



## **IHL Devotionals 2024-25: Pickup skate**

### **Who we are and what we do**

*By Nick Veronica*

This league started as a pickup skate with a group of guys from The Chapel. Eventually the skate got so big it grew into two back-to-back ice times. About 10 years ago, they decided to make it a league. They named it the Integrity Hockey League.

This league is not like other leagues. It's almost like a men's fellowship group, with a hockey game afterward. We do a devotional in the locker room before every game. We pray at center ice before we drop the puck. Play is competitive, but we don't tolerate goons – and more often than not, your own teammates will tell you to check yourself before the league has to dole out any discipline. Volunteer opportunities can earn you points in the standings; this year, two teams moved up in the playoff race by earning the equivalent of two wins through volunteer work.

That's not to say we don't care about hockey. The talent level in the league gets better every year, and has ranged as high as former Division I players. Several league members played club hockey in college or were on high-level travel and varsity teams. Yet, we're open to all skill levels – and all walks of life. We have dads who have never played organized hockey before on teams with their sons. And you certainly, certainly do not need to have everything figured out in your faith life to join.

I was in the league when it started. Before the first game, our team went around the room introducing themselves, sharing details about their life, where they went to church, stuff like that. When it got to me, I stared at the floor and said, "My name is Nick. I play defense." And I hoped no one would call on me.

A decade later, I'm the league president. I write most of our devotional material. I speak before the games. I go out of my way to look for new ways to tell people how good God's grace is. I'm not a biblical scholar, I'm not a pastor, and I'm certainly not a person free from sin. But I am someone who has had his heart changed through the fellowship I experienced in this league.

We're always looking for new members. We have our playoffs going on right now; registration for next year will open in August. We'd love to get to an even number of teams. If you have any questions, you can talk to me, or any league leader who's skating tonight. We're on social media as the Integrity Hockey League ... or [IHLbuffalo.com](http://IHLbuffalo.com).

Thank you for coming out tonight. If anyone has any questions or if any members of the league have anything they want to share, we'll open it up...

[Then close with a prayer, thanking God for all his blessings, to keep us safe on the ice, for the men in the league, the fellowship we have, and as we approach Easter, we thank you again the incredible price he paid for us when we were still sinners. The bible says in Colossians says he canceled the record of charges against us and nailed it to the cross. That's something I think about at Easter. All the stupid things I've done ... and the record of charges against me was nailed to the cross. What would it look like if I lived my life believing that was real? Ephesians says live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Gentlemen, that's what I'll leave you with today.