



Teams now use all their players in games

With unlimited substitution, field hockey has evolved from having a “starting eleven” like in soccer (and old-time field hockey) to where all fifteen to seventeen players play in the game.

Most teams will substitute players about every five minutes throughout the game. Coaches organize their teams where there are groups of forwards, midfielders and defenders and before each game, they inform the players in what sequence they want them to substitute.

Let's assume a team has five forwards, four midfielders and six defenders. So, every five minutes, the team will substitute:

- Two forwards
- One mid-fielder
- Two defenders

The coach or the coach's assistant sets a timer that goes off every five minutes to tell the players to make their substitution.

There are major benefits using all players in games:

1. Coaches don't have to select “starters” and then tell the other players that they are going to sit on the bench and may not play at all. The coach's relationship with all the players is on an equal footing.
2. The intensity and pace of game will be much higher as players know they can work very hard when on the field knowing that within five to ten minutes they will get to rest. Coaches can expect their players to go “all out” when they are on the field.
3. Coaches can “coach” their players when they come off the field.
4. During the game, all players on the bench remain focused knowing when they will be going into the game. Players on the bench aren't “spectators” or “cheerleaders” and aren't having conversations that have nothing to do with the game!
5. The psyche of the team improves as there aren't two groups, the “starters” and the “reserves”. Every player is part of the result of every game. Once players accept that they are a permanent “reserve”, they show up to practice, but their effort and focus may be at question (*it is only in professional sport where “reserves” work as hard as starters because they are being paid*).

So, use all your players throughout each game and enjoy the benefits. We aren't playing old-time field hockey anymore!