



Girls Hockey Calgary Association (GHC)

**Member Q&A**

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

May 25, 2020

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**1. At what level should more elite city-wide teams be forming? U11? U13?**

**GHC:** The Female Hockey Alberta Development Model (A.D.M.), which was developed over a period of years and implemented in 2015, identified a system for female players to successfully move from grassroots to high-performance hockey. Part of this model was to decrease the number of “elite” teams across the province at the U15 (Bantam) and U18 (Midget) level, as well as a focus on meeting the development metrics at the Learn to Play (Females age 8-9) and Learn to Train (Females age 10-11) stages so players are better prepared to succeed at the Train to Train (Females age 12-16) stages and onward. In this new system, GHC has two “elite” U15 (Bantam) AA teams, two “elite” U18 AA teams and one U18 (Midget) AAA team.

All of this is important to consider when determining how many U11 (Atom) and U13 (Peewee) players have had the maximum opportunity for well-rounded development as they progress through this system. Evidence shows that moving into a “best on best” system too early does not produce long-term success overall. If we move into an “hourglass” system with a reduced number of top teams in the middle (at the U11 and U13 age divisions), we are isolating a small group of “elite” early developers. Some of these early developers may or may not remain in hockey after the crucial ages where athletes (especially girls) leave sport. Forming “elite” teams at younger age groups can also tempt coaches and players to focus their training on “winning” instead of skill proficiency and mastery, which in the long run, disadvantages those early developers as well. Finally, we risk disadvantaging and discouraging our late developers, who absolutely do become part of these successful high-performance teams by U15.

GHC has two Calgary Fire AA teams who play in the Alberta Female Hockey League (AFHL), and two Jr Inferno U15 (Bantam) 1 teams who play in Hockey Calgary U18 (Midget) A Girls during league play and Hockey Alberta U15 (Bantam) Female A Provincial Championships. Our Jr Inferno U15 (Bantam) 1 teams have players who were on the bubble of AA during tryouts, as well as high-performance players who chose not to enter into the AFHL elite system for various reasons (commitment, cost, etc). Our Calgary Fire U15 (Bantam) AA teams have consistently led the province in the past few years, especially since Hockey Alberta introduced its Female A.D.M. This season, our U15 (Bantam) Fire teams were ranked first and second in the province, and were ranked 9<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> in Canada’s Girls 14U Tier 1 rankings. Our Jr Inferno U15 (Bantam) 1 teams have also been highly successful at the provincial level, winning the U15 (Bantam) Female A Championships last year. The majority (75 percent) of our elite U15 (Bantam) players this year played with GHC the season prior.

There will always be players whose talent and mindset will consistently move them into the top percentages on their age group. Successful teams are made up of many players of many skill sets. We are lucky to have the number of players we do, and because of our size, we are able to maximize the development opportunities for all players.

- 2. How will the Peewee age group be structured for the upcoming season?**
- 3. How will the Peewee teams be formed this year?**
- 4. Will the Peewee teams be mixed again with players living in both the North and South?**
- 5. How are the teams going to be tiered for the Pee Wee levels next year? Are we having one Peewee #1 team or two? In the case of two Peewee #1 teams, will they be split North and South or will they be done city wide parity?**

**GHC:** The number of teams in each tier within an age division is determined by the number of registered players in that age division and the number of recommended “teams per tier” in the standardized tiering structure through Hockey Calgary and Hockey Alberta. We also consider the overall development

pathway, which is especially relevant to our U13 (Peewee) players and their path to our U15 (Bantam) AA, 1, 2 and 3 teams (see Question #1).

For the past few years, GHC has rostered two U13 (Peewee) 1 teams from the top 18 forwards and top 12 defense from the evaluation process. (This is different than the team formation approach in Atom, which rosters its two Atom 1 teams from the top 16 players in the North and top 16 players in the South respectively.) From these players, GHC forms two equal teams and coaching staffs. One team competes in Hockey Calgary U13 (Peewee), 3 North and the other in Hockey Calgary U13 (Peewee), 3 South. The North/South “mix” changes season to season, and is highly dependent on the evaluation results and position distribution of the players.

The intention of this team formation switch (prioritizing evaluation results over North/South, as opposed to the Atom 1 teams) is to minimize the skill gap on our U13 (Peewee), 1 teams.

