

# THE AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT MODEL AT 14U-16U HOCKEY



# INTRODUCTION

**GRADUATING TO A MORE  
DEVELOPED KIND OF HOCKEY.**

The 14U and 16U level is where a player starts to put it all together. The skills they've acquired at younger ages are starting to gel, and mental skills are easier to learn. And though they should still be developing athletic skills by

playing multiple sports, many players will begin to specialize in hockey. At 14U and 16U, the games are more intense, the practices are harder and the quality of play is better than it ever has been.

## LONG-TERM ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT STAGES

- 8. HOCKEY FOR LIFE**
- 7. TRAINING TO WIN**  
19+ Junior (NCAA, NHL)
- 6. TRAINING TO COMPETE**  
Junior, NCAA
- 5. LEARNING TO COMPETE**  
18-and-under (Midgets)
- 4. TRAINING TO TRAIN**  
16-and-under (Midgets), 14-and-under (Bantams)
- 3. LEARNING TO TRAIN**  
12-and-under (Peewees), 10-and-under (Squirts)
- 2. FUNDAMENTALS**  
8-and-under (Mites), 6-and-under (Mites)
- 1. ACTIVE START**  
6-and-under



# 14U

**WHERE BODY AND MIND  
MEET YEARS OF PRACTICE.**

At 14U Bantam the physical skills acquired at previous levels are subconsciously becoming part of their game. Other mental skills like hockey sense and decision-making are gelling as well. And because their bodies and minds are more developed, body checking is now incorporated in games. All the tools are in place, but they need to be used properly to ensure maximized development.

## **TOP 3 THINGS AT 14U.**

- 1. LEARNING GAME TACTICS  
AND CONCEPTS.**
- 2. KEEPING SKILL DEVELOPMENT  
AS A MAIN GOAL.**
- 3. TRAINING MORE  
SPECIFICALLY FOR HOCKEY.**



# WHERE TO BE AND WHEN TO BE THERE.

If the necessary tools learned at previous levels are there, more time can be dedicated to game tactics and concepts. Because everything from stickhandling to skating to passing and shooting are becoming second nature, a player can spend more time learning game tactics. In essence, their hands and feet should be working on autopilot. That way, their mind can concentrate on anticipation, situational awareness and positioning. They should still, however, be working on their hockey skills throughout their hockey life.



## PRACTICE-TO-GAME RATIO 14 & UNDER (BANTAMS) & 16 & UNDER (MIDGETS):

1 YEAR

9 MONTHS training calendar

4-5 ICE SESSIONS PER WEEK

120-130 QUALITY PRACTICES

40-50 GAMES



## **GETTING READY FOR THE NEXT GAME IS A SKILL, TOO.**

The major growth spurts players are experiencing at this age, combined with the increased intensity of training and gameplay, mean that proper recovery, nutrition, hydration and stretching are crucial to their development. In addition, proper fitness programs are paramount to a player's success. Specific lifting and athletic training must be adhered to if a player intends on keeping up with the season.

## **MEANINGFUL GAMES MAKE FOR MEANINGFUL DEVELOPMENT.**

Competition is, and always will be, part of every level of hockey. But at 14U Bantam, simply playing more games doesn't necessarily translate to a competitive environment. The games must be meaningful to truly make a difference. For example, playing in a tournament that requires multiple games in a day or inadequate recovery time is counterproductive and doesn't develop any long-term skills. It's better to play fewer games where each one will be close. In that setting, the players are more engaged and play harder, and ultimately each win means more. Plus, just playing more games leads to competition fatigue that stagnates physical and mental development. That's why every game on the schedule needs to matter.

# 16U

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE RINK RAT

Up to this point, playing multiple sports has always been key for athlete development. Different muscle movements and cognitive abilities are learned through other sports that translate well to hockey. But at the 16U level, specialization can start to take place and training for hockey becomes a focus.

### TOP 3 THINGS AT 16U.

1. SPECIALIZATION IN HOCKEY BEGINS TO TAKE PLACE.
2. KEEPING SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS A MAIN GOAL.
3. TAKING THE NEXT STEP.

### A LIFELONG PASSION THAT'S BECOMING FULLY REALIZED.

At the 16U level players may begin to specialize in hockey — though they should also continue with other activities. The competition gets more intense. And players start to think about their future in the game.





**THERE WILL ALWAYS BE A PLACE TO DEVELOP TALENT.**

## **KEEPING LONG-TERM GOALS FRONT OF MIND.**

It's easy to focus on the present, or the short-term, and lose sight of the long-term goal of fulfilling potential. So while winning is important, playing for a winning team doesn't necessarily mean improvement. It's how you play, regardless of the win/loss column, that has everything to do with development. It's something that may be difficult to remember, but is crucial nonetheless.

With hockey being a late-specialization sport, what you do as a player after puberty plays a huge part in development. So at this age, players are ready to take the next step and there are a wide array of opportunities to select from, including midget and high school programs, elite-level club hockey, the vast collection of American junior hockey programs and USA Hockey's National Team Development Program.

**The great news is that USA Hockey programs provide options for players of all ability levels. Stick with the game, as your brightest days are likely ahead of you.**

WHAT TO EXPECT  
AT **8U** MITE

- 1) More puck touches
- 2) Maximum ice utilization
- 3) Increased competition for all players
- 4) Fun for all participants

WHAT TO EXPECT  
AT **10U** SQUIRT  
AND **12U** PEEWEE

- 1) A better practice-to-game ratio
- 2) Prime window for skill development
- 3) Athletes first, then hockey players
- 4) Increased emphasis on decision-making skills

WHAT TO EXPECT  
AT **14U** BANTAM  
AND **16U** MIDGET

- 1) Increased hockey training schedule
- 2) Player takes more responsibility for off-ice training
- 3) Managing recovery becomes important
- 4) Make sure the competition is meaningful

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