underneath. The final touch to the invention includes two round poles with bike handles that players can use as hockey sticks. In spite of restrictions relative to

the measurements and weights of the sledges that are used in the Paralympics Games, most of the original design is still in use today and has changed little since its birth.

Though there was a decline of interest after sledge hockey was first invented, competition began in 1969 and included five teams out of Europe. Great Britain established its first sledge hockey team in 1981 and was followed by Canada in 1982. The United States didn't develop its first ice sledge hockey team until eight years later in 1990 followed by Estonia and Japan in 1993. When the Paralympics Games began in 1994 international ice sledge hockey was added to the list of official events with Sweden claiming the gold medal for that year. During the next Paralympics Games in 1998, Norway took the gold medal while Canada won the silver medal and Sweden the bronze. In 2002, the United States won the gold medal while Norway finished second and Sweden third. The Paralympics Games continue to turn out winners of gold, silver and bronze medals and allow those with disabilities to continue to participate in their favorite sports activity using the sledge.

### **Ice Hockey: The Object of the Game**

Like field hockey the object of the game in ice hockey is for players to prevent their opponents from making a goal. That requires speed and agility on the rink so block the puck from entering the net. The goalie will attempt to prevent the puck of the opposing team from entering the net area and scoring points for the other team. All of this combined is what makes the game of ice hockey an exciting one. Knowing what you need to do and building the adrenalin so that you can accomplish your goal is part of what makes the game so popular throughout the world.

Ice hockey is directly derived from field hockey and has been popular in parts of Europe for centuries. Its popularity throughout the world is probably due in part to its inclusion in the Olympic Games. In fact, many sports have gained popularity because they become better known when everyone can see them when they watch the Olympic Games. Some sports that used to be part of simple life became more popular as they became part of the Olympic Games. The popularity of many winter sports activities has increased as they are viewed by more people. Of course, ice hockey is popular for kids as well because like street hockey they can substitute things that are available for actual equipment.

Speed and agility are important parts of ice hockey—in fact, they are the most essential parts of the entire game. The players have to be fast in order to block the other team from making a goal. This becomes more of a challenge because of the ice—the puck will slide along the smooth surface, so each player must be prepared to grab their hockey stick and push the puck to the other end of the ice rink not just to score a point for their team but to block their opponent from scoring as well. The quicker you are able to move the easier it will be for you to make sure there is no goal for the opposing team.

The speed and agility are part of learning to move around on ice skates, so those who play ice hockey must first know how to ice skate. With that simple skill there, a player will not be able to move around the rink in order to score points for his or her team or block the opponent from scoring.

## **Ice Hockey as a Sport**

Though most people tend to think of ice hockey as a professional or semi-professional sport, it can also be a sport as routine as playing football in high school. There doesn't have to be a professional edge to it, and it can be played with a group of friends as well as by being part of another team. As long as everyone has the necessary equipment and access to an ice rink, you can play ice hockey as part of a sport. In fact, many people will find a frozen pond or lake during the winter and play instead of attempting to find an indoor rink that will allow you to rent space for a game.

In all likelihood when ice hockey was first played it was not on an indoor artificial rink but outdoors during the coldest part of winter. In some places that is likely to still remain an important part of the game just as much as skiing in regions where the weather is cold enough to have snow during the winter. Changes of climate and technology change the way people play ice hockey but that doesn't mean the old ways are no longer good to use. When you are playing in the middle of winter and the ponds are frozen, why should you go to an indoor rink to play the game? Certainly when it is a professional game the fans don't want to sit outside in the cold but when you are playing for fun there is no need to be concerned about spectators.

In addition to being a good sport ice hockey is also good exercise. You can move around in aerobic motions that will boost your metabolism and stimulate your heart. What that means for someone who plays ice hockey is that it is a healthy sport in which to participate. You can lose weight, maintain weight and just remain healthy while having fun playing ice hockey. You know by seeing professional hockey players they have to stay in shape in order to maintain the speed and agility to play the game. Though someone playing just for the sport may not need the same speed, it's important to maintain the agility just to have an easier time doing all of those things you need to do for everyday life. The quicker and more agile your movements the more things you will be able to accomplish and thus the more active your lifestyle will be.

