

Woodbury Area Hockey Club Board Approves Changes to the Mite Program – March, 2011

Over the last two years, the Woodbury Area Hockey Club (WAHC) has been working to improve the player development strategy for our youngest players. Our focus has been to balance skill development with fun to ensure the long-term enjoyment of hockey.

Several changes have been put in place to better align our development strategy with Minnesota Hockey, the USA Hockey American Development Model (ADM) and other top clubs in Minnesota. First, the Club changed from a skill-level-only progression to a format that better aligns skill and age. This resulted in formation of the current Mite and Super Mite structure. In addition, the Club reinforced the need for more small area games and adopted the 3v3 cross-ice policy to be consistent with the direction being set by USA Hockey. <http://minnesotahockeyhep.com/featured/breaking-up-the-ice> Time was dedicated to 3v3 cross-ice hockey this season so that all players could develop hockey sense while enhancing decision making skills. Age appropriate “Pond Hockey” nets were purchased to help put the game in perspective for our youngest players to allow for better skill development. We also introduced ‘junior-size’ nets for Super Mites who are now being introduced to goal-tending via the Carroll Goalie School. We supplemented skating development with the addition of professional instruction from Pro Edge and introduced dry-land training at Total Hockey for the Super Mite and U8 levels. The Mite Development Committee will continue to evaluate the programs we introduced this year and will continue to improve them based on parent and player feedback.

Throughout the current season, the Mite Development Committee continued to meet to review additional changes that would help further align our strategy. The committee proposed several changes to the WAHC board during the January meeting. The board met again on February 16th and approved the following changes for the Mite program starting with the 2011-2012 season.

Termite Program restructured as Boys or Girls Introduction to Hockey

Players new to hockey will either enroll in Boys Introduction to Hockey or Girls Introduction to Hockey. Players new to WAHC between the ages of 3 and 8 will need to complete at least one session of Introduction to Hockey before enrolling in Mites, Super Mites or U6/U8. Players that cannot fulfill this obligation will be evaluated for skating ability by the Mite level directors to obtain approval to enroll in Mite or SuperMite hockey.

Starting with the 2011 spring session, the Intro programs will transition to an ADM based model. The format will utilize a multi-station structure with fun drills and games designed to develop core fundamental skating skills. We believe this will not only better develop our future skater’s early skills but will lay the groundwork for developing a long term passion for hockey.

Minimum Age Requirement to Enter the Mite/U6 Program

Players will need to be at least 5 years old or entering kindergarten to enroll in the Mite/U6 program going forward. Players that are younger than this and played Mite hockey in 2010-2011 will be permitted to play Mite hockey or are grandfathered into the Mite/U6 program next season. Boys or girls younger than this who did not previously play Mite/U6 hockey will be directed to the Boys or Girls Introduction to Hockey program until they are of age.

Mite/U6 to Super Mite/U8 Play Up Policy

There will be no play up policy to move a child from Mites/U6 to Super Mites/U8 prematurely. Age and grade based policies will be enforced.

Squirt/U10 Play up Policy

Only players eligible by Minnesota Hockey Age Guidelines will be permitted to enroll in Squirts or U10 hockey going forward.

There will be a one year grandfather exception to allow those players that will be in 3rd grade and have previously completed two consecutive seasons at the most advanced level (D book, Super Mite Advanced A or U8). Written approvals must be obtained by the current coach, Super Mite Director and the VP of Hockey Development prior to enrollment into Squirt or U10. There will be no exception to this policy starting with the 2012-2013 season.

Age guidelines are updated on an annual basis and are posted on the Minnesota Hockey website.

<http://www.minnesotahockey.org/page/show/85059-age-charts-and-participation-levels>

We believe that these policy changes will result in the progression of larger pools of higher skilled players through our program and will help improve player retention at older ages. These changes allow WAHC to be in alignment with current national guidance and other top clubs in Minnesota. We look forward to seeing you at the rink and are excited about the future of our youngest players. Feel free to contact one of the Mite directors for any questions regarding our program. Contact information can be found using the following link: <http://www.woodburyhockey.com/page/show/557-mite-super-mite>

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