



Ottawa Centre Minor Hockey Association: SomeGoalline Guidelines

As we all learn the system, it is becoming clear that we could benefit from some guidelines on best practices for using Goalline.

This is a work in progress. We will need feedback from all users on these guidelines in order to strike a balance between consistent and effective use of the system on the one hand, and not being overly dictatorial on the other.

The guidelines are intended to help us achieve the following objectives:

- Effective communication with our parents.
- Consistent communication with our parents.
- Minimizing volunteer time in administration and communication tasks.

These three objectives come together in the Goalline Prime Directive:

Stop the push.

Goalline is designed to be a central repository of information for parents. It will contain scheduling information, but should also be the primary place for other parent communications.

In order for Goalline to work effectively as a central repository it has to be comprehensive and reliable. This means that we all have to keep it updated, and ensure that all important information is available there.

Here's why:

- If everything is on Goalline, then teams don't have to worry about whether parents kept the email, or read the right email. Parents know where to get the information they need.
- In the past, teams have used a patchwork of different ways of communicating - parents with kids on multiple teams may experience multiple ways of receiving

- information, and get a bit confused in their expectations.
- Using web postings to send information makes life easier for all of us - it reduces duplication caused when people don't know what has and has not been done or said, and it means one-stop shopping for information, rather than trolling through emails in three different accounts looking for the information we need.

Here are three steps down the path to minimizing the push.

I. Get to Know the Website

Have a poke around. There is a surprising amount of stuff up on the site, and it is rarely buried more than a menu or two deep. If you can answer parents' questions by directing them to the site, they will start looking for themselves.

II. Stop Sending Emails

You can do it. Put the practices up (the games are already there). Let the parents find them. Don't send them emails telling them when the practices are.

If you make a change on short notice, don't send an email with the new times. Send an email saying there have been changes, and let the parents go find it.

If you have important information for parents, then post it on the website in the team page. If it is something very timely, then send an email telling them that you have posted something timely.

Get people used to the idea that whatever they need will be on the site. If you don't it will be a vicious circle - people will wait for you to feed them, and won't go get the info; you will get nervous that they aren't getting the info and will start feeding them, and so on. Break the cycle.

You can't eliminate emails altogether, but you should be able to reduce them dramatically with a bit of effort and willpower.

III. Use the Site

The obvious corollary of I, is that we have to use the site. It has to be reliable - if we tell parents to go to the site, and they go and don't find the info they are looking for, they will stop going.

Post things. Use the article function on the team page, and use the webpages functions. These are actually pretty good tools (if limited in allowing you to express creativity). You must, however, resist the urge to post things and then email them. If you need to direct people to the site, then send separate emails telling them to go look - don't send the

articles/postings.

Some Guidelines

To help you and your team get the most out of the site, we have put together a few guidelines.

Guidelines for News Articles

Articles are good ways to keep people informed of general news, and of specific items as they arise. There are a few ways of doing it.

One way is to maintain a running article or articles. This could be Team News, and in the article you could list all the various things that you would otherwise email to people - team special events, fees information, sock orders, whatever. If you go this route, then it is very important that you indicate when you have updated it. Add update information to the title (and edit this to bring it current), so that parents know when there is something new to look for. So if your running article is "Team News," then you may want to re-title it "Team News - Updated October 15, 2009." The disadvantage is that this can become a bit unwieldy as time goes on, and you will have to make some decisions about what to do with older bits.

The second way is to do separate articles for each item. This permits easy identification of new items - "Important Information re Sock Orders." The downside is that your front page can easily become overwhelmed with multiple items.

Most people will end up using a hybrid of sorts. For example you could use a running item, but for some things where there is a lot of separate information (tournaments, for example), have a separate item. Once in a while, pull the old items from the bottom of your running list that you don't want to delete, and add them to a separate article you create for older items.

Alternatively, you could have separate articles for different items, and then just aggregate them in a running article for older items.

There are no doubt a number of good ways to use the article function, and some of you will come up with excellent systems over the year.

Guidelines for Webpages

The webpage function can be quite useful, but it can be tricky to decide how to use it. One obvious idea is to use it for static information, like a roster or contact list. (Please note that as an association we are trying quite hard to keep roster information private to the extent possible, so if you do use a webpage to post roster or contact information,

please use the password function.)

Webpages might also be a way to post photographs, information about tournaments, or something like a coach's document setting out expectations for a season.

Uploads and Hyperlinks

You can also use Goalline to upload documents in various formats, and then create hyperlinks in news articles or webpages to those documents. This can again be very useful for embedding links to reference material.

Using the Email Features

When you do go to email players, you have the option of doing it in Goalline. While this feature is useful, there are a few things to think about.

First, it may not be useful for group discussions, as not all recipients show up in the To field. Reply All, is therefore not an option. (This, of course, may be a positive for some communications.)

Second, Goalline does not keep a record of outgoing emails, so you won't have a Sent Items archive of material you send out (though since you will receive the emails, you can track them that way).

Third, there are some issues with how Goalline compiles email lists. As you will have seen, Goalline offers you the option of sending to parents, to players, or to an email signup list. At online registration, we were all offered the option of entering three email addresses - one for the player, one for parent 1, and one for parent 2. As you can imagine, different people did different things with these fields, including some who duplicated addresses in the player field and one or other of the parent fields (something which wouldn't matter, except that Goalline does not recognize duplicate addresses and will send two separate emails to the same address). To ensure that your parents get emails at all the addresses, encourage them to add any additional email addresses into the system by using the email signup function. You may also want to avoid sending to player addresses, as these (at least in younger age groups) are the same as parent addresses for the most part.

One last thing about Goalline emails, is that all the emails sent from within the system - whether from the executive, the convener, or the team - tend to look the same. So it is a good idea to put a line at the top of the email saying something like: "To all Ottawa Centre families, from the Executive," or "To Atom B1 parents from Jane Doe."

Coach/Manager Information

Every team can fill in information for coaches and managers. It is crucial that you put at

least the email addresses here, so that you will show up in Goalline as coaches and managers, and receive coach/manager communications.

Also, teams from other associations wishing to contact you for whatever reason can then find you on the website.

Roster Information

We do encourage you to compile a roster, and to attach contact information to it.

However, we have decided as an association to try to keep this information private to the extent possible. (In fact Goalline originally had a roster tab for each team, which could be selected to automatically show the roster - at an executive meeting in September we determined to request that Goalline remove this tab.)

As stated above, the way to put this information up is to create a webpage, put the contact information on that page, and then use the password function.