## **Ice Hockey – Not a Sport for the Weak**

With such a variety of sports in which sports-minded people can participate, it's important to understand that not every person is cut out for every sport. While some may be cut out for baseball or football others may fare better in a sport that isn't as rough such as bowling or golf. No matter what the situation may be there is a sport in which everyone can participate—it just won't always be the same one. You need to find your strengths and weaknesses and find a sport that will allow you to put them to the best use. While some people are naturals on the ice hockey field the same is not true of everyone.

One thing you want to remember is that ice hockey is not a sport for the weak. It takes a great deal of skill and quick thinking in order to win a game. Being able to move quickly in order to block the opponent from making a goal is the nature of the game and unfortunately you may become injured in the process even when wearing a mask and/or shin guards. Though the types of injuries are fewer in a game of ice hockey than when playing field hockey the severity may increase. Instead of being able to crawl out of the way in a game of field hockey, during ice hockey you may find several players adding to your injuries with the blades from their skates before you are able to remove yourself from the ice rink.

Ice hockey is a very competitive sport and as such you need to learn to understand there will be times you are going to lose. If you are a sore loser and become violent in light of a loss you will not be very well-liked nor are you likely to spend much time in the game. Those who are able to take losses in stride are more likely to become successful ice hockey players. That doesn't mean you have to take a nonchalant attitude, but you do want to learn not to become angry when you lose a game. No matter how good your team may be there will be times when the competition is too strong for you to beat, no matter how good your tactics may be. Those who are strong enough to handle the stress of a competitive ice hockey game are those who will make the best players.

## **Ice Hockey Play Times and Overtime**

Although not all sports have specified play times, many do—football, soccer, field and ice hockey are just a few. A game of ice hockey has three twenty minute play periods, but these times do not include any time outs or game stoppages. If the game stops for any reason, the clock will stop as well. It is important for fans and players alike to understand that an ice hockey game may not necessarily end in sixty minutes—it depends on many mitigating factors including the number of time outs and how many times the referee needs to stop the game. If you are trying to plan a schedule, you want to plan for at least thirty to sixty minutes longer in order to allow for a reasonable number of game stoppages.

How can you make a determination on time? If you have attended games for the same ice hockey team in the past you will be able to grasp an idea about the length of time you can expect to be at the game. You want to make sure to think ahead if you are waiting for someone to pick you up or have somewhere else to be when the game is over. The more game stoppages there are the longer the game will last. You also have to understand there may be unexpected game stoppages such as when someone gets hurt or when the coach has a need to talk to his team during the middle of the game. Not everything can be discussed at half time because something may happen before or after that time, which requires immediate attention.

Overtime is also something on which you cannot always plan, and it doesn't have anything to do with game stoppages. A game will go into overtime when there is a tie score. Overtime is then necessary to assess the winner of that game. Thus, you have an overtime situation when you have to allot additional playtime in order to break a tie. In the event that the game still remains a tie the game will continue until one team has more points than the other one. Each twenty-minute play period will be instituted in an effort to break a tie and call a winner for that game. No professional game ends until someone wins or they have exhausted overtime plays that some teams assess.

## **Issuance and Reasons for Ice Hockey Penalties**

In a game of ice hockey a player can encounter both major and minor penalties based upon the action that is involved. There exists a problem often because the difference between a legal check and a penalty is one that is often left open to interpretation thus causing discord among not only the players but also the fans and other people who may be involved in the game. Any player who is charged with a minor penalty is removed from the ice for two minutes with no allowance for substitution. If the opposing team scores a goal the penalty immediately ends.

