



**VINIK SPORT & ENTERTAINMENT
MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

USF MUMA COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

**Lighting High School Hockey League (LHSHL)
FINAL RESEARCH REPORT**

Created by:

Janelle E. Wells, Ph.D. & Michelle Gacio Harrolle, Ph.D.
Madison Allen, Josh VanKooten, Sam Morgan & Aomori Allen
VSEM C/O 2020
June 21, 2020

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Introduction	5
Background	5
Objective of the Research	5
Method	5
Findings	6
Study 1 Observations	6
Study 1 Observations: Procedures	6
Study 1 Observations: Participants	6
Study 1 Observations: Data Analysis	6
Study 1 Observations: Findings	6
Theme 1: High Volume of Profanity and Verbal Abuse	6
Theme 2: Inconsistency Among Venues and Referees	8
Theme 3: Lack of Respect for Officials amongst LSHSL Stakeholders	9
Theme 4: Inconsistent Game Control	10
Study 1 Observations: Recommendations	10
Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews	11
Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Procedures	11
Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Participants	11
Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Data Analysis	11
Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Findings	11
Theme 1: Unsportsmanlike profanity	11
Theme 2: Justifying Behaviors	12
Theme 3: Inconsistent Referees	12
Theme 4: Highly competitive and intense rivalry games	12
Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Recommendations	13
Study 3 Penalty Data	14
Study 3 Penalty Data: Procedures	14
Study 3 Penalty Data: Participants	14
Study 3 Penalty Data: Data Analysis	14
Study 3 Penalty Data: Findings	14
Study 3 Penalty Data: Recommendations	15

Study 4 Pre and Post Survey	16
Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Procedures	16
Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Participants	16
Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Data Analysis	17
Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Findings	17
Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Recommendations	19
Study 5 Social Audit	20
Study 5 Social Audit: Procedures	20
Study 5 Social Audit: Participants	20
Study 5 Social Audit: Data Analysis	20
Study 5 Social Audit: Findings	20
Study 5 Social Audit: Recommendations	20
Overall Recommendations	22
Conclusion	23
Appendices	24
Appendix A: Interview Trainer 3 Transcript	24
Appendix B: Press PR + Marketing Social Overview	24

Executive Summary

The biggest issues surrounding youth sports today are related to sportsmanship, inclusivity, and diversity within the specific sport itself, and the Lightning High School Hockey League (LHSHL) is no exception. Hockey has been a predominantly white sport within North America; however, efforts to expand its reach to more diverse demographics have been apparent in the past few years, especially with the creation of the National Hockey League's (NHL) Declaration of Principles (NHL, 2017). As we continue to see an expansion of the sport of hockey, character development must parallel that growth, and collectively with the help of world-class partners like the NHL, Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality (RISE), Vinik Sport and Entertainment Management (VSEM) Program, and Press PR + Marketing, we can help educate and shape a positive culture.

The purpose of this initiative was to research, identify, implement, and elevate programs to positively educate and begin changing LHSHL's culture to create a respectful and inclusive environment. Through a multi-phase case study:

- Study 1: Observations
- Study 2: Athletic Trainer Interviews
- Study 3: Penalty Data
- Study 4: Pre and Post Data
- Study 5: Social Media Audit,

The following main findings were discovered and will be thoroughly reviewed throughout the report:

- Deviant behaviors from all stakeholders, particularly players and parents, are present in the LHSHL environment
- There are misinterpretations and contradictions on what the culture of hockey has been, is, and should be
- Inconsistent rule enforcement, particularly from officials, exist and heighten the frustration of all stakeholders
- Sportsmanship awareness has increased, yet the tolerance and enforcement for unsportsmanlike conduct has not been elevated

These perspectives will, in hopes, spark innovativeness to further develop the LHSHL, which in return will position the LHSHL to spearhead the progressive inclusivity character development initiatives that youth sports across North America are trying to accomplish.

Introduction

Background

The youth sport experience has dramatically changed over the past two generations from fun player-controlled to organized adult-controlled (Coakley, 2015). Essentially, amateur youth sport has begun to mirror the highly competitive culture present in professional sports. Farrey (2009) notes that in youth sport “the psychic landscape has shifted to such a degree that touting sportsmanship as an ideal is now seen as a sign of weakness in sports circles.” LSHSL leadership has witnessed a lack of sportsmanship on and off the ice that has harmed the fun, family-friendly environment they want within the league. Thus, they partnered with the NHL, PCA, RISE, VSEM, and Press PR + Marketing to research, identify, implement, and elevate programs to positively educate and begin changing the league’s culture. Specifically, LSHSL requested Press PR + create a marketing campaign (“Check Yourself”) to bring awareness for the need to increase sportsmanship within HS hockey. Simultaneously, the PCA created and delivered educational content to all of the LSHSL stakeholders (players, parents, coaches, and administrators). To evaluate these initiatives, VSEM conducted multiple research studies to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions.

