

SAM'S Column...

During my school holidays over the Christmas period I went to the Ice Centre in Nottingham to go and see what has become one of my favourite spectator sports, not football or cricket but ice hockey.

Now, you may not have been to an Ice hockey match here in England, or anywhere else in the World, but I must recommend it. The atmosphere when you go is fantastic, the tickets are relatively cheap and it is a great day out for the whole family.



An Ice hockey game usually lasts about two hours because you get three, twenty minute periods and a fifteen minute break between each of these periods so you can go and get some refreshments which are all around the ground, also during the break there is some great entertainment with Ice skating and a chance for the fans to take some shots at the goal to win prizes.

During the twenty minute periods when the game is halted for an offence (offside, penalty, fighting!) music is played to which the young and attractive female cheerleaders dance. A welcome spectacle to pass the time!

The Nottingham Panthers are our local team and in the world of Ice hockey they are pretty good as at the last game they beat top of the league 3-1. There are also two other teams which are near to us, the Coventry Blaze and the Sheffield Steelers, which adds a great sense of rivalry in the local area.

The atmosphere during a game of Ice hockey is amazing even though there is no swearing allowed you get plenty of banter between rival fans which is certainly fun when you get into it and you join in the chants.

Another part of Ice hockey which is less acceptable with the fans and the players is the fighting. Ice hockey is a very aggressive and a full contact sport where the players are regularly pushed onto the floor or into the plastic surrounding the ice rink, because of this the players can get pretty wound up and that is when they lash out at each other.

The fighting can get quite brutal with sticks, gloves and helmets strewn all over the playing area and the referees only ever step in after a couple of minutes.

A player on an Ice hockey pitch will never get sent off for the whole of the game though as the worst penalty for any offence is a five minute sin bin for the players involved making the game faster and a lot more exiting to watch.

When going to an Ice hockey game you do have to be careful as well though as the puck can sometimes fly out of the rink and into the crowd which can be quite painful if it hits you. However if you catch it or it lands near to where you are sitting you can take it home as a souvenir.

All these things put together allow Ice hockey to be a fun sport which family and friends can enjoy. So get down to the Nottingham Ice Centre now and get involved, you do not know what you are missing.

BY SAM GREGORY
Age 15

