

ENGLISH ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION LIMITED
U10S HOCKEY MEETING 20TH JANUARY 2008

Minutes of meeting on U10s hockey on 20th January 2008 at the Renaissance Hotel, Derby at 10 a.m.

Present: Rita MacKriel, Val Wilkinson, Bob Wilkinson, Steve Taylor, Neville Moralee, Mary Moralee, David Hurn, Geoff Hemmerman, Liz Moralee (minutes), South East: Judith Koral (Streatham), Mark Crabb (Chelmsford), Adrian Tull (Solent & Gosport), South West: Carol-Ann Watt, Sue Godfrey (Swindon), Joanne Jackson (Milton Keynes), Midlands: Jayne Bowns, Georgina Crebbin, Paul Gill (Coventry), Gary Apsley (Sutton), North: Jacqueline Pye, Steve Proctor (Newcastle), Peter Johnson (Kingston).

RM welcomed everyone to the meeting. It had no agenda, as there was only one subject to be talked about: a way forward for U10 hockey. This was the third attempt to hold such a meeting; first it was cancelled because there were proposals to change all the age groups (there are currently no proposals for age group changes), then it was set up again but cancelled because many people could not go. Clubs need to accept that there can be different rules for U10s than for other age groups, e.g. minimum numbers, merged teams, as U10s are special and more of them need to be encouraged into hockey. **RM** said any decisions made at this meeting will go to the Board as soon as possible, and can be approved at the Board meeting on 2 – 3 February (this meeting had a quorum of the Board, but they would prefer to have decisions approved unanimously). Contrary to what many people think, decisions made by sections and committees are passed on to the Board, who approve most of them. If they do not approve a decision it is usually because there are serious implications which the committee did not think of.

GH made out a list of what people might consider priorities for the U10s:

- Kids
- League
- Fun
- Development
- Numbers
- Win
- Elite
- Parents

It was generally felt that the most important thing is to have as many players as possible taking part. Hockey needs to be more accessible, which might mean relaxing regulations. Players need to be on the ice as much as possible. If the players are having fun they do not care whether they win or lose or whether there are league points available. If they are not having fun they stop coming. Hockey will only work if parents are encouraged to bring their children, so their wishes and concerns need to be considered. If the children are having fun, the parents will generally be drawn in. Many issues matter only because of the parents and/or clubs. Rules have evolved over time, and have always been brought in for good reason.

Conference Chairs gave feedback from discussions with their own Conferences.

North: Retain 3-line competitive league leading to Finals, and introduce 2-line development league. Clubs may enter a team in each.

South West: Retain current league structure. 1-minute shifts (however they realise this could make games over-long). Continue to allow merged teams. Allow teams to borrow players if they do not have enough for a game.

Midlands: Allow teams to borrow players if they do not have enough for a game. Shorter penalties.

There have been discussions about changing the registration deadline for U10s. This would mean beginners starting after January would not need to wait until the following season to take part in games. The majority of U10 games take place after 31st January, and there are not many challenges or cross-ice days. Changing the deadline will probably make little difference to the overall numbers of U10 registrations, which include summer licences and insurance only.

There were 587 U10s registered in 2006/7. This season there are 551, with registrations still coming in. Some clubs have large numbers of players while others cannot form a full team. A country this size with this number of ice rinks should have far more hockey players. Teams seem to be leaving it until late in the season to think about recruiting to make sure they have enough players for the next season.

Many would like to dispense with the minimum number of 16 for a game. However if teams are allowed to play with only two lines, those with good numbers will leave their weaker players out, while those with few players will not bother to recruit and then press for an even lower minimum. **PG** said most countries do not have competitive U10 leagues, and asked why a formal league is needed. Coventry players do not want to travel to the north east for 12 minutes on the ice. He suggested local leagues of 4 – 5 clubs taking it in turns to host cross-ice days, with a seeded tournament or playoffs. It was explained that the YMC put in place a very similar structure a few years ago, but at the next AGM they were inundated with complaints from teams tired of seeing the same opponents and rinks over and over again. They then had a regional split with more teams in each section, but only two teams in the North had enough players, so the structure had to be changed again. Many clubs are finding that players want competitive games and are less keen to turn up for cross-ice. Most thought players need to start playing competitively at an early age so they can fulfil their potential. U8 programmes have made a lot of difference at some clubs.

20 – 25 seconds are lost at every shift change. More time is lost if players do not know what to do at changeovers. In the past there were more officials who helped the players, which brought them respect in return. **PJ** said there are far too many stoppages, and at the moment it seems U10 hockey is being used for training officials, to the detriment of the players. Fewer stoppages mean less opportunity for argument with officials. **GA** said the HDC he attended in Vierumäki used 65 local players, all on the ice at once with lots of pucks. There was an analysis of U10 hockey which showed that during a game each player touches the puck for less than 10 seconds. Many would like to introduce “Jonker’s rules”, which keep the players active and energised. **PJ** said it has been shown to work for age groups up to U16. Line changes are in rotation on the buzzer, with 1 min 15 sec shifts. Players change on the fly. When there is a dead puck the referee shouts for the offending team to get out of the zone, so the opposition can take the puck out. After a goal the players go straight to the centre face-off spot and the referee throws the puck in. Offsides are delayed, giving a chance for the offending team to come back out. More discussion is needed about how to manage shift changes at rinks where the benches have no doors. The benches could be on the ice, players could sit on the ice, or they could line up on the boards and race for the puck. Some clocks will not buzz at a shorter interval than two minutes. **PJ** said it is best not to use the clock.