Objective of the Research

The research objectives included:

1. Examining LSHSL’s sport culture, environment, and sportsmanship related to:
 - Misconduct reconstrual (wrongful behaviors that are justified as righteous)
 - Destructive language
 - Deviant behavior (e.g., fighting, lying, fouling, injuring)
 - Moral disengagement (process of convincing one’s self that ethical standards do not apply to oneself in a particular context)
2. Evaluating the character-building programming and marketing interventions:
 - Press PR + Marketing campaign
 - PCA workshops

Method

To serve the objectives of this project, a case study with multi-phases was used. Below are the descriptions of the five studies:

- Study 1: Observations
- Study 2: Athletic Trainer Interviews
- Study 3: Penalty Data
- Study 4: Pre and Post Data
- Study 5: Social Media Audit

Findings

Study 1 Observations

Researchers began the initiative by unbiasedly observing LSHSL's stakeholders' behaviors.

Study 1 Observations: Procedures

The VSEM researchers attended 58 games between February 2018 and February 2020. Sixteen (16) teams were represented in the data across five venues, including Brandon Ice Sports Forum, Florida Hospital Center Ice, Clearwater Ice Arena, Tampa Bay Skating Academy, and Ellenton Ice and Sports complex. One hundred and ninety (190) observations were observed and categorized by behavioral types.

Study 1 Observations: Participants

During the 2018-2020 seasons all stakeholders were observed during LSHSL games.

Study 1 Observations: Data Analysis

Data were coded independently and organized into themes. This analysis tactic served to increase credibility and dependability as themes were affirmed, challenged, and confirmed.

Study 1 Observations: Findings

Key findings from the observations were organized into four primary themes:

1. High volume of profanity and verbal abuse
2. Inconsistency among venues and referees
3. Lack of respect for officials amongst LSHSL stakeholders
4. Inconsistent game control by officials

Theme 1: High Volume of Profanity and Verbal Abuse

Outside players' physical play and equipment incidents, to all stakeholders' verbal altercations and profanity were highly common. Perpetrators of profanity were equally split between players and parents and while verbal altercations came from all perpetrators, 42% were from parents and fans. The data (see Figures 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3) also reveals that coaches have the least number of incidents among all perpetrators. Furthermore, the high proportion of player verbal altercations to physical play (49%: 100%) suggests that verbal altercations quickly escalate to physical ones.

