



Greetings Prospective Parents and Players,

Thank you for considering the River Falls Youth Hockey Association (RFYHA) Mite Hockey Developmental Level! The RFYHA is here to serve your young skater. I hope this introductory letter and the following FAQs will be a great start of answering questions and building this new relationship.

The Mite Hockey Development Level (MHDL) is for 4-8 year old skaters. Age is designated via calendar year. Therefore, any child born 2007 to 2011 is eligible as a Mite skater. The MHDL is divided into four skill levels:

- Mite Level 1 (Fundamentals of Skating)
- Mite Level 2 (Fundamentals of Hockey)
- Mite Level 3 (Advancing in Skating & Hockey Skills)
- Mite Level 4 (Mastering Age Appropriate Skating & Skills along with Learning Hockey Concepts)

The philosophy of MHDL is taken after **Long-Term Athlete Development** from USA Hockey. The first two stages include the *Active Start Stage* and the *FUNDamentals Stage*. These two stages include introducing ice skates and skating on ice, along with beginning awareness and maturation of Agility, Balance, Coordination and Skills (ABCs).

These four-levels are skill based levels and not age based. So, a first year, four-year old skater will begin at Level 1. When learning, mastering or growing into the skills for a particular level, the skater will then move to the next level. Likewise, a new eight-year old skater, would enter as a level 1 skater and be assessed to determine appropriate level. The movement of level is determined by on-ice coaches.

The RFYHA is also committed to the **American Development Model (ADM)** from USA Hockey. This philosophy of hockey emphasizes small ice area games, constant movement on the ice, variety of activities on the ice and maximizing skater involvement. With a 42 year history of hockey in River Falls, the RFYHA is committed to seeing it continue.

The RFYHA strives to keep costs low for families. The cost/commitment for participating in this program as a first year skater includes a \$100 fee, selling \$150 worth of raffle tickets, and helping around the arena for 15 hours (e.g., helping at varsity games/tournaments, etc)

Contact Janell Rasmussen at rasmussen.janell@gmail.com to ask any questions about the program.

Registration night for the LTS transition program is scheduled for November 18th from 6 pm to 7 pm at the Wildcat Centre. The RFYHA looks forward to working with you!

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Does my child need to know how to skate? No prior skating ability is needed to start hockey. The Mite Hockey Development Level is made for such skaters. The RFYHA has been teaching young kids how to skate for many years.

What equipment do I need? To be allowed on the ice Mite skaters are to wear the following equipment:

- **Required:** Certified hockey helmet/mask, mouth guard, hockey skates, hockey stick, shoulder pads, breezers, shin pads, elbow pads and hockey gloves.
- **Recommended:** Hockey shorts (holds cup/socks), cup/pelvic protector, neck guard, hockey/duffle bag

Does my child need hockey socks and a jersey? The MHDL provides a practice jersey as part of the registration fee. You will receive the jersey sometime in the first week that practices begin. Hockey socks are not required for over the shin pad use at this practice level. Many skaters simply put sweat pants on to hold the shin pads on. If desired, hockey socks can be purchased at the ice arena.

Do boys and girls play on the same team? Yes. Boys and girls train together at the U8 level (which is the MHDL).

When does the season start? How long is the season? The season typically begins end of October/early November. The season runs through February.

When are the practice times? Practice times for the MHDL are typically on Saturday, Sunday and Wednesdays. Additionally, Mite Levels 1 & 2 practice together and Mite Levels 3 & 4 practice together. The goal is to not have many activities during the school week.

Where do they practice? All practice will be held at the River Falls' Wildcat Centre Arena, which is located across from the River Falls' High School.

What do I do on the first night of practice? There can be a lot of anxiety the first night of practice for skaters and parents. We try our best to host you well on the first night and give you the needed direction. Please come with your skater to the registration/welcome table that first night.

Do you travel for games? Most of the MHDL is in-house. Meaning, players do not travel. However, in February, Mite level 1-2 typically hosts a Saturday cross-ice scramble and goes to another local association for another one-day, 3 on 3 cross-ice scramble. This celebrates the hard work put in throughout the year. It is also a time to invite family to watch the young skaters.