Smaller clubs are struggling to attract new players into an expensive sport, and want to improve but have little idea how to go about it. Many thought the big clubs and the YMC should be helping them more. Clubs have been trying to capitalise on *Dancing On Ice* by promoting hockey at public skating. Some spoke about clubs going into schools. **BW** has been signing off grant application forms for schools programmes. He has just heard that Coventry Blaze’s application was successful. He said junior clubs are already aware that such funding is available. However, unlike professional clubs with full-time staff, junior clubs often cannot find anyone to complete lengthy application forms. While some junior clubs

seem to think a schools programme is the answer to all their problems, the number of players from a schools programme joining the junior club has usually been disappointing. Some of the programmes have been run by professional teams interested only in securing funding for wages. **AT** has found many schools are not prepared to allow a hockey club in, because hockey is not one of the sports the council recognise. **JK** explained that schools need to be very cautious about the activities they promote, and they are bombarded with offers of coaching from sportspeople.

Some wanted to return to freezing the score when a team got 8 goals ahead (not necessarily 8, 10 was suggested). Players and parents will often keep stats even when no score is being kept officially. Coaches need to be shown that one-sided scores are not a good way of teaching young players. There was a 49 – 0 score, and one person asked whether this would make the *Guinness Book of Records*. While most thought the scoreboard should be turned off in one-sided games, opinions varied about whether scores should continue to be recorded on the gamesheet. The stats might affect league standings. Results on the website and in *Powerplay* could simply announce which team won.

PJ asked why a team with insufficient players needs to forfeit the game, as they are already at a disadvantage. Without this rule some teams would turn up with a short bench for every game. **PJ** asked why forfeited games need to be played by the usual rules. He was not satisfied with Mohammed Ashraff's answer that it was an insurance issue. Officials are frightened to change the format. **RM** said the YMC will consider this for next season.

GA has done a lot of work on Clubmark, and on funding sources such as Sportmatch (not currently in operation), with help from the local council. The better a club's accreditation and procedures, the easier it is to access both public and private funding. Clubs need to have someone to take ownership of these issues. Clubmark is extremely important for clubs in his area, so he considers it vital for the EIHA to be able to award Clubmark accreditation. Clubs can take advantage of community initiatives such as that run by the Co-op. While the Board have looked into many of these issues, they have rarely found it feasible to go proceed with them. **DH** has been discussing some of them with Charles Dacres. They are considering running a workshop on obtaining funding, and putting together a template based on previous successful applications. The EIHA still has no marketing officer. Someone agreed to take on the job, then very quickly gave up. **PJ** said clubs would be in a much better financial position if they could use local officials. **RM** asked for examples of costs of officials: Swindon estimated an U14 game and an U16 game over one weekend would cost them £280 in officials' fees. Officials are still travelling long distances even though there are local officials available. **PG** suggested having pools of local officials whom clubs can book and then let Mohammed Ashraff know. Mohammed Ashraff has said there would be no more one-man systems, however a substantial number of games go ahead with only one official. The EIHL are taking the best officials. Despite various problems over officials, clubs need to remember that hockey will not work without them.

GA said the strongest teams seem to be dictating what happens. Being in the Finals is an incentive for the top clubs. It was the clubs, especially in the South, who wanted the change from two to four U10 teams at the Finals. **JJ** said Milton Keynes might make the Finals, but parents are asking why they should go when they will lose heavily. Teams have no choice about going. It was pointed out that the Finals format was decided democratically by the clubs. Some consider playing against teams with quality players and programmes is good for players even if they lose heavily. There is a problem that the successful clubs are resented. **GH** said many clubs do not seem to take U10s very seriously. They have no one taking responsibility for U10 recruitment and development. U10s tend to look very much to their coaches and managers as role models, but clubs often give them newly qualified team staff, and the more experienced coaches are not interested in them. **JB** said Sheffield have benefited greatly from older players coming to their practices and demonstrating.

GA said while the rules say third line players should be “*Predominantly novices – those new and the younger players*”, some teams are using players on their third line who have quite advanced skills. The U10 rules will be reworded to reflect the fact that some U10 teams now have three lines of quality players, which was not the case at the time these rules were written.

Some points were set out for people to consider over lunch and then make decisions about, subject to approval at the Board meeting.