At this time, we cannot say what our U13 (Peewee) structure will look like. Even under typical circumstances, we must wait until registration closes to interpret the number of registered players and submit a proposed structure to Hockey Calgary for approval and ice allocation. Then, we must wait until evaluation results to form teams within that approved structure. All of Hockey Calgary faces significant uncertainties about the upcoming hockey season.

U15 (Bantam) and U18 (Midget) Structure

**6. *What will the U15 and U18 community structure look like, and will there be division mixes between U15 and U18 like last year?***

**GHC:** When we moved our teams under the umbrella of Hockey Calgary in 2018-19, we maintained the A/B structure for U15 (Bantam) and U18 (Midget), but adjusted the teams within these tiers. U15 (Bantam) 1 and U18 (Midget) 1 teams played in Hockey Calgary U18 (Midget) A Girls, facing each other in league play. U15 (Bantam) 1 teams were still made up of U15 (Bantam)-aged girls only, and U18 (Midget) 1 teams were made up of U18 (Midget)-aged girls only. Our U15 (Bantam) 2 teams and U18 (Midget) 2 teams played in Hockey Calgary U15 (Bantam) Girls and Hockey Calgary U18 (Midget) B Girls respectively.

This year, with more teams, we adjusted our structure to include a third “middle” tier, which had U15 (Bantam)-2 teams and U18 (Midget) 2 teams play each other in Hockey Calgary U18 (Midget) B girls, and a U15 (Bantam)-only tier which featured our U15 (Bantam) Blaze, Flames, Ignite, Scorch and Spark. We do consider the make-up of structure each season, but at this time we cannot say what our U15 (Bantam) and U18 (Midget) structure will look like. Even under typical circumstances, we must wait until registration closes to interpret the number of registered players and submit a proposed structure Hockey Calgary for approval and ice allocation. Then, we must wait until evaluation results to form teams within that approved structure. However, all of Hockey Calgary faces significant uncertainties about the upcoming hockey season.

All-Female Divisions (AFD)

- 7. *There are a number of players that are strong hockey players that want to play in hockey Calgary's main stream and not the AFD. How will GHC accommodate these players?***
- 8. *How does GHC plan on addressing the skill transition between AFD and 1 / 2 teams?***

**GHC:** The roll-out of the All-Female Divisions in 2018/19 (especially for players who had never been part of previous all-female structures with the RMFHL) was never intended to create a feeling of demoting out of the “main” stream. Slotting all-female teams into a tiering structure that did not have all-female

divisions was challenging when our move from the RMFHL was piloted early on in the process. GHC worked in partnership with Hockey Calgary to create tailored, competitive, skill-balanced all-female divisions from U11 (Atom) to U18 (Midget) to better incorporate the needs of female hockey teams in a co-ed structure.

Hockey Calgary now has five divisions featuring all-female teams: U18 (Midget) A Girls, U18 (Midget) B Girls, U15 (Bantam) Girls, U13 (Peewee) Girls and U11 (Atom) Girls. As the only all-female hockey association in Zone 9 (Hockey Calgary), those divisions are made up of our GHC teams. All U7 (Timbits), all U9 (Novice), some U11 (Atom) and some U13 (Peewee) GHC teams play in co-ed divisions, while the majority of others play in these all-female divisions. Players are rostered to these teams based on their evaluation performance. All GHC teams play in Hockey Calgary's Community "main" stream.

There are many examples of girls who moved from the AFD in 2018/19 to the top tier of their age group in 2019/20. GHC also has players who began playing hockey "late" and now play in our Elite Female Hockey stream. We are focused on building a consistent, well-developed, well-executed program specifically for female hockey athletes, that we can control and modify to fit each age level and skill set. We have numerous very experienced skill coaches within our association who can help deliver this goal, and help develop our athletes to not only excel in hockey, but in all sports and in their community.