There are several reasons a referee may call a minor penalty against a player in his attempt to obstruct his opponent. Some of those reasons include the following:

- Using the hockey stick or your knee to trip another player
- Using the stick or hands to hold
- Using your stick to hook
- Checking or impeding a player who does not have the puck

Players can also receive a penalty for using his hockey stick to engage in dangerous activities such as the following:

- Slashing
- Spearing
- Using your hockey stick to hit an opponent in the head or face
- Hitting an opponent with the shaft of your hockey stick

A player is also subject to a penalty for dangerous physical confrontations that include:

- Elbowing
- Checking an opponent from behind
- Kneeing
- Roughing up an opponent such as wrestling or shoving

Players are also subject to major penalties for certain more serious infractions. The penalty that is imposed depends on the offense the player commits. Some of the reasons a player might receive a major penalty can expect any of the following:

- Any player that is charged with a major penalty must leave the rink for five minutes
- Fighting is the most common infraction that results in a major penalty. Substitutions are permitted if both fighters are subject to a five minute penalty outside of the rink
- The referee may choose to turn a minor penalty into a major one at his discretion. This usually happens if the opponent suffered serious injury or he feels the player was attempting to injure another player deliberately.
- If a player is charged with a major penalty that causes serious injury or he is attempting to cause injury to another player he will be removed from the game.
- When a player who is assessed a major penalty is removed from the game one of his teammates will serve his major penalty. In this case no substitutions are permitted.

## **Learn the Game Well Before You Compete**

In any sport you cannot be successful in a competition unless you know the game well before you begin to compete. It doesn't matter whether it's ice hockey or another sport—you have to know exactly what the game entails before you begin to compete with other teams. Certainly you need the experience in order to learn how to win in a competition but you also need to make sure you know exactly what can happen in the rink and what to expect from the opposing team. It may look easy when you watch a game on television but in reality the moves are much more difficult than they seem.

In order to be successful in a competitive game of ice hockey you need to not only know the game completely but you must also be very experienced in how to make the right moves and how to block your opponent from making a goal. Without the ability to do that you will not be effective in helping your team win a game. It's rare for a team to win every game but you don't want to be the one responsible for causing your team to lose because you are not as experienced as the other players. Although many teams do have you try out before they decide to put you on a team, there are some who will allow everyone to play regardless of the ability. This is especially true of amateur teams who need additional players.

Gaining the experience you need before playing competitively, means you need to practice without the stress of competing. You can do this by playing the game in a sports club or when you are still in school and have the opportunity to play without competing. It is much easier to learn the game without the stress of competing while you are still learning how to play the game including all of the tactics and moves you will need to know when you begin competing in a professional or semi-professional game of ice hockey. The more you know about the game the easier it will be for you to help your team win a victory. It is unlikely you will be responsible for helping your team win every game but you will be at a better advantage when you learn everything you can about the competitive angle of the game.

### **Notable Ice Hockey Attendance Records**

Although one can never predict the turnout of any ice hockey game one of the largest attendance records in history occurred on October 6, 2001. The game was commonly known as the Cold War and involved two college hockey rivals, the University of Michigan and Michigan State University. The game took place on Michigan State's outdoor football field where the temperature was 30°. They used a sheet of ice that cost \$500,000 and in spite of the cold the game drew a crowd of 74,554 people, toppling the 55,000 that attended the Sweden vs. Soviet Union game when the world championship game was played in Moscow.

Another notable game was called the Heritage Classic. This game was played outside on November 22, 2003 in Edmonton, Alberta Canada and was a competition between the Edmonton Oilers and the Montreal Canadiens. The game set the record for the most viewers of any individual NHL game, boasting a mind-boggling 2.747 million viewers nationwide. Whether you're watching the game in person or on television it's going to draw a large crowd of ice hockey fans. Certain games have a knack for drawing in viewers simply because those teams have appeal for the audience. People attend certain games because they like certain teams and they prefer those teams for various reasons.

The MegaStars game is called an old-timers game, took place before the regular season match, and was comprised of an Oilers alumnus playing against a squad of players formerly from the Canadiens. This game was the last and final game played by Wayne Gretzky after he retired. On the other hand the largest attendance record for an NHL game was when a crowd of 71,000 watched the Pittsburgh Penguins play against the Buffalo Sabres. The game was played at Ralph Wilson Stadium in Orchard Park, New York on January 1, 2008. This was the first NHL game in the United States that took place outdoors. The game was successful from a public relationship point of view in spite of the snow and cold temperatures that were in place at the time the game took place. That just shows that a true ice hockey fan doesn't care how cold it is

—they are interested in seeing their favorite team play an excellent and exciting game of ice hockey and may pave the way to a worldwide championship in the process.