Kids in / Funding / Marketing

GA said there is a great deal of knowledge in the EIHA, but it needs to be brought together. Everything which is good at successful clubs needs to be replicated at others. While much of this is the clubs’ responsibility, there might be more areas in which the EIHA could help. There is a need for a package of information which everyone agrees is best practice. This must fit in with the EIHA development plan. The top priority for sharing best practice is player recruitment, followed by marketing and accessing funding. There should also be templates and guidelines for documents such as equipment guide, constitution, club registration form. **GH** spoke about the questionnaire he sent out to all junior clubs about U10s issues a few years ago. He did a presentation on the feedback at the IIHF Learn To Play seminar. Most of the problems the EIHA could do nothing about. However he was able to dispel some perceptions, e.g. clubs were saying the EIHA were making hockey too expensive, until he pointed out how small the registration fee is in comparison with the total cost of putting a player on the ice.

***GA** will consult successful clubs and put together a package of templates and guidance. This will be incorporated into the Club Secretary course (he will attend the next planning meeting for this). More recruitment leaflets will be sent out to clubs. The development plan will include a section on recruitment.*

Register players till 30th April

The registration deadline for new U10 players will be 30th April, as of the current season.

League or not / 3-line league and 2-line development

Everyone agreed the 3-line league is still needed. Introducing a 2-line league in addition would cause problems with ice time. Having a 3-line and a 2-line league would need much thought over administration, e.g. transfers between leagues. The 2-line competition could be challenge only. However parents’ attitudes to challenges are different from league games. Decisions would need to be made about what should happen about teams which are short of players when they moved up to U12. There was concern that a 2-tier system would develop, with clubs which are short of players becoming stuck in a non-competitive environment. Being able to play only challenges should be an incentive for clubs to recruit. 2-line games could be played against the second and third lines of a 3-line team (the 3-line teams would have to be trusted not to take their first and second lines instead). Teams need to communicate for the benefit of the players, for example a team with no third line can use the opposition’s fourth.

Cross-ice does not work well when top players are pitted against inexperienced ones. There were suggestions for restricting cross-ice to U8 or U9 players. However players can start at any age. Cross-ice gives the opportunity to rearrange teams in a way that will benefit everyone. Also it is good for players of all ages, so it would be unwise to give the impression that it is only for very young players or beginners.

The 3-line league will continue. There will be no formal 2-line league.

8/10 clear goals

The scoreboard will be turned off when a team gets 8 goals ahead.

“Jonker’s rules” / Structure of game

*U10 games will be played according to “Jonker’s rules”. The Conferences and **RM** will arrange for **PJ** to visit different areas in the next few weeks, to explain to coaches and officials how it works. **PJ** and **GH** will formulate the rules as soon as possible.*

Refs / Cost

GH said officials are usually quick to learn and adapt.

The issues of costs, number of officials needed, and how they interpret the rules will be brought up with Mohammed Ashraff.

Distance of travel

BW said junior teams used to travel the length of the country for league games. Players and parents are no longer willing to travel so far, especially on a Sunday afternoon. **GH** said other formats would be possible, for example having the league in four regional groups with the top team from each group going to the Finals. The issue is complicated by other arguments such as whether there should be four U10 teams at the Finals and whether there should be U10 finals at all. Dividing the league into smaller groups would dilute the quality of hockey. **BW** said for the North the same team would be sure to reach the Finals for the next five years, while in the Midlands there would only be one place at the Finals for two or three teams with a good chance of winning the title. **PG** asked if the geographical setup of the leagues could be changed, with the Midlands including teams further south such as Peterborough and Milton Keynes. **BW** said it would be unwise to make too many changes over one season, but this could be looked at in a year or two. **GH** said the fixture secretaries take distances into account as far as possible, but ice allocations are far from ideal and they need to consider other clubs as well as the juniors. **JK** said clubs try to make sensible decisions over ice time, but most of them have no say in what the rink gives them.

If a team goes to a game with insufficient players, they will still forfeit the game 5 – 0. **RM** will consult the Board about the possibility of borrowing players. They should borrow from the opposition first. They should not be able to borrow another team's stars. **CW** said the players Bracknell have offered to allow other teams to borrow are very poor. Allowing teams to borrow might mean less poaching. There was a discussion about whether a game where one team has borrowed players could count as a league game, as players are not keen to travel to meaningless games. Only the first two lines' shifts could count, as in roller hockey. The team with enough players could be awarded one point with the other being up for grabs to the winning team. It appears that some clubs are registering phantom players to reach the minimum number for entering the league. If a team do not have enough players for the league they can still play challenges. **GH** said there are no teams which would be affected if 2-line games were played only as challenges. Being in the league encourages the players even if their scores do not count in the standings. Teams borrowing players need to be sure they are registered.

GA suggested that because of the 8 clear goals rule, the 5 – 0 score for a forfeit should become 8 – 0. 5 – 0 for a forfeit is an IIHF rule, but 8 – 0 could be adopted as an in-house rule. The YMC will consult about this. Probably the only problem would be over separating teams at the top of the league.

The regional divisions will remain the same for 2008/9.

A club will need 12 players registered at the start of the season to enter an U10 team, and 16 players for a game. Teams with less than 16 players will play their games as challenges, and may borrow players.

These decisions will be taken to the Board. **RM** will report back after the Board meeting.

Signed..... Date.....