

May 2010

Sheboygan Laker Mite Parents:



I hope everyone is enjoying their offseason. Sheboygan Laker Youth Hockey Committee (YHC) is responsible for the hockey programs provided and has the responsibility of ensuring those programs are meeting all of the needs for the club and all the skaters. This includes monitoring the progress and effectiveness of our programs, listening to feedback from our coaches and parents, and researching the best processes being used to teach hockey around the area and the world. YHC committee is made up of parents and coaches of the Lakers organization. YHC members have met during the offseason to review our current programs and learn about USA Hockey initiatives with region 5 WAHA clubs.

The main USA Hockey initiative is the ADM (American Development Model) program. The ADM program was developed and supported by NHL and college coaches and players. Sheboygan Lakers will be a leader in our region on this nationwide program, by becoming one of the first in our region to be certified ADM at the Mite level. This is a great accomplishment for our club, as the other clubs in our region are moving this direction, but not able to fully commit to it. Being the first will benefit our club by getting equipment from USA Hockey and improving the skill level of our skaters. WAHA (Wisconsin Amateur Hockey Organization) is also moving to the ADM program. We are beginning to see the changes already take place as last year was the last Mite B state tournaments and this year could be the last year for the Mite A tournament. Studies show that using small area games at this age level will allow each skater to touch the puck more often versus a traditional full ice game. When a player does not get chances to touch the puck they are not able to improve. In a half ice or three on three games the skaters get many touches and therefore opportunities to improve their skills. Also, take into account that a full ice game is the same size ice surface that 16 – 18 year old players play on, whereas most other sports, such as baseball and soccer, will adjust the size of the playing field, or ball or number of players for the younger and smaller sized players. To find more specifics on the program go to www.admkids.com or see the information on our website www.sheboyganlakershockey.com.

The major changes for the Mite's program are they will no longer play full ice games and they will have limited travel. All Mites will be evenly spread onto in-house teams, which results in no tryouts for Mites. YHC and Mite Coaches will determine the teams. These teams will play cross-ice game (played on a third of the rink) or half ice games in-house on the weekends. Games will be changed throughout the season to help keep the skaters entertained. Skaters will have the opportunity to travel to other rinks and play against other teams, just not in full ice games. The travel will be restricted to a limited number of games with other clubs that are following our model of game play and are closest to us. A later letter will be sent out with all of the details and rules of the game play. All Mites will practice together at the same time during the week, with two practices. Stations will be used to ensure the ice is utilized efficiently with all skaters getting involved and staying involved during the whole practice.

There are two main reasons for the change by USA Hockey. One is to focus on developing skilled hockey players at all age levels. The other reason is skater retention. This change at the Mite level will help the Lakers organization to focus on skill development by removing the temptation to coach to win and allow for focusing on skills. By doing mostly in-house programs, there will be less pressure on the coaches, players and parents to focus on winning and losing. This allows the coaches to teach skills and for players to be able to make mistakes, which is how we truly learn, without losing the 'big game.' If kids want to truly excel at hockey, they need to learn the right way to play the game. Fundamentals and building both physical and mental skills are crucial to success in hockey throughout their playing career. These things can't be learned efficiently during a game — they have to be learned in practice. And practicing the right way is how kids will be able to unlock their limitless potential.

The other benefit is skater retention. Currently, kids have more options than ever of activities to do. There is soccer, football, basketball, swimming, piano, 4H, church organizations and the list goes on. Mite is a big step up for our hockey families with our current setup. In Mitey Mites, there are two skates a week with no travel and limited work hour requirements. With the move to Mites there are two skates a week, plus 20 games that require travel of up to an hour each way and an increase in the required work hours. This can be tough for families to commit to when hockey is just one of the child's activities. By keeping our Mite families mostly in-house we are giving a stepping stone for families, and the skaters, by not requiring full time travel, but whose children are ready to move on from Mitey Mites. Another point is giving a place for older beginning skaters. Traditionally, if a child starts skating at seven they don't have many options. They can play a year of Mitey Mites and then move to Squirts or if they are lucky a year of travel Mites. With this change we are no longer bound by the USA Hockey age rules, as we do not need to submit a formal USA Hockey Team, this is only required for state tournaments. By giving this nine or ten year old, who has a year of skating or is just starting to skate, an opportunity to skate with their peers and learn in a safe environment we can only increase the participation at this level.

YHC knows this is a big change for our club, but there will be gains as we develop our skaters more completely and set them up for success not only in Mites, but also in the older age groups. If you have any questions or concerns about this change to the Mites level please feel free to contact myself or any other member of the YHC.

Thank you for your time,

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