## **World Championships in Ice Hockey**

Nothing is better for an athlete than to be able to say he was part of a team that won world championships. Whether it's the Olympic Games or just participation in games that are seen throughout the world doesn't matter. In fact you may even find a game in which you can compete in your own town that is part of a world championship game. If you're looking to promote your career as an ice hockey player nothing is better than participating in some of the world championships. If you are a semi-professional player who hasn't yet made the commitment to join a professional team, you want to take any time you have available and travel the world for championship games.

How do you participate if you are not part of a team? You don't necessarily need to be part of a team to participate in an ice hockey championship game. As long as you can join with six players whether it's a team or friends who also play the game you will be able to promote yourself by joining in one of the world championship games. Even if you aren't interested in playing ice hockey professionally participating in world championships will promote your skills as a semi-professional athlete. In addition, if you decide at some point later in your life that you want to become a professional ice hockey player you will already have the credentials you need to be accepted as an experienced player.

If you want to find out where world championship games are being held you want to read some of the sporting magazines or those that have information on winter sports. Although ice hockey is not necessarily a winter sport you are more likely to find information about championship games in publications that are directed toward those games that are more popular in the winter. With the addition of artificial ice rinks ice hockey became a year round sport though some people still prefer to play the game on real ice. In fact, the best way to practice is during the winter on a frozen lake or pond instead of spending the money to go to an ice arena where you will also be in the company of ice skaters and not just those who are ice hockey players. World championship ice hockey is an important event for those who wish to become world-renowned ice hockey players.

## **Purpose of Officials in ice Hockey**

In ice hockey, there are people who are responsible for maintaining order and enforcing the rules of the game. These officials perform many different duties and may be in the rink or on the sides of the rink. The job each performs is of no less importance than any other job. The difference is not in the importance but in the reason each official has to perform a certain job. For instance, on-ice officials are in the hockey rink. They are usually wearing a black hockey helmet, black pants, a black and white striped shirt and black polished skates that have pure white laces. They also wear standard style hockey skates and use a finger whistle to stop play. While these officials used to have their names on the back of their shirts, they began wearing numbers instead beginning in 1994.

The referee is responsible for the smooth operation of the game and usually wears a red or orange armband. In most cases he is the only person who has the authority to penalize for

violations of the rules. There are some cases when the linesmen may call a penalty such as when the referee doesn't see what happened to call it. The referee also conducts both the opening faceoff in each period and any additional face-offs that may be necessary throughout the game. For the most part the linesmen are responsible for making sure there are no violations of the centerline and the blue line. Linesmen also conduct face-offs and break up any fist fights or other confrontations that may occur.

The goal judge is the one who makes a decision about whether a player has actually scored a goal. He will check to make sure the puck has totally crossed the goal line. You will usually find one goal judge located outside the rink and behind each goal net. Depending on the size of the arena and the size of the team you may find any number of other officials present during the playing of an ice hockey game. There are many other roles that may be necessary to fill with a very popular and experienced team, especially within the NHL. Though not every team will have the same number of officials, players need to understand what they might expect to see during the playing of a championship game. These officials listed here are only a few of the possibilities one may find.

## **Rules of Sledge Hockey**

The rules for ice sledge hockey are pretty much the same as the rules for any other ice hockey. There are some modifications necessary because of the way the sledge is designed and the accommodations that must be made because of the disabilities of the players. The rules that have been implemented and enforced in the regular ice hockey leagues apply to most of the sledge ice hockey leagues around the world as well. The differences that have been identified for the game of ice sledge hockey are modifications for the athletes and their sledges. The first set of official international rules was adapted in 1990 and were modified from Canadian rules.

The entranceways to the benches where the players sit as well as the penalty benches for players who are removed from the ice are designed so that they are level with the ice. In this way the players are able to access them without the need for a coach or person who lacks any kind of disability. In addition the surface area that is within the benches in both the players' area and penalty area are either a smooth plastic or ice in order to avoid any damage to the sledges of the players.