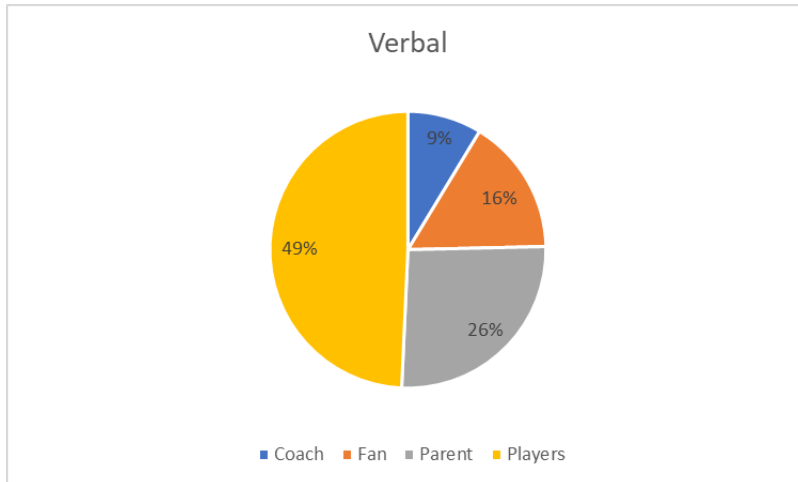


Figure 1.1. Perpetrators of verbal incidents

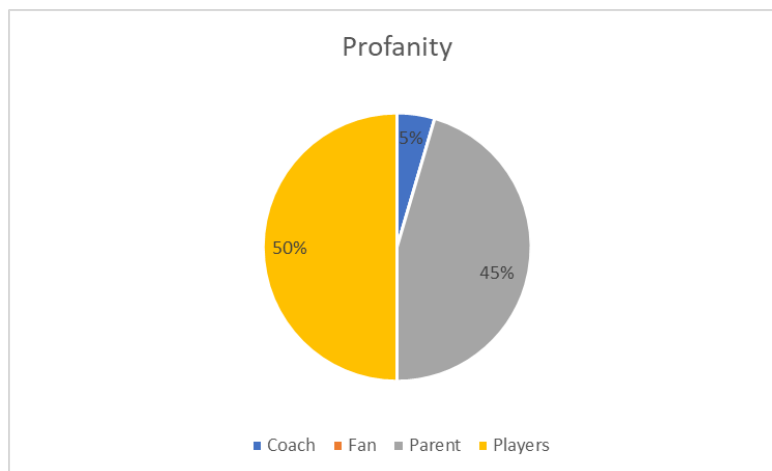


Figure 1.2. Perpetrators of profanity incidents

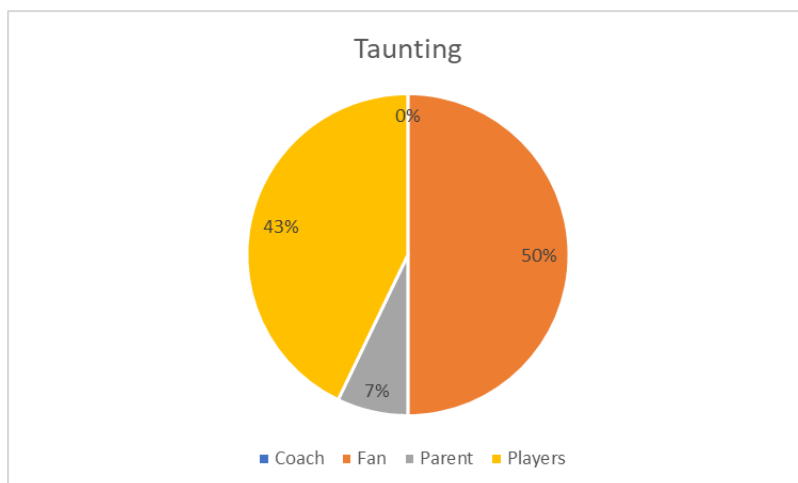


Figure 1.3. Perpetrators of taunting incidents

Theme 2: Inconsistency Among Venues and Referees

The data suggests there were inconsistencies in how incidents were handled by the different venues. Some venues appear stricter than others when it comes to incidents in the stands versus on the ice. As you can see from the graph below (see Figure 1.4), Ellenton and Oldsmar averaged higher incidents per game in the stands compared to other venues. This may be an indication of fan policies or social norms, allowing fans to become vocal about their view on the game and officials.

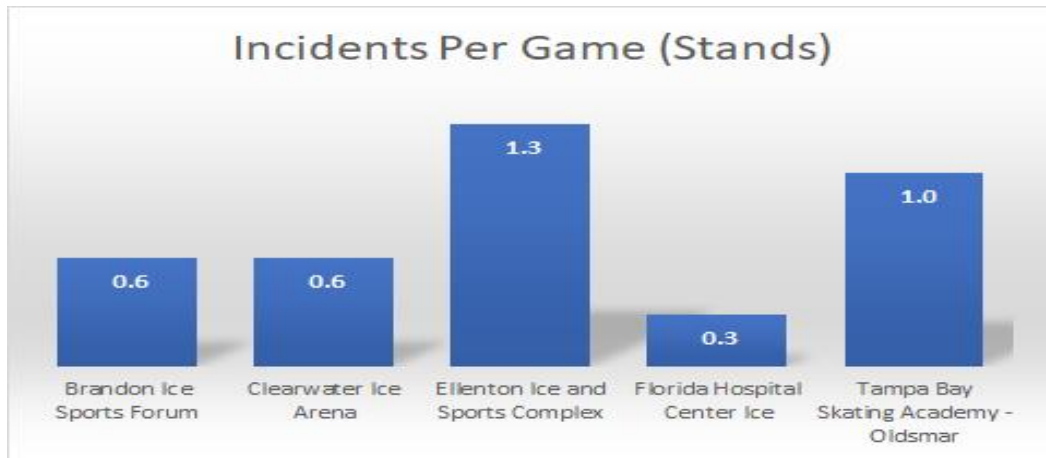


Figure 1.4. Venue Incidents by game

The data also suggests inconsistency in the way on-ice incidents are handled by the different locations (See Figure 1.5). Similar to the high number of incidents coming from the stands in Ellenton, just over half of on-ice incidents resulted in penalties, which is extremely low compared to the 69% of on-ice incidents that resulted in penalties at the Brandon Ice Sports Forum. This instigates instability across the league, giving players mixed signals from game to game, depending on where it’s played.

On-Ice Penalty by Locations

Location:	Did it result in a Penalty?		Grand Total
	No	Yes	
Brandon Ice Sports Forum	31%	69%	100%
	15	33	48
Florida Hopsital Center Ice	46%	54%	100%
	16	19	35
Clearwater Ice Arena	46%	54%	100%
	19	22	41
Tampa Bay Skating Academy - Oldsmar	36%	64%	100%
	4	7	11
Ellenton	47%	53%	100%
	7	8	15

Figure 1.5. One-ice penalties by Venue

Theme 3: Lack of Respect for Officials amongst LSHL Stakeholders

Excluding the player to player incidents, we found that officials are being targeted by all LSHL participants at an alarming rate (see Figure 1.6). Referees are typically at the receiving end of harsh criticism. This may prove a lack of control of the in-game environment, which could lead to more abuse or even escalate to violence.

