

Worthington Hockey Association

2012-2013

Competitive philosophy, and other age level
focuses

Sources:

American Development Module

WHA Handbook 2011-2012

Kyle W. Johnson

The purpose of the WHA 2012-2013 competitive philosophy and other age level focuses is to give a detailed description of how our different age levels (mini-mite, mite, squirt, pee-wee, and bantam) will operate over the course of our hockey season with regard to how teams will be set up, what skills will be developed, and how they will compete. This is a great guideline for coaches to read through, and use for planning and during their season. Also for parents and others involved, to read through so they can learn what to expect from the WHA and their coaches at the different age levels.

Mini – Mite:

The main focus at the mini-mite level is to start encouraging a love for hockey for the new players, and for their parents and other family members, while reinforcing the love of the game for those who have been involved in the past.

The USA Hockey's key focuses for this stage are:

- Help ensure our participants gain physical literacy
- Develop a passion for hockey in all children
- Encourage daily physical activity
- Provide the opportunity to explore a new surface (ice) and mode of locomotion (skating)
- Develop on-ice balance, coordination, and agility
- Introduce basic skating movement skills through a learn to skate program
 - Preferably without use of a hockey stick

The mini-mites training and competitive environment should include a 1 hour practice, 1-2 times per week with parents encouraged to take them out to open skate once every 2-3 weeks. Games will begin after an amount of time that the coaches feel that kids participating have had time to get acquainted with the game enough to participate in an informal non-competitive manner. Their practices will focus on the following:

- Getting players and parents comfortable with our arena
- Putting on and taking off their hockey equipment
- Getting comfortable with coaches and other participants
- Learning to skate and introduction on other skating fundamentals
- Educating the players and parents on basic principles of the game of hockey

Achieving these goals for our mini-mites and their families will be done in practice and games with no formal competition. During practice traditional skating drills will be done with a mixture of small area games. Practices and games will be half-ice. Ideally teams will consist of 9-13 skaters with no assigned goalie, but maintain a goalie rotation with even playing time at that position. No goalie pads are necessary at this level. Equal playing time will be given in all games to all players.

Mites:

This is the stage that USA Hockey refers to as the Fundamentals stage. They say that this is a time when the foundation is laid for future acquisition of more advanced skills. USA Hockey's description of the fundamentals stage would be that the skills developed at this stage will benefit them when they engage in any activity regardless of their level of participation. Skill development in this stage should be well structured, positive, and done in a FUN and social environment and that all programs should be structured with proper progression.

USA Hockey's key focuses at this stage would be to develop a passion for hockey in all our children. Also, to develop on-ice balance, coordination, agility, and speed. Introduction to basic puck control skills will be done at this time.

Practices will be 2-3 times per week. Many of the practice sessions will be on cross, or half-ice. During their practices, the participants will be introduced to simple rules and fair play. At practice they will work on their development in skating, puck control, passing and receiving, shooting, and some body contact. The kids will need to learn how to follow simple instructions, and basic decision making skills.

Ideally teams will consist of 9-13 skaters with the goaltender position being rotated among team members with interest in the position. Goalie pads will be encouraged at this age level. Coaches shall attempt to give equal playing time to players during games. These games are to be formal, but non-competitive. The emphasis will be on skill development, not outcomes.

Squirts:

At this level the coaches will work with the players at refining their hockey skills that they have developed, and to introduce them to a specialized skater position. At this age level, goalies need to begin their focus on that position.

At the squirt level formal competition will be introduced. Team rosters would ideally have 10-12 skaters with one goalie in efforts for the participants to be playing every other shift; two teams are desired. According to the ADM, competition should be fun and structured to address differences in training age and abilities. Also, athletes should be recognized for their success and achievement.

At this level kids will be grouped into teams of like abilities, this will include games and practice. It is our responsibility to put our participants in the best situations for their development.

According to the ADM the coaching considerations for this age level explains how this is a critical stage for sports skill acquisition, and that our participants need to be exposed to quality skill demonstrations. Players need to practice a high volume of skill training at a reduced intensity in order to achieve successful repetitions. Coaches also need to provide opportunities for the players to execute their skills in game situations.

Games will be played at a competitive level. The coaches will be encouraged to give equal playing time throughout the course of the year, however, playing time needs to be given in the right situations for the development of the individual players, as stated above from the ADM.

Practices will be 2-3 times per week for one hour periods. The ADM tells us that this is the optimal trainability peak for skill development of core hockey skills. Some skills our coaches will work on include:

- Refining skating and puck control skills
- Players positioning skills
- Small area games to apply core skills in decision making
- Emphasis on passing and receiving skills
- Emphasis on shooting and scoring skills
- Body contact and angling basics
- Offensive and defensive body positioning skills
- Conditioning drills

Pee-Wee & Bantam

The ADM tells us that these age levels the objective is to further develop sports specific skills and to continue the development of speed, strength and stamina. This age level is a window of accelerated adaptation to aerobic, speed and strength training, and for maximum improvement in skill development.

The ideal team at this level would be 13-15 players, with two teams at each level. These teams will practice 3 times a week when able for 1 hour long intervals. The teams at these age levels will be grouped with players of like abilities with no restrictions and will play hockey in a competitive nature. The coach shall attempt to give equal playing time over the course of the year. It will be the coach's decision to give proper ice time to different individuals during specific games, based on the nature of that game, and what they feel is best for the development of the kids, and for the team. Winning is emphasized at these age levels.

The ADM gives the following coaching considerations for this level:

- Spend significant amount of time refining technical skills, but the emphasis will gradually change to increase both the difficulty and intensity.
- Use both high volume/lower intensity training and high intensity/low volume training.
- Include skill execution in tactical situations
- Plan training loads with consideration to the athlete's competition, rest and recovery.

At these levels, skills and other ideas previously learned will be continued to be worked upon, and will go into more specific detail. At these levels players will focus in on their specific position, and be limited to lesser variation in position changes. Participants at these levels will learn the importance of offense and defense that revolve around the idea of achieving and keeping puck control.