Each piece of ice sledge hockey equipment must adhere to the standard that the Ice hockey Executive Committee has set forth including the sledges themselves, sticks, helmet, skates and any other protective gear a player may be required or choose to wear. The sticks players use for ice sledge hockey have curved blades on one end that are similar to those used in regular ice hockey and on the opposite end of the blade you will see six to eight picks that are used for maneuvering and propelling the sledge. To allow movement the player uses the metal teeth in order to grip the ice and thus move forward. The metal picks cannot be too pointy and must not protrude any farther than one centimeter beyond the stick. This is to prevent damage to the ice as well as other players.

If one has already been an ice hockey player before becoming disabled there is no need to learn the entire game of ice sledge hockey but only those things that differ from playing regular

ice hockey. It is a good way for someone who enjoys ice hockey to be able to continue to play in spite of disabilities.

## **Tactics of Ice Hockey**

It's important to know the tactics in any game in which you participate. There is not a sports activity in which you participate that does not have tactics, or in simpler terms the means by which you achieve your goal or prevent the opponent from achieving theirs. Many competitive sports require participants to block the opponent or find other means by which to score points for themselves or their team. Even a sport as simple as volleyball requires certain tactics to make sure when your ball goes over the net the other team is unable to score points. In most cases you accomplish that by putting it over the net so that the other team is not able to put the ball back over the net.

When you are in an ice hockey championship losing a game might mean you are out of that event. In order to prevent that players tend to resort to a series of tactics that increase their chances of winning. There are several different tactics an ice hockey player may employ in order to increase the chances of a win for his team. Some of these tactics are legal while others are not permitted at all.

Some of the tactics players use in ice hockey includes checking, fighting and various kinds of shots at the puck. Checking is the most common tactic players use to prevent the opponent from scoring and may include back checking, fore-checking, stick checking, sweep checking, and body checking. Body checking is an illegal tactic in which a player uses his hip or shoulder to hit a player who is control of the puck.

Many believe that aggression is the best defense tactic to use. Some teams who use this simple tactic are very victorious, but you need to know your opponent but it may be more effective to plan your strategy before the game begins. There are also a variety of shots you can make on the puck in order to reach your goal.

Unfortunately many teams also resort to fighting when they are losing a game. This tactic is not actually for violence or to generate anger but to increase the morale of the players on the losing team and uproot the rhythm of the winning team so they lose the game. There may be other tactics teams use to increase their chances of winning but not all are legal. The tactics are an essential part of the teams' planning when they are looking for a championship win and for this reason some teams hire enforcers.

## **Rules of Ice Hockey**

Most people already understand the rules of any hockey game involve preventing the opposing team from making a goal or winning more points than your team. However there are some other rules that are involved when playing the game that can allow you to win or receive a penalty if you violate the rules. The game of ice hockey begins with the referee dropping the puck between two forwards on opposing teams. At this point in the game all of the other players remain on the defensive side of the puck. This action is called a faceoff and is used anytime the game stops as well as when it begins.

An ice hockey game is comprised of three twenty minute periods of play. These periods may not necessarily be to the minute because any time there is a stop in the game the clock will also be stopped. For instance, if the game is halted because someone is hurt and must be removed from the rink, the clock will be stopped. Thus instead of having a twenty minute period based on the actual clock, you have three twenty minute period where the teams actually play the game. Of course, for those who have seen sports of any kind you know this is the case with any game. If either team calls a time out for whatever reason the clock stops until the game resumes.

Body checking is a method by which a player attempts to stop someone from the opposite team from pushing the puck through the goalie to the net and scoring. If the opposing team has the puck a player can use a shoulder, hip or torso to impede the movement of the opponent. It is illegal to target the head of an opponent or his back if that player is facing the boards. A player who violates the rules of a body check can be subject to a penalty though one of the problems is there is sometimes the problem with interpretation when it involves a legal check and a penalty. This tends to create discord among not only the players but also the fans and anyone else who is involved in the game. A penalty can be either minor or major depending on the situation and can include not only illegal body checks but also fighting and other offenses that disrupt the game and create the potential for chaos among the players or fans.