Mite Level 3-4 participates in cross-ice 3 on 3 games starting in January. They typically play 10-12 cross ice games throughout January-February. Most games are on Saturday or Sunday. They also typically participate in a weekend, cross-ice scramble (similar to a tournament) in February/early March.

There is no scoring during the games nor do they play full-ice games. The goal is to have multiple games on the ice at the same time. This maximizes the number of skaters on the ice which increase the amount your skater is on the ice and touching the puck. Additionally, there is a 30 minutes driving radius for games. So, travel time to and from games will be minimal.

Can my skater move up to Squirts? Yes and No. There is a process to move a skater to a higher age group. However, this is not recommended and it needs the RFHYA board approval. The hope is to keep skaters at his/her age level in his/her early years. The hope is that more advanced skaters in each particular level will embrace and learn to be leaders and set examples for others.

Skills for Each Mite Hockey Developmental Level

The following skills are practiced throughout the year. Skaters are asked to be *proficient* in particular skills before moving to the next level. The ***bold & italicized skills*** are needed skills to pass into the next level. All the other skills are practiced but not required for moving to the next level.

Coaches will move mites between levels based on consensus of the required skills. Each level builds on the prior levels. Thus, moving Skaters prior to achieving proficiency in their current level hinders their growth and enjoyment as well as that of their new Level. Open, two-way dialogue with the Mite Coordinators is the best solution should you have any questions about your Skater's movement. They will be happy to discuss this or any other questions with you at any time.

Level 1: Fundamentals of Skating - Hockey Stance, How to Get Up, Ability to Pick-up Stick, ***Participation in Drills, Coachability***, Forward Start (T-Push), ***Alternate Feet While Skating, Glide Turn, One-Foot V-Stop***, One-Foot Push Around Circles, Backwards Stance, ***Skating (Walking) Backwards Movement, Lateral Moving (without falling), Basic Passing & Shooting (without falling)***.

Level 2: Fundamentals of Hockey - Comfortable with Physical Contact, Coachability, V-Start, Proper Stride, One-Foot Glide, ***Controlled Turns (both ways)***, Forward V-Stop, ***Controlled Hockey Stops, Backwards V-Stop, Backwards Striding (C-Cuts)***, Backwards Glide with Jump, ***Forward Crossovers, Controlled Weaving with Puck, Lateral Puck Dribble, Diagonal Puck Dribble***, Recognize Left or Right Handed, ***Basic Forehand & Backhand Sweep Pass & Reception***, Basic Forehand & Backhand Sweep Shot, Skating & Shooting (firm shot without falling), Introduction to Puck Protection (body between puck and defensive player), Introduction to Puck Possession (skate with puck, pass or shoot....never just slap at puck), Appropriate Stick Length.

Level 3: Advancing in Skating & Hockey Skills - Inside & Outside Edge Control, Forward to Backward Transition, Coachability, One-Foot Glide Weave, Mastering Crossover Turns, ***Hockey Stop Left & Right, Starting Backwards Crossovers***, Quick Lateral Movement, ***Forward to Backwards Skating Dribble, Accelerating with Puck (3 Hard Strides), Toe to Heel Stick Dribble***, Two Foot Stopping with Puck, Proper "Open Ice Carry" with Puck, Passing while Moving, Lead Pass/Moving Target, Be a Good Receiver, ***Stationary Wrist Shot, Backhand Flip Shot, Offensive Puck Possession, Offensive Puck Protection, Defensive Splitting (Intro to Checking), Defensive "Man-up"***, Over & Through the Puck, ***Stick Poke Check, "Lift the Stick" Check***, Working on Independency of Putting on Equipment.

Level 4: Mastering Age-Appropriate Skating Skills & Hockey Skills along with Learning Hockey Concepts - Coachability, One Foot Stride (both feet), Backwards Crossover Turns, One-Foot Outside Edge Stop, Backwards Crossover Starts, Tight Turns with Puck (hands crossed), Face-offs, Skate/Deke, Feet-Puck Dribble, Bank Pass, Forehand/Backhand Flip Pass, Receiving Pass with Skates, Five Holes of Shooting, Attack the Triangle, Cycling, Give & Go.