

April 29, 2024

Good morning ASAA Board members. My name is Wescott Bott.

I'm here to talk about the Hockey Dual Participation Rule. My son and I, and many others spoke on this topic in person at your board meeting last October. We thank you for suspending the Rule last year and urge you to permanently abandon that rule.

Last year many were concerned that getting rid of the rule would lead to a disaster of conflicts between comp hockey and high school hockey. That simply did not happen. As we told you last year that this rule is more about adults getting in the way and making up needless rules rather than focusing on what matters... letting kids play hockey. The rule was all about adults and their politics and turf-wars.

The reality is...hockey season went great. Most High school and comp hockey coaches worked together to figure out how to allow comp players, Especially Tier 1 players, to play both. Of course, there were a few high school and comp coaches could not see past their own self-importance and would not allow Tier 1 Comp players to play high school. And that's ok too. We knew that going into it. But in the end, things worked themselves out.

The outcomes from last season....

1. More of our very best players, the Tier 1 comp kids, were able to play, elevating the competition and very likely resulting in several of them staying in Alaska one more year. Kids who otherwise would have left the state. I know at least 3 kids in that category.
2. Fewer sheets of ice went unused, especially prime ice time on Fridays and Saturdays.
3. The ASAA tournaments were some of the highest quality high school hockey that ASAA has put on in years. It was fast, high-energy hockey!
4. Best of all.... 27 Tier 1 Comp hockey players, both boys AND GIRLS, were able to compete in the ASAA state tournament. They otherwise would not have been eligible to.

Moving forward, there is absolutely no need for this rule. That was clearly proven last season. What's also clear is that the rule is more about adult politics getting in the way of kids playing a fun game. What's weirder is that no other ASAA sport has this rule?... How is that fair? How is it ASAA's job to dictate what a kid is allowed to do on their own time? And last, why not let coaches and kids navigate participation in both Comp and High School hockey? It worked last year. Get rid of the rule.

Looking ahead to the upcoming season, we understand that the 14, 15, and 16 year old Tier 1 coaches are not allowing their comp players to play high school hockey and that's unfortunate. As a result, my oldest kid and several others have chosen to not play Tier 1 again next year so that they can play high school. I expect more will follow when they see that Tier 1 has gotten watered down and struggles to compete in the Lower 48. Unfortunately, there are also more kids who are leaving Alaska as a result, further depleting the Tier 1 programs. But I hope ASAA doesn't have a reactionary response of "Well, the Tier 1 comp program won't compromise, so we're putting the rule back in place". That would only perpetuate the adult pissing-match at the expense of kids. ASAA should eliminate the rule and watch the natural consequences unfold for Tier 1. It might take a few seasons, but the Tier 1 coaches will learn some natural consequences when their players force the issue and demand to play high school.

Thank you.

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