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GUEST SPEAKER: JOHNNY PHILLIPS FROM TOP DECK'S LONDON, U.K. OFFICE FEBRUARY 02, 1989 7:00 p.m. ROOM 142, L'EXPRESS OVERFLOW (MAIN FLOOR) S.U.B.

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IMPORTANT
JAN. FEB. MAR. '89

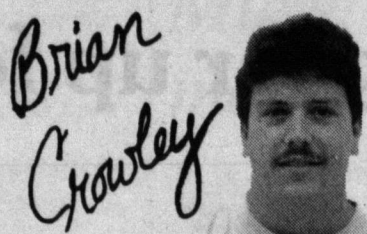
FEEES DIVISION WILL BE DISBURSING GOVERNMENT GRANTS, OTHER SCHOLARSHIP CHEQUES AND SIGNING LOAN FORMS IN ROOM 349 CAB

8:30 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.

JAN. 03 - 06
JAN. 30 & 31
FEB. 01 & 02
FEB. 27 & 28
MAR. 01 & 02

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The headlines screamed "ELITISM" last week, as the city's sports pages turned their attention to amateur hockey during the annual Minor Hockey Week Tournament.

Destroy elitism! Minor hockey registrations are going down because of elitism! Hide your children until the system is changed!

Within the current system, players of the same age grouping are divided at the beginning of the season, based on their skill level. As a result, each age group has a number of divisions, such as the A, B, and C division.

Howie Meeker, quoted in the *Edmonton Sun*, was absolutely horrified at the state of minor hockey. He feels that Soviet-style training camps would be more appropriate for the kids. Give them more drills, and fewer games and scrimmages. Have elite players play in the same leagues with less-skilled players.

So who came to the rescue of the current system? None other than Mr. Coach's Corner, Don Cherry. Grapes, also in the *Sun*, rebuked Howie by stating he'd change only one thing in minor hockey: "less emphasis on drills". Have more scrimmages, because that is what the kids want. If the kids are having fun, they'll stick around, and the more skilled players will naturally rise to the top.

While I agree with Grapes' assessment of appropriate

as fast when they are playing with less-skilled, or inexperienced players. The inexperienced player will not have much fun sitting on his butt, while "the next Gretzky" (oops, I'm not supposed to mention the G-word anymore) glides past him for yet another break-away. Indeed, I pity the coach who tries to satisfy the varied needs of such a team. Johnny can't stop properly. Jimmy's learning about off-sides and icing. And little Jeff is asking how to set-up an effective power play system. That coach would deserve either a "purple heart", or a valium.

Too much emphasis on winning is driving kids out of hockey.

Inappropriate coaching (for the team's level) is driving kids out of hockey.

Heavy travel and high costs are driving kids out of hockey.

Introducing full body contact at an early age is driving kids out of hockey.

Categorization ("elitism") is



The new system being discussed would eliminate these divisions, spreading all of the players over all of the teams. Proponents claim it will eliminate the "elitism" of the current system, by abolishing these divisions. Many "experts" are in their corner.

Vern Paul, President of the Alberta Amateur Hockey Association, was quoted in the *Edmonton Journal*, claiming categorization (another word for elitism) should be removed for kids under 12.

coaching philosophy, I am afraid he has fallen into the same trap as Mr. Paul, Mr. Meeker, and a host of other commentators. They all fail to recognize the central issue: elitism is not the problem! Elitism is merely a smoke-screen which is blinding people from the real problem: How to keep players at all levels interested in the game.

Abolishing the current system would not solve anything and would make some problem areas even worse. Talented, experienced players will not develop

keeping kids in the game. The divisions make sense, if our concern is with the quality of the individual player's experience.

Let's recognize the individual player's wants. If he's talented and highly skilled, put him in a division where he can get the competition he needs to improve. New players, or less skilled players, should be put in divisions where their needs for skill development, and more of a recreational attitude are met.

After all, I'd have a shitty time playing in the N.H.L. And I don't think Gretzky (damn, that G-word again) would get quite the same rush playing in my novice league.

If there's room for varied levels of adult hockey, then let's ensure that there is also such room for our children. They shouldn't have to wait until they're 20 to get the type of hockey environment they want.

Pssst... don't tell the Chef, but Tuesday is:

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