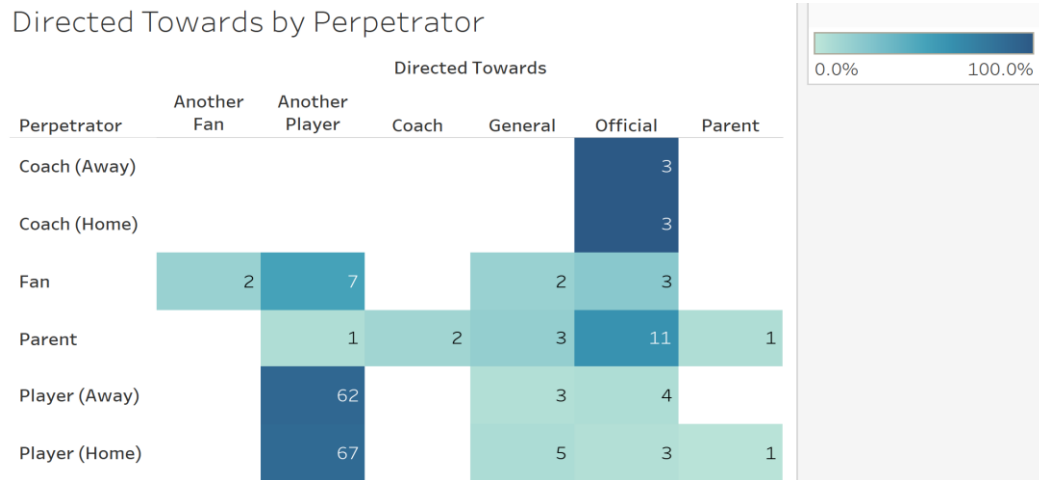


Figure 1.6. Perpetrator’s directed behavior

Additionally, there appears to be a wide range of incidents amongst teams (ranging from 1.3 to 6.7) demonstrating the variability across team behavior (see Figure 1.7).

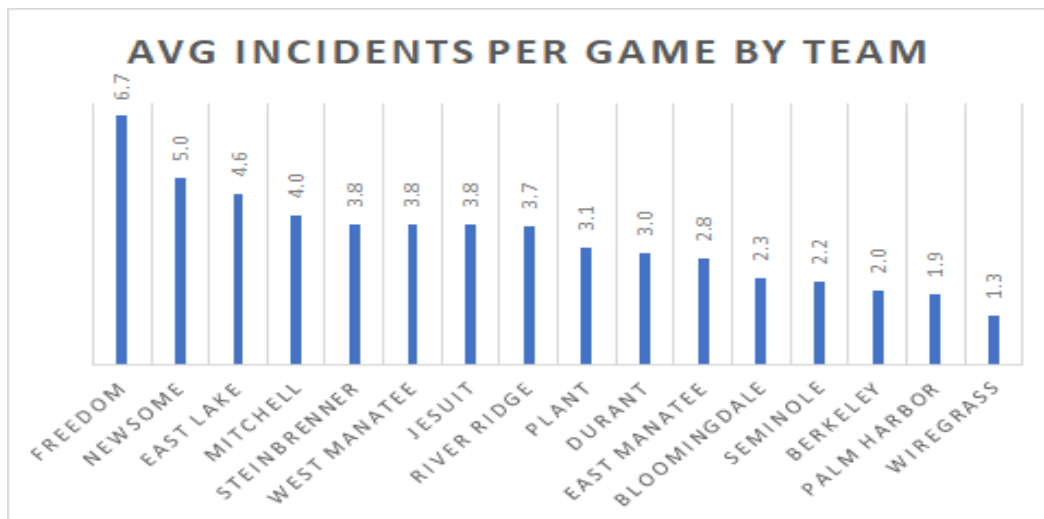


Figure 1.7. Average Incident per game by team

Theme 4: Inconsistent Game Control

There is a high concentration of penalties towards the start of games (see Figure 1.8).

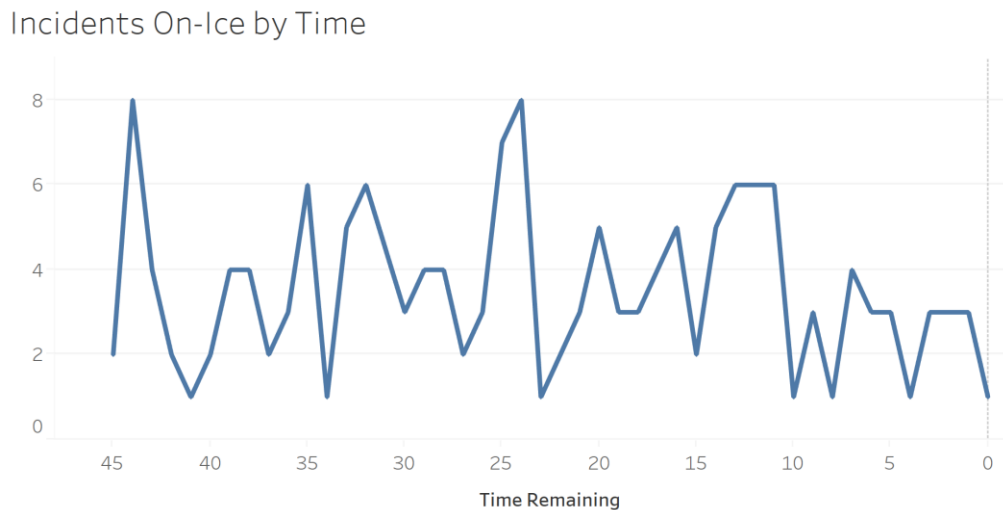


Figure 1.8. Behavioral incident on-ice over the game time.

Study 1 Observations: Recommendations

Based on the findings from the observations, we offer the following recommendations:

1. **More referee training** to have a solid pool of officials with an evenly distributed rotation of appearances at all five host arenas provides officials more familiarity and preparation for maximum results. The officials will gain direct access to data from referee feedback and post-game evaluations.
2. Create a LSHSL **referee educational program** to educate and ensure stakeholders are on the same page. Having monthly recap training sessions to maintain and improve officiating, as well as a safe space to share on-ice experiences involving incidents with players, coaches and parents. This will allow the group to learn from each other and share advice and techniques. The LSHSL is unique to other youth hockey leagues, and with different goals in mind, frontline officials are an important piece of molding better behavior from all parties.
3. **Establish communication protocols**, so the communication to the referees is limited to the coaches. The data supports that coaches have the least number of incidents among all groups of people.
4. **More significant penalties** for any verbal abuse or profanity directed towards officials. Create or better enforce a tiered system where those with multiple offenses are identified and addressed immediately.
5. **Establish or elevate the Code of Conduct**. This can assist all stakeholders, and also be the reference point to provide justification in any disputes.

Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews

After observing LSHL' stakeholders' behavior, it was important to speak with athletic trainers because of their close proximity to the ice directly besides the players, parents, coaches, and officials.

Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Procedures

Forty-five to sixty-minute interviews were held by phone with five LSHL athletic trainers.

Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Participants

All five Athletic Trainers from the LSHL (see Figure 2.1) were interviewed during the 2019-2020 season.

Trainer	Occupational Tenure	LSHL Organizational Tenure
Trainer 1	10 years	3 years
Trainer 2	7 years	2 years
Trainer 3	10 years	3 years
Trainer 4	4 years	2.5 years
Trainer 5	12 years	3 years

Figure 2.1. Athletic Trainer Demographics

Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Data Analysis

Once the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed, the data were coded and organized into themes independently by the researchers. This analysis tactic served to increase credibility and dependability as themes were affirmed, challenged, and confirmed.

Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Findings

Key findings from the athletic trainer interviews were organized into four primary themes:

1. Unsportsmanlike Profanity
2. Justifying Behaviors
3. Inconsistent Refereeing
4. Highly Competitive and Intense Rivalry Games

Theme 1: Unsportsmanlike profanity

- The usual phrases from the players are: "What the fuck is that ref?" "Why the fuck did you call that?" - Trainer 1
- "When they get called for a penalty they curse." - Trainer 3
- "Most common expressions used: Fuck" - Trainer 3
- "Every kid feels like the call against them is the worst one ever, so they are more likely to curse at the refs because of that." - Trainer 5
- "One specific thing is just how vulgar they can be sometimes and the words that they choose to say are inappropriate for high schoolers." – Trainer 2
- "I think I hear more cussing on the ice, between kids or more bickering between the kids than I do the kids at the referee." - Trainer 1

- “So we get to hear a lot more things, so I would say that the biggest difference is I hear a lot more foul language than any other sport.” - Trainer 5
- “Jesuit is what we call a pure team, they're almost exclusively kids from the high school they're very respectful, they're very polite to us, they use that language the least.” - Trainer 1

Theme 2: Justifying Behaviors

- “I've worked in sports for a while, and I've worked with collegiate athletes as well, and I think the things I've heard them say, so then I kind of think sometimes is it just like the nature of sports? This is just sometimes what people say when they're frustrated, and they're angry, but I go back to these kids are so young, and I'm just surprised there's just things that I would have never thought of saying when I was 15 or 16 years old.” - Trainer 2
- “I've also seen coaches who are completely oblivious to it. I don't know if they just are like 'oh it's the nature of the sport' or they just don't care, but I definitely have seen coaches go both ways on that, as far as feeding into it. Sometimes, especially if they feel like there's a bad call with the refs I've seen them obviously be aggressive towards refs too, which doesn't give the kids anything to look at.” - Trainer 2
- “I don't think the environment is hostile, I think it's more of the fact that they're high school boys playing.” - Trainer 3
- “Christian schools are stricter on player conduct, but a lot of the unsportsmanlike actions can be chalked up to players being high school students.” - Trainer 4

Theme 3: Inconsistent Referees

- “So there's some refs that will call standard games. There are other refs that I see, that I'm like... If I see them come out 'oh this is how this game is gonna be'.” - Trainer 3
- “It definitely depends on the referee... It depends on how many games they've done for that day, and their preconceived notions of the team. If they have a set of teams that are coming in that they know tend to play harder that may have a history of a lot of verbal players. I feel like they definitely penalize more for those types of games.” - Trainer 1
- “Certain refs will not call the game as fairly or consistently as others - certain refs want to “show them who's boss.” - Trainer 3
- “Penalties are often given, but ejections are less seen or less often handed out.” - Trainer 5
- “For the most part, fans are good. Every once in a while, you'll hear yelling at the refs for their inconsistency”- Trainer 3

Theme 4: Highly competitive and intense rivalry games

- “I wouldn't say Wiregrass & Bloomingdale use the most profanity because when they play each other it's equal, when they play other teams they're like any other teams, they're not as hostile towards each other, but that is a rivalry game.” - Trainer 1
- “I would say that when we have a game like Freedom/Steinberger where they're rival teams, they already know. 'Oh, this is going to be a shit show'.” - Trainer 1
- “There are certain teams that play each other regularly always and there is always a good rivalry in sports, so when that fire is a little bit more intense that's when the kids show a little bit more emotion, that's when they slip up or get mad at the other team, but it's kinda heat of the moment.” - Trainer 4
- “It was kind of a rivalry game, and it had just gotten to the point where there were a lot of big hits, the players just decided they would take it into their own hands.” - Trainer 5
- “Rivalry games are going to be rougher. They're going to play harder. They're going to try to get cheaper shots in. Same thing goes for Bloomingdale and Wiregrass. Same thing, goes