*Some background on the decision to leave the RMHL:*

In 2018, GHC completed the multi-year process of transferring 41 teams from the RMFHL to Hockey Calgary. This change was implemented to improve the experience of GHC players and their families and achieve the following:

- A clarified, consistent tier system vs. restrictive tiering structure.
- More consistent and established season structure.
- Less out-of-city travel (time, safety) and barriers to entry for new players.
- More ice access as a member of Hockey Calgary.
- Appropriate release of schedules / less schedule changes.
- Control development, team formation and division balance.
- Centralize administration, operation and marketing.
- Showcase all-female teams and rankings in All Female Divisions.
- Implement a Goalie Development Program.
- Develop structure for players new to hockey above Atom.
- Support "girls play against girls" model.
- Increase the visibility of girls' hockey in Calgary.

**9. *Has any thought been given as to how the all-female divisions operate? Perhaps operating these divisions more like a house league would promote registrations for athletes and parents who only want two ice times per week (like many other activities).***

**GHC:** As noted above, part of GHC's integration into Hockey Calgary was the introduction of "All-Female Divisions" (i.e. U11 (Atom) Girls, U13 (Peewee), Girls, U15 (Bantam) Girls, U18 (Midget) A Girls, U18 (Midget) B Girls). The goal of these all-female divisions was to increase the number of appropriate tiers for female hockey players within Hockey Calgary, that also:

- Provide balanced and competitive divisions for all-female teams.

- Provide the same number of practices, games and skill development opportunities as other Hockey Calgary divisions.
- Increase the opportunity for all-female teams in Calgary to compete in Esso Minor Hockey Week (EMHW), City Championships, etc.
- Maintain the model of “girls playing girls.”
- Increase the “community culture” of our citywide association.

The all-female divisions within Hockey Calgary are not a Recreational hockey experience. They are all-female divisions within Hockey Calgary’s Community stream (its largest stream). Hockey Calgary’s Recreation hockey stream is meant to be a less competitive playing environment and a less demanding time commitment than Community hockey, and is an option for both male and female players.

All-female divisions are also not part of a house league. Teams in Hockey Calgary’s all-female divisions receive the same amount of practice ice as any other GHC team in their age division, and are subject to the same season format (games, tournament sanctions, championships) as all other teams in Hockey Calgary’s Community stream. GHC does not limit fundraising, tournament participation or practices like other House League experiences (i.e. North West House League), which are offered as an alternative to a traditional (Community) hockey season.

All-female divisions are also not a “discover hockey” program. For players ages 4-8, GHC does offer a weekly development program, Jr Inferno First Strides Program. This is a optional program for girls who are new to hockey, and is not appropriate for those with hockey experience.

**10. How is the board's planning to address the issues with team formation in the Atom / Peewee All Female division? How will the geographic locations determine placement of players in the All Female Division?**

**GHC:** The city-wide aspect is one of our biggest advantages (maximizing our reach, building a diverse development experience) and biggest challenges (predicting ice needs, securing ice, reducing travel for families). Our registration process currently requests a North/South designation to assist in our Team Formation process, but the geographical basis of our teams change year to year based on registration numbers and evaluation results.

The first transition to “city-wide” divisions is U11 (Atom). Players moving into U11 (Atom) adjust from a strict North/South format in U9 (Novice) — where they have always played with their peers, perhaps since U7 (Timbits) — to a wider tiering structure and more diverse skill range. Hockey sees lots of early developers break away from their peer group in this age range, especially when it comes to skating proficiency, and it’s also where you see a significant “bubble” begin to form of players who are similarly skilled and determined.

As we settle into a more consistent structure after many years of growth, GHC is focusing on improving its **communication**, especially in supporting advancing players transition from one age division to another. We don’t know exactly what our team sizes and numbers will look like for an upcoming season until registration has closed and evaluations have ended, but we can reduce the stress of team formation by providing as much helpful information as possible, and by engaging with members season to season. (We also hope to attract more members to volunteer at the Association level, to de-centralize some of the tasks that require a significant amount of time and resources.)

In terms of **geography** at U11 (Atom) and U13 (Peewee) all-female divisions, GHC’s city-wide membership allows us to build a division of 5-6 balanced teams. The goal has been to create a tightly balanced tier, so all teams (Blaze, Flames, Heat, Ignite, Spark, Scorch, etc) have a competitive hockey experience. GHC members will be polled on their priorities on this approach for next season. This survey is forthcoming.

Finally, our (amazing) ice scheduler makes the most effort possible to secure ice based on our registration predictions, the geographic location of our registrations, and the scarcity of ice in the city. Despite these efforts, there may still be instances where “South” teams have practices on “North” ice, etc.

