



**PARENTS OF THE MISSISSAUGA RATTLERS
U16 AA GTHL WEST TEAM**
GTHLletthemplay.ca

**Mississauga Rattlers Appeal Denied. Ontario Hockey Federation
permits the GTHL to break appeal procedures**

Ontario Hockey Federation unfairly allowed the GTHL to change rules in appeal hearing process to support 14-game-loss penalty imposed, parents say.

"Let Them Play" campaign will continue and press for reform of the GTHL.

MISSISSAUGA, ONTARIO, February 26, 2025 --- Following an appeal hearing on Monday evening, the Ontario Hockey Federation (OHF) denied the Mississauga Rattlers U16 AA Team's appeal of the Greater Toronto Hockey League's (GTHL) decision to assign them 14 game losses over a paperwork error concerning the registration of a trainer. The parents of the Rattler players have officially responded to the OHF claiming the appeal panel unfairly allowed the GTHL to change, without notice, which rule it was penalizing the players under during the appeal.

According to the official OHF appeal document, the purpose of the appeal hearing was, "to determine whether the GTHL Appeal Committee correctly applied GTHL Rules 9.13, 14.4 and 15.8 in its decision of 16 January 2025 and whether the penalties imposed against the Rattlers U16 AA team should stand or be changed."

The GTHL has consistently cited its rule 9.13 (*Effect of an Ineligible Player or Team Official Participating in a Game*) since first imposing the game loss penalties on the Rattlers in December 2024 and at the subsequent appeal hearing in January 2025. Rule 9.13 allows for an exception for an "understandable mistake".

It was only during the OHF hearing that the GTHL changed its argument that it was now citing Rule 9.11, (*No Non-Registered Individuals on Bench*). The league did so without informing the OHF or the team prior to the hearing about this change. Rule 9.11 is much more punitive and has no exceptions for inadvertent errors.

"Our legal counsel said this should not have been allowed and was a clear abuse of process," said Jeff Davis, volunteer team manager and a parent of one of the players. "We had hoped for a fair hearing."

Specifically, the GTHL convinced the OHF appeal committee that an "understandable mistake", (while likely, the OHF noted its decision), had no bearing on Rule 9.11 the GTHL was now quoting in reference to the 14-game-loss penalty.

In its decision, the OHF wrote, "While unintended, the actions of the Rattlers Association and/or the relevant team officials, clearly violated Rule 9.11 (first raised by the GTHL at this Appeal hearing). The

consequences of this are clearly outlined within the Rule. Further, while the Panel might believe that this was an 'understandable mistake' as per Rule 9.13, such exception does not apply to Rule 9.11."

Davis said, "At the OHF appeal hearing, we presented our case that the team's paperwork error was an understandable mistake. But the change of the rule the GTHL applied from 9.13 to 9.11 made such an argument irrelevant. The appeal panel should never have been permitted the GTHL's last minute change."

Davis said, "The GTHL was permitted to make many mistakes through this process with no accountability. They are granted unlimited grace, but the team and volunteers are granted no similar grace for an understandable mistake."

The Rattlers were in first place in their division at the time the 14-game-loss penalty was assigned. The team has since won almost every game to reach 8th place and will compete in the playoffs.

Mieke Gilbert, whose son is a goaltender on the team, said, "Our boys have shown incredible strength through this. Instead of dwelling on their setback, they have stayed focused, supported each other and kept playing game they love. They've handled this with maturity beyond their years and we are so proud of them."

Davis said, "The GTHL will not change without outside pressure. That must come from the Minister of Sport, GTA municipalities, and the 50 plus associations that make up league."

The [GTHL Let Them Play Campaign](#) will continue as a place where others can share their stories of mistreatment by the GTHL. The website will help with investigations in an effort to bring real change to the GTHL for all players, families and volunteers.

Gilbert said, "We are incredibly grateful to the hockey community for standing with us. The support from the players, parents and teams across this league has meant so much. It is a reminder of what hockey is really about: camaraderie, resilience, and standing up for what is right. Thank you for being in our corner. "

The [Mississauga Rattlers](#) Hockey Association was founded in 1982. It competes in the GTHL AA West Division with some 170 players aged 8 to 21 and strives to provide a positive environment for players to develop both hockey and life skills, while enjoying the thrill and benefits of competing in Canada's national winter sport.

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