- for... Durant Bloomingdale.” - Trainer 1
- “East Manatee and River Ridge are the most aggressive teams I’ve ever worked with.” - Trainer 5

Study 2 Athletic Trainer Interviews: Recommendations

Based on the findings from the athletic trainer interviews we offer the following recommendations:

1. Create an **educational training** regarding referee calls, particularly for parents.
2. Collaborate with the referee association to ensure consistency and new evaluation methods.
3. **Stronger and consistent consequences** for foul language.
4. Rotate a parent liaison or a general admission liaison to monitor the stands during games.
5. **Investigate and address** the racist scorekeeper situation at TBSA (refer to Trainer 3 in Appendix A).
6. **Showcase the roles** of officials and athletic trainers more in PCA workshops to help shift the acceptance of the “trash talking” culture amongst all parties.

Study 3 Penalty Data

While observing and interviewing LSHL stakeholders, the LSHL collected penalty data from each game. To see if the initiatives had an influence on stakeholders' behaviors, we analyzed and compared the penalty data from the start of the 2018-2019 season to the start of the 2019-2020 season.

Study 3 Penalty Data: Procedures

Historical penalty data from the 2018-2020 seasons were provided by LSHL.

Study 3 Penalty Data: Participants

All LSHL players who have played over the 2018-2020 seasons were included.

Study 3 Penalty Data: Data Analysis

Data from 2018-2019 season were analyzed and compared to data from the 2019-2020 season.

Study 3 Penalty Data: Findings

Key findings from secondary data comparing the first half of the 2018-2019 season to the 2019-2020 season (see Figure 3.1) revealed the following:

- A 56.8% decrease in total penalties
- A 57.2% decrease in penalty minutes
- A 58.9% decrease in unsportsmanlike conduct
- A 62.9% decrease in checking from behind
- A 55.5% decrease in head contacts
- A 52.9% decrease in game misconducts
- Newsome had the most head contacts in both the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 seasons

Type of Penalty	2018-2019	2019-2020
	Penalties (through 11/30/18)	Penalties (through 11/1/19)
Abuse of Official	1	1
Boarding	12	13
Charging	5	9
Checking from behind	27	17
Fighting	9	0
Game Misconducts	17	9
Head Contact	18	10
Major Penalty	19	6
Unsportsmanlike Conduct	39	23
Total Penalties Called	1,106	629
Total Penalty Minutes	3,138	1,796

Figure 3.1. Penalty comparison data for the first half of the 2018-2020 seasons. Note. The intervention occurred at the beginning of the season.

Study 3 Penalty Data: Recommendations

Based on the findings from the secondary penalty data, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Recognizing the majority of the PCA workshops occurred in the first portion of the seasons, we encourage **more training throughout the season** to continue the educational touch points.
2. Weave the timely **penalty data** into the PCA workshops or provide it consistently to the necessary stakeholders.

Study 4 Pre and Post Survey

To examine the perceptions of change, we collected survey data before the interventions (e.g., PCA workshops and the Press PR + Marketing Check Yourself campaign) began and at the conclusion of the season.

Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Procedures

Pre survey data were collected at the end of the 2018-2019 season in March 2019, then following the PCA workshop at the start of the 2019-2020 season the post survey data were collected in February/March 2020. Data related to the following variables were collected:

- Awareness of the hostile and performance cultures
- Observations of hostile behaviors
- Respect of rules
- Perceptions of athlete's, parent's, coach's, and official's sportsmanship

Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Participants

All stakeholders participating in the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 seasons were asked to participate in a pre and post survey. To increase player participation, in addition to an online pre survey, data were collected during medical day. There was not an opportunity to collect data for the post survey, so stakeholder representation is lower. Below are the demographics for the 309 participants that completed the pre survey and the 193 participants that completed the post survey.

The demographics from the pre and post surveys mirrored one another outside of the stakeholders (see Figure 4.1), which had fewer players and officials represented in the post survey. Below are the demographics for the post survey:

- **Sex:** Male 63.1%, Female 35.9%
- **Racial/Ethnic Identity:** White 86.5%, Hispanic 4.1%, and other 4.7%
- **Age:** 12-17 years old 10.7%, 35-44 years old 16.3%, 45-54 years old 56.6%; 55-64 years old 10.7%

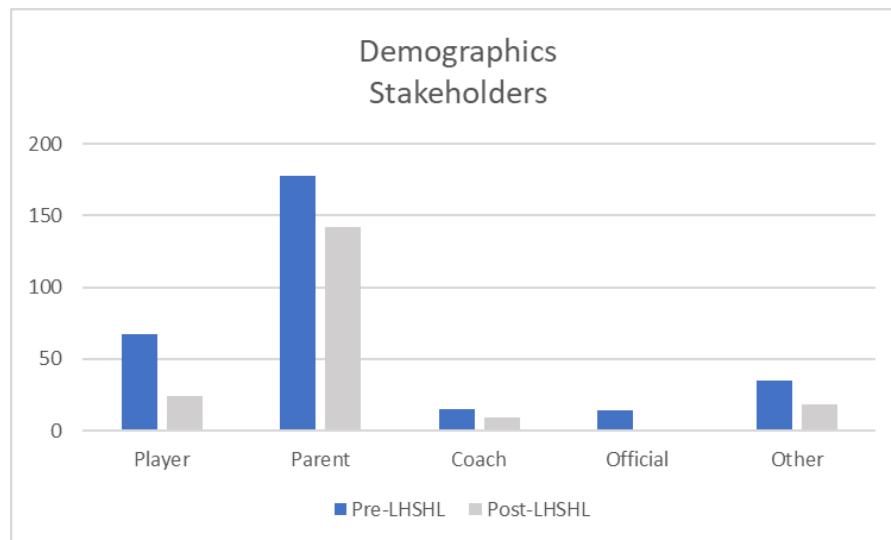


Figure 4.1. Stakeholder representation for pre and post surveys.

Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Data Analysis

Once data were collected and cleaned, descriptive statistics were calculated and mean comparisons were conducted.

Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Findings

Key findings from the pre and post survey revealed the following:

1. Each of the stakeholder groups overall sportsmanship mean score improved (see Figure 5.1).

Higher Mean Score is Positive		
	Pre	Post
Respect for Rules	3.21	3.39
Communication Climate	2.98	2.74
Coach Sportsmanship	3.47	3.67
Player Sportsmanship	3.03	3.49
Parent Sportsmanship	3.22	3.48
Official Sportsmanship	3.46	3.49
Note. A score of a 3 is a neutral perception.		

Figure 5.1. Mean scores of respect for rules, climate, and sportsmanship.

2. While misconduct reconstrual decreased, performance and hostile climates increased (see Figure 5.2).

Higher Mean is a Concern		
	Pre	Post
Misconduct - Conduct Reconstrual (Example - It is okay for players to lie to officials, if it helps their team.)	2.01	1.93
Performance Climate	3.03	3.09
Hostile Climate	3.28	3.52

Figure 5.2. Mean scores of misconduct, performance, and hostile climates.

3. Similar to the pre survey, the most prevalent “ism” in the post survey was sexism. Note. There is limited diversity represented within the league.

which I respond to my son after a game has changed; Made me re-think my own behaviors; It has helped quiet some obnoxious parents; Consistent messaging; Improvement in players and spectators.

- **Online format would be helpful.** It wasn't easy to attend; Make it online; More supplemental training online; Tough to attend in person could it be online?

Study 4 Pre and Post Survey: Recommendations

Based on the findings from the pre and post survey data, we offer the following recommendations:

1. Recognizing the majority of the PCA workshops occurred in the first portion of the seasons, we encourage **more training throughout the season** to continue the educational touch points.
2. For **sustainable engagement** organize consistent webinar training.
3. The variation between the number of participants in the pre data collection (n= 309) and the post data collection (n = 193) were significantly lower due to the data collection location. In the future, data needs to be collected in person when possible, similar to the pre-data collection (i.e., medical day).
4. **Evidence indicates that awareness increases after training.** Some of the measured variables' increases should not be seen as a sign that the training is not working, but rather that it is creating a more conscious space.

Study 5 Social Audit

Press PR + Marketing developed creative ideas and content to keep the Check Yourself campaign relevant across the season. To increase the traction of the campaign throughout the season, Press created and managed an Instagram account beginning in September 2019 and a Facebook account beginning in October 2019.

Study 5 Social Audit: Procedures

The Check Yourself social media posts on Instagram and Facebook from October 2019 to March 2020 were evaluated.

Study 5 Social Audit: Participants

During PCA workshops, stakeholders were invited to follow the Instagram and Facebook accounts. Parents had an influx of social media followings right after the PCA parent workshop during medical day.

Study 5 Social Audit: Data Analysis

A content analysis of the social channels was conducted from Fall 2019 until Spring 2020.

Study 5 Social Audit: Findings

Key findings from the social audit revealed the following:

1. See Press PR + Marketing Social Media Overview (see Appendix B)
2. More followers on Instagram (222) compared to Facebook (52)
3. Instagram followers are majority males (57%) and are suspected athletes because their profile pictures display young men and their hockey gear
4. Instagram followers engaged most with videos (i.e., One Timers and Celly Cam)
5. #TBLCheckYourself was the top hashtag
6. The majority of Facebook engagement was from a core group of women
7. Facebook, when compared to Instagram, had less content and limited engagement

Study 5 Social Audit: Recommendations

Based on the findings from the social audit we offer the following recommendations:

1. **Increase user-generated content.** User-generated content allows followers to feel a deeper connection with the platform as their personal work is displayed on a larger stage, which in turn can gain lead generation and increase social sharing. Abigail Morrish, head of content and partnerships at the marketing company Wake the Bear, has found that “generally sentiment around user-generated content and influencers is over 90% positive as people either know them or feel like they do, which also makes it harder for people to criticize the content given it’s personal.”
 - The Parent Seat: Each week parents are either assigned, or can volunteer, to turn in what they say or have witnessed in regard to good sportsmanship over

the last week. They could also do something extra themselves and submit what they think about the campaign.

- Tag: Encourage users to tag others. For example, tag the best high school follow player you know or tag the best example of sportsmanship.
- Contests: Require sharing and tagging to win an autographed TBL item.
- Ask questions: “What’s the best thing about high school hockey? What’s the best thing about the Check Yourself” campaign?
- Create polls: Vote for this week’s sportsmanship play of the week. Vote for the highlight of the week?