## **The Competitive Angle of Ice Hockey**

Like any sport you can choose to play ice hockey just for the fun of it or to win. Playing to win creates the competitive angle some people need in order to perform their best. It means putting your best foot forward and not just playing around on the ice as some people tend to do when there is no competition involved. Although it would be advantageous to play every game as though it were competition not everyone is inclined to do that. The stress that comes from knowing you are competing against another person or team keeps the adrenalin flowing and helps make a person play harder than they do under non-stressful situations.

The problem with failing to develop a competitive mindset is that when you are preparing to learn ice hockey you don't work as hard because you are not competing. Yet at the same time it's important to play as though you were competing. How do you accomplish both? Developing that competitive mindset is something you will need to condition yourself to do during practice sessions. Practice is not competitive yet at the same time it prepares you for the "big game," so in a way it has the same effect. There is a need to make sure you can maintain a competitive mind at all times so that you can do your best.

When you are first learning how to play ice hockey it is unlikely you will have the competitive mindset necessary for later play. However, this is the time you must teach yourself to either maintain a competitive mindset or to work well in both situations. The key to being able to play just as well under competitive and non-competitive conditions is mind conditioning. Do not let down your guard but always play as though you were competing. If you begin doing that from the time you first learn the game you will be able to continue with that line of thinking and thus play the same way at practice, playing for fun and during a big competition. Anyone who is dedicated to any sport can learn to play as though each time they pick up a ball, stick, bat, or whatever the equipment is for their game of choice they are competing. Never let your guard down—always play as though this was the biggest game of the season.

## **The Importance of Safety Equipment**

In addition to its competitive angle, ice hockey also has the potential to cause injury to the players if they don't follow simple safety rules. There is safety equipment developed for playing ice hockey and no player should enter the ice rink to play unless they have all of the required and even optional safety equipment. There are some pieces of equipment that are a requirement of the teams for which you play and there are others that are optional. As a player of ice hockey you must decide to invest in safety equipment in order to keep yourself safe while you are playing the game.

Most teams require all players to wear knee pads. This is to protect the knees and legs of the player if he or she should take a fall on the ice. Attempting to circumvent this requirement can end your career not only in ice hockey but also in many other occupations as well. Though it is more important for a professional hockey player, even those who play the sport on a regular basis as part of an amateur team or just with friends are taking a chance if they don't wear knee pads. Even if your regular job involves sitting in an office a damaged knee can be uncomfortable when you are sitting or walking.

Goalies must wear a face mask in order to prevent damage to the face from either being hit by a hockey stick, colliding with another player or in the case of field hockey being hit in the face with the ball. It doesn't take much for someone to receive a rather hard blow to the face from a flying hockey stick. Players sometimes become upset when they miss the puck or are put into the penalty box and will throw their stick. This action can damage other players, so even though you may not be a goalie it is not a bad idea to develop the habit of wearing a face mask.

You may also want to wear pads in your uniform so that if you take a fall on your bottom you will not be injured. It is very easy to injure your back if you should fall on the ice, so the more you can protect your body from injury the less likely you are to suffer long term or permanent disability as a result. The choice you make will protect you not just for today's game but for the rest of your life.

## **The Presence of Ice Hockey in Popular Culture**

Ice hockey is not just something you watch on the sports channel on television or at the local sports arena. You will find many movies not only on the sport of ice hockey but where it becomes part of the movie. The setting may be at a resort or in a place where the weather is extremely cold with frozen lakes. Children mull around the frozen lake playing hockey on the frozen ice—it may not even be an official puck or hockey stick. The idea is to present the idea of ice hockey as something fun to do even on the spur of the moment.

Although other sports have been a part of movies and stage productions there is probably none as common as ice hockey. Perhaps it is because of its potential to become a spur of the moment thing—all one needs is a stick, something to act as a puck and a frozen body of water. Certainly that is not the safest way to play, but it is no different than the neighborhood children who play street hockey with nothing more than a ball and stick. This is one of the nice things about hockey—you can find a way to accommodate the use of formal equipment when it is not available. It is probably one of the few sports that allows you to do that—football, baseball, soccer, basketball, etc. all require at least the ball though you can substitute something for the bat if necessary.