Evaluations

**11. Will there be changes to the evaluation process? GHC said there would be transparency last year, there was not.**

**GHC:** Our intention with Evaluations is to ensure that all players are placed on the appropriate team to allow for maximum skill development and maximum enjoyment. We want every player to have the opportunity to contribute to her team both on and off the ice resulting in a positive hockey experience. We sent each age division Evaluation Letters as soon as we had

This past season, each player had five evaluated ice sessions. The initial ice time was a skill testing and time trials, administered by a third-party service. To place players efficiently and effectively, it is important to sort players into like-groups as soon as possible to pinpoint the most suitable ice session for each player.

Once groups were determined, the remainder of the evaluations were game-style sessions, similar to a training camp. The intent was to create a team-like atmosphere in order to decrease stress for the players. Players moved up or down if they were outliers in their group. Players ranked at the top of their group were moved up, players ranked at the bottom of their group moved down group. If a player moves up, she will be competing at a higher level and will have the opportunity to stay in this group. If a player moves down, she will have the opportunity to show off her skills in a lower level and possibly be moved back up. The number of players moving up and down varies, as it is based on the number of outliers. This decision is solely dependent on numerical scores.

GHC hired a third-party service to conduct a large portion of our evaluations last season. The company we chose supplied evaluators with strong hockey backgrounds (playing and coaching at post-secondary, junior and various professional levels) along with years of other involvement in the sport. We also reinstated GHC coach evaluators. Coaches were not allowed to evaluate their own daughter’s age group. This was strictly enforced and monitored. Approximately ten evaluators attended each ice session. They assigned each player a score from 1-7 in a variety of areas (GHC provided parents and Evaluators with these reference notes.)

Work is underway on our Evaluation and Team Formation processes for the coming year. We are updating our reference material for next season, GHC has expanded its Operations team on the Board, and we are building more Association-level positions to de-centralize the process and increase our resources during our busiest time of year.

Team Formation

**12. We have heard rumours that the "North" and "South" separation will be removed for the 2020-21 season. Is this true? If it is not planned for this coming season, is it planned for the foreseeable future?**

**GHC:** Hockey Calgary introduced a North / South structure in its Community steam in 2015 to minimize travel time and costs, reduce the number of tiers, and improve alignment to the rest of province among other things. For GHC’s U7 (Timbits), U9 (Novice) and U11 (Atom) teams who play in Hockey Calgary co-ed tiers, there is a North / South separation. For our U13 (Peewee) teams who play in Hockey Calgary co-ed tiers, team formation is a little different due to the introduction of designated positions (see

Questions 2-5). For our all-female divisions, which draw players from all over Zone 9, we have attempted to balance skill while incorporating regional representation and where possible, friend requests (see Question 10).

At this time, we cannot say what our structure will look like. Under typical circumstances, we must wait until registration closes to interpret the number of registered players and submit a proposed structure Hockey Calgary for approval and ice allocation. Then, we must wait until evaluation results to form teams within that approved structure. This year, due to the impacts of COVID-19, all of Hockey Calgary faces significant uncertainties about the upcoming hockey season. The number of tiers within an age division is highly dependent on registration numbers.

Team Size

- 13. Why were the team sizes so large in Atom? 16-skaters per team seemed like too many.**  
**14. Can you confirm that roster sizes won't exceed 16 players, including the goalie?**

**GHC:** GHC waits until registration closes to interpret the number of registered players and their regional preference and submit a proposed structure Hockey Calgary for approval and ice allocation. Then, we use evaluation results to form teams within that approved structure.

Development

- 15. What is the development plan for all levels of players for the coming season?**

**GHC:** This past season, GHC introduced a Skill Sequence Training Program to address a gap in the foundational skating and puck control skills of our players and to promote a consistency in our coaching language and instruction delivery. We had high participation in our coach feedback sessions, which allows us to tailor for next season. GHC will continue to measure its success and break down the sequences at every age and skill level. We also plan to incorporate more coach development on player motivation and connection, and work with our coaches on training delivery. GHC will continue to develop our partnership with P3 Right Start (U7 & U9) to identify age-specific skill progressions and teaching points to maximize coach and player development.