2. **Ensure different content is posted on each of the social channels.** In order to engage the target audiences (e.g., parents age demo on Facebook and players age demo on Instagram) on each platform we believe the following ideas would help achieve those goals:

- Consistent and targeted posting on each channel.
- Facebook: Focus on the content that engages parents.
 - Highlighting current/previous players accomplishments. Possibly, “where are they now” and how LSHL helped get them there.
 - Player Spotlight - from each team talk about their time in the program; what they have learned from PCA; how the program has improved the game of hockey; how they checked themselves
 - Good deeds highlight reel
 - Check yourself coach, player, parent of the month
- Instagram: Focus on content that engages with the players.
 - Use videos of NHL players and coaches. Short video on sportsmanship, how participating in youth leagues helped shape their path to the NHL, or why it’s necessary to be a good teammate.
 - Players demonstrating sportsmanship or a captivating play.
 - Notable acts of behavior from other sources (e.g., video games or streams from Minecraft, NHL 20).

3. **Educate and humanize the work of referees.** Diversify and change the negative narratives that surround referees by creating posts that show refs as more relatable. Example posts include:

- Ref Background Story: Many referees are often past players. Highlighting their hockey playing career can make them see more respectable in players eyes.
- Good Call / Bad Call: Referees watch the calls and debate whether it was a bad call or good call.
- Referee Story Time: Referees recall their best and worst experiences as a referee.

Overall Recommendations

Based on the findings from the multi-phased case study we offer the following recommendations that are beneficial to all of the LSHL stakeholders:

1. Provide **educational sportsmanship training, measurement, and enforcement** that should occur throughout the entire season
2. Establish or elevate the **Code of Conduct**
3. The **NHL's Declaration of Principles** should be weaved throughout everything LSHL does. To foster more interest for hockey among minority groups and raise the level of conscience among the current players. When 88% of the stakeholders are White, there should be a goal of achieving greater representation.
4. Create an **advocacy initiative** where the LSHL stakeholders feel they can have a voice and speak up when they see misconduct in the league

The following recommendations are suggested for the following specific stakeholders:

1. Organization/Marketing
 - Continue to collect data and research to see the lasting effects of the education
 - Social media communications
 - Increase user-generated content
 - Ensure different content is posted consistently on each of the social channels
 - Educate and humanize the work of referees through social media
2. Players
 - More significant penalties for any verbal abuse or profanity directed towards officials
 - Create a culture where players can “check others” and advocate for positive behaviors from other peers
3. Coaches
 - With establish communication protocols, coaches could help ensure stakeholders follow them
 - Incorporate coaches in PCA workshops to help shift the acceptance of the “trash talking” culture amongst all parties
 - Hold players more accountable with significant penalties for any verbal abuse or profanity
4. Parents
 - Create an educational training regarding referee calls
 - Each team could nominate a “Team Parent” that would monitor the team’s fan behavior and act as a mediator with disputes between coaches and parents and between officials and parents

5. Officials

- Increase training and create a LSHSL referee educational program to educate and ensure stakeholders are on the same page
- Direct access to data from referee feedback and post-game evaluations
- Monthly recap training sessions to maintain and improve officiating
 - Establish communication protocols

6. Trainers

- Incorporate athletic trainers in PCA workshops to help shift the acceptance of the “trash talking” culture amongst all parties

Conclusion

LHSHL aimed to research, identify, implement, and elevate programs to positively educate and begin changing the league’s culture. Through a five-phase case study inclusive of the following:

- Study 1: Observations
- Study 2: Athletic Trainer Interviews
- Study 3: Penalty Data
- Study 4: Pre and Post Data
- Study 5: Social Media Audit

Our results revealed there was a heightened awareness of unsportsmanlike conduct, increase in stakeholder sportsmanship, and a reduction in on-ice penalties. While these successes are meant to be celebrated, the work is just beginning, so through these recommendations we believe that LHSHL can continue to elevate their character development and inclusive culture.

If you have any questions regarding the material within this research report, please contact:
Janelle E. Wells, PhD – janellew@usf.edu or (317) 371-0969

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Trainer 3 Transcript

Trainer3: So the score keeper from TBSA is racist and some of the things that come out of his mouth are inexcusable.

Researcher: Oh, okay, like to the players, coaches, anyone?

Trainer3: So it's not about people at the venue. He'll be talking about things in the news or... Like one time he said "oh well I'm from Michigan, at the university of Michigan they have a statue of a white man, a caveman and a black man and the black man looks like a cave man." Stuff like that. Or like "did you hear about what happened down in case County? Well cops found on the side of the road a black man that had been burned. Like they should be." I was like oh okay. I mean he's extremely racist and it does make you uncomfortable, so I just stop talking to him. But that's not provided by the league that's provided by the arena.

Researcher: From where he sits the players can hear this as well?

Trainer3 - Maybe if a player was in the box, like I said, a player in the penalty box, they might be able to hear it. He just keeps going on, and I have brought it up but he like okay, this is what they said, and that I'm not the only one that's heard. One of my docs was covering for me and he was like, "Oh yeah if a black person started bleeding them I would never help them because I might get sickle cell from it," so Doc just explained that's not the way it works.

Appendix B: Press PR + Marketing Social Overview