Movies about ice hockey tend to attract the fans of the sport whether it is directly about the sport itself or just part of the scene. There is so much to learn about the sport and those who are adamant fans will take a movie and tear it apart—it better be factual in its portrayal or it will not appeal to those who are fans of the sport. Though one would think a movie might have some not so accurate information, for the ice hockey fan this is not allowed. They believe if you are going to include the sport in a fiction story whether a movie or book you need to make sure the information you provide is accurate. Most writers will also agree that having information that is accurate about the storyline will make it more believable and will draw in more readers and/or viewers.

## **Using Ice Hockey to Stay in Shape**

Although ice hockey is a very competitive sport you can also use it as a means to stay in shape. You may not do it directly but by choosing to play you will find that you are getting plenty of exercise to not only help you stay in shape but boost your metabolism as well. You are dealing with aerobic exercise whenever you play ice hockey, so your decision to engage in this sport has a two-fold purpose. Without even trying you have the ability to stay in shape and keep your body toned and fit. When you don't think you are exercising you don't take the time to dread it and thus have much better results.

When you play ice hockey especially in the amateur ice arena you are less likely to see the benefit of the game as exercise. However, professional players know they must stay in shape in order to be able to compete in the game. Being out of shape will prevent a player from being able to do the moves that are necessary with the speed required to win the game or even make good moves during the game. On the other hand an amateur player can stay in shape without even trying. When something does not appear to be exercise the results are much better. Those who do things for fun have much better results than those who do it because they think they have to do so.

That doesn't mean to say you need to start playing ice hockey but if you already enjoy the sport it is certainly an easy way to both have fun and exercise. The key to effective exercise is to do things that are fun and exhilarating at the same time. Choose an activity that will provide the exercise you need in a fun and healthy way and you will have more success. With ice hockey you can enjoy a competitive game and still experience the benefits of aerobic exercise without realizing you are doing it. What does that mean? It means you won't think you are exercising thus you won't dread it and will be happier when you are engaging in your "exercise" of choice. Even the stress of the competition will provide needed exercise for your heart thus the benefits will be increased greatly while you are enjoying a game of ice hockey.

## **Women's Ice Hockey and the Olympics**

Women's ice hockey was approved for inclusion as an Olympic event at the 99<sup>th</sup> IOC Session in 1992. The first time the event was a part of the Olympics was during the 1998 Winter Olympics. The process took so long because the decision to include women's hockey needed the approval of the Nagano Winter Olympic Organizing Committee, which originally hesitated to include the event because of the additional cost factors related to including the tournament. It took until November 1992 for the NWOOC and IOC Coordination Committee to come to an agreement

about including a women's ice hockey tournament in the Olympic program during the 1998 games. Part of the agreement included limiting the number of teams to six so that no additional facilities would be necessary. If the NWOOC had failed to approve the event for 1998 the IOC had agreed it would be included in the 2002 Winter Olympics.

Prior to 1998 women's hockey had been a by-product of Canada with Canadian teams being the only ones winning the World Championship at that time. By 1997, there was a huge improvement in the American team making it an even match for Canada. During that year there were thirteen total with Canada winning seven and the United States six. In 1998, the tournament also included teams from Finland, Sweden, China, and host Japan. In the round-robin portion the United States won the gold medal final, outdoing Canada and going on to become the third American ice hockey team to win the coveted Olympic gold medal.

The 2002 Winter Olympics allowed eight teams, a move that allowed Russia, Germany and Kazakhstan to qualify for the first time. Though the Canadian and American teams were undefeated during the first round and then into the semi-finals, the Canadian team won in a rematch for the gold medal. Sweden won the bronze medal in a match against Finland, the first championship in women's ice hockey. In 2006 Italy and Switzerland were added as qualifiers though Italy had qualified only because it was the host country. The Italian team lost 32-1 in three games after which the IIHF decided they would try to increase the competition and remove that clause allowing host countries to qualify on that basis alone. At the 2008 semi-finals America was defeated by Sweden, the first time anyone other than Canada had defeated them. Canada then defeated Sweden to win the gold medal while America won the bronze when they defeated Finland.