This past year, we expanded our Team Training Development Fund for U11 (Atom), U13 (Peewee), U15 (Bantam) & U18 (Midget), which provided these teams with \$500 of off-ice physical literacy and conditioning sessions. This program was positively received (despite the set-back of one of our training providers closing abruptly) and will continue to evolve. We are hoping to develop a list of approved organizations for coaches to select from.

GHC is always looking for people for the development team. If you are interested, please contact [admin@girlshockeyscalgary.com](mailto:admin@girlshockeyscalgary.com)!

Coaches

- 16. Comments about coach survey: Most important question was not asked: Is your player returning to GHC for the 2020-2021 season? Too many questions, simplify. We don't need to ask 30 questions about the head coach.**

**GHC:** Generally, GHC sends members a year-end survey, which is where we would include this question. The 2019/20 survey was being re-designed to better assess member needs, however its roll-out has



been delayed with the abrupt changes our volunteers have faced at home and at work in the past two months. It will be sent to members soon.

Our coaching surveys are sent twice per season and are intended to give members an opportunity to provide feedback on their coaches. Our Directors of Coaching use the results to identify themes (both positive and areas for improvement) to bring to our coaches, and use to plan our development plans and seminars. Effective and open communication between coaches and their players / parents generates more trust, which leads to stronger training, athletic progress and personal growth.

Impacts from COVID-19

- 17. What is the league doing to support operations during COVID?**
- 18. What is your strategy for the season Start-up including evaluations in the event that Covid-19 pandemic restrictions are still in place?**
- 19. GHC continues to show healthy surpluses each year. Hopefully the board has considered to REDUCE the registration fees for the 20-21 season not only based on that but also due to the COVID-19 situation where many families are feeling it?**
- 20. What is GHC doing to monitor the return to hockey in the Fall in relation to COVID 19?**
- 21. Looking at the 2020-2021 season, IF the season doesn't go forward and proceed as current restrictions are not lifted - reimbursements options?**
- 22. What are the plans for the 2020/21 season based on the current covid 19 restrictions?**

**GHC:** While we cannot say what the 2020-21 minor hockey season will look like, we can reasonably expect that it will not be business-as-usual. GHC will adhere to and clearly communicate our directives from Hockey Canada, Hockey Alberta and Hockey Calgary as soon as we learn more. For now, Hockey Calgary has scheduled registration to open on July 1, 2020.

In the meantime, GHC is preparing for the 2020-21 season as usual, by holding our AGM and elections to ensure a full and functioning board of directors to enable our 2020/21 season planning; inventorying and purchasing jerseys, socks and equipment for our Jr Inferno and Calgary Fire teams; reviewing and preparing our Evaluation and Team Formation processes and procedures; booking ice as required; working with our third-party partners (Evaluators, Equipment & Apparel, Photography, Development, etc) in preparation for the upcoming season.

The following financial resources are available on our website:

- GHC Financial Assistance Fund
- Grindstone Award Foundation Grant
- Flames Even Strength Program
- Canadian Tire Jumpstart Program
- Lace 'Em Up Foundation

*Update on COVID-19 From Hockey Calgary:*

“Hockey Calgary will be taking its directive from Hockey Alberta and Hockey Canada, as well as the City of Calgary and the Provincial Government, with regards to start times. Facilities and rinks need to be given the green light to operate and our governing bodies need to give Hockey Calgary the green light to run programs.

Hockey Calgary is actively involved with planning various scenarios and start times should the season not start on time. Hockey Calgary is focused on being prepared to resume operations when given the go ahead, whenever that may be.

Hockey Calgary will take its lead from Hockey Alberta, Hockey Canada, and Public Health Authorities. Members should expect to see increased sanitary procedures and recommendations put in place by our governing bodies and governments. Hockey Calgary will diligently follow, and possibly strengthen, these measures to ensure the health and safety of our players and families.”

Retainment & Recruitment

**23. What is the plan to retain and attract players from coming and going to boys hockey or other League's?**

**GHC:** The growth in our registration in the past five to six years can largely be attributed to the number of female players coming to GHC from co-ed associations, as well as new players joining the game. GHC's presence in city rinks has increased drastically since our re-integration of all 40+ teams into Hockey Calgary in 2018, which continues to raise our profile.

