

Ontario - The Rules have Changed -Team Canada Players no longer Eligible for High School Hockey

One of the strangest things about competitive sports, particularly at the amateur level, is the wide range of rules that govern where, when, or at what age a player may compete within certain leagues. Of particular note to Ontario hockey fans and players alike is the eligibility of players for "high school" hockey leagues, or alternatively the junior leagues. Of course, the junior league in question when it comes to hockey in the province is the Ontario Hockey League (OHL).

Recent changes have been implanted in Ontario that state that a player may no longer play in "high school" leagues if accepted onto a national team, or Team Canada. This, of course, would mean that the player was selected to play for Canada during the World Junior Hockey Championships, one of the most important amateur tournaments in Canadian sports. In this article, we will look at the reasoning behind this decision and the objections to it.

Unfair advantage

The main reasoning behind cancelling the eligibility of any player at the amateur level is that he has received a decided advantage. Usually this advantage is restricted to age, in that a player is much better at a certain age than younger aged players. However, experience definitely comes into play when the new regulation is considered.

Essentially, those that make such decisions are saying that players who are selected and play on Team Canada for the tournament receive a higher calibre of training than those who are not. It is similar to the thinking that prevents players from re-joining minor hockey after a certain amount of National Hockey League games; the argument here was that the intense training and team experience for the World Juniors is greater than the equivalent number of professional games.

Objections

Of course, there are many sound objections to the change in the rules. Here are a few of them.

Sport is about competition, and if a player receives additional training through a hockey association this should not prevent him from participating. A player named to the World Juniors is a major feat for any team, with good drawing power. It is not fair to deny fans of the chance to have a national hero on their home team.

Perhaps the biggest objection is that these rule changes are only valid in Ontario. Other provinces will continue to allow players to compete at the high school minor level even with Team Canada experience, and this leaves Ontario players out in the cold.

About the Author

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