GHC is a choice for female hockey players, who can also play for their designated co-ed member association, and now all players in the city have more options available with non-sanctioned hockey programs. Some players will inevitably move from one Association to another (some Calgary players have played for three clubs in as many seasons) but there are measures we can take to cultivate a culture of pride to build on our success:

- Strengthen and standardize skill development.
- Develop and support our coaches.
- Stabilize our tiering structure.
- Commit to reviewing the needs of our members in terms of geography, ice availability, schedule consistency, etc.
- Elevate our elite female hockey program, the Calgary Fire.
- Be a leading voice for female hockey in Alberta.

**24. Can GHC look Grant proposals /applications for opportunity for our community to keep girls in sport. There are some Grants opportunities for Alberta Children Youth and Communities. Eg. Go Girl Events Grants \$2,500 In motion Network: Girls**

**GHC:** Yes, absolutely. These are great ideas and we can look into them further! If any members are aware of resources our association / members can utilize, please get in touch:  
[admin@girlshockeycalgary.com](mailto:admin@girlshockeycalgary.com)

Hockey Calgary Boundary Announcement

**25. Will the Hockey Calgary boundary announcement have any impact on GHC? It looks to not.**

**GHC:** The boundary changes will not affect our current members. Any female hockey player in Zone 9 (The City of Calgary) remains entitled to register with GHC. As the boundary change is intended to address inequities that result from diverse association sizes across the whole city, it's possible that this may increase access to ice contracts for some Hockey Calgary Associations. It's also possible that some families whose community has been re-designated to a new Hockey Calgary Association may instead

decide to join GHC, however we cannot say what the registration impacts across all minor hockey associations will look like this year with so much financial, medical and social uncertainty related to COVID-19.

Provincials

**26. *Provincials - Pee wee B: Significant debate about team attending Provincials. We finished 1st in GHC league, but we were a C team with beginner players. Were completely out of our league competing with B teams at Provincials. Need to rethink.***

**GHC:** Hockey Alberta has two championships for female U13 (Pee wee), players: U13 (Pee wee), Female A Provincials and U13 (Pee wee), Female B Provincials. Hockey Alberta does not permit female teams who compete in co-ed divisions to play in female Provincial Championships, so our U13 (Pee wee), 1 Red/White and U13 (Pee wee), 2 teams are not eligible to attend female Provincials.

In the 2018-19 season, two GHC AFD teams attended the 2019 ATB Hockey Alberta U13 (Pee wee), Female B Provincials in Lethbridge. The game results for each team was 1-4, 1-6 and 1-4, 0-4 respectively. This year, because the 2007-born and 2008-born group was larger than the previous year, GHC added one U13 (Pee wee), 2 team, which effectively made the GHC AFD a “Tier 3.” Unfortunately, there are no Hockey Alberta U13 (Pee wee), Female C Provincials. The other option this year was to decline our right to Zone 9 representation, which must be decided very early on in season. We re-asses our Provincial representations (alongside Hockey Calgary and Hockey Alberta) every season, as there is no standardized provincial tiering structure for female hockey.

Volunteers

**27. *Will there be changes to volunteer commitments for parents, ie how to incentivize parents to volunteer throughout the year not just during evaluations and being of season?***

**GHC:** We do not anticipate major changes to the volunteer program for the upcoming season, but we do want to examine:

- Incentivizing team-level volunteers (especially at the older age divisions) to minimize the responsibility and strain on Team Managers and Head Coaches.
- Empowering association-level volunteers to de-centralize the responsibility and strain on Coordinators and Board members.

Ice Usage

**28. *Are we getting any standard ice times at Father David Bauer and how will they be utilized?***

**GHC:** The contract that GHC holds at FDB with the City of Calgary is for the use of practices and games for the Calgary Fire U18 (Midget) AAA. GHC is a priority user after the Calgary Dino's and the NWCAA Midget AAA Flames. Our ice includes approximately 3-4 weeknight times along with 32 game slots over the season. Game times are 2.5 hours. Weeknight slots are usually 1.25 hours, with start times that can vary from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Any ice not utilized for the AAA Fire filters down to the Elite and community programs. This past season, GHC had 142 slots at the venue (practices and games). Of those, 45 filtered down to Elite and community teams. Our ice pool overall did see a slight increase as a result of this.