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Proud Branch Of



OHF to Introduce Modified-Ice Programming

Changes coming for 2011-born players for 2018-2019 season

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Why is Hockey Canada making these changes to 8-and-under programming, including the change to cross-ice this past season?

A. The Initiation Program has been Hockey Canada's suggested development model for over 30 years. The addition of modified-ice for Novice programs is in recognition of recent research which clearly lays out the need for age-appropriate programming, based on the size of the participant in relation to the playing facility. When children play on smaller surfaces, they are given more opportunities to engage with the puck, regardless of skill level, giving every player a chance to develop equally. At the 8-and-under level, Hockey Canada is putting the emphasis on development, not competition.

Q. Why is the programming based on age and not on skill?

A. Similar to all other programming in Hockey Canada, players are divided in divisions (Initiation, Novice, Atom, PeeWee, Bantam, Midget and Juvenile) and classes (minor or major) by age. Therefore, this programming follows suit. Additionally, there will be an opportunity for players of similar-skill to compete against each other through tiering. There are a few different options for associations to employ tiering, based on the size of their association.

Q. When will information on tiering be available to associations?

A. Hockey Canada will be producing resources for modified-ice at the Initiation and Novice level, which will include examples and information on tiering. It is expected the OHF will have this information for distribution by the end of February 2018. Minor Hockey Associations (MHAs) or clubs can also contact their Members for examples of tiering which are currently being used by other associations.

Q. What is the difference between cross-ice and half-ice?

A. Primarily, it is the size of the playing surface which changes from cross-ice to half-ice, but additionally there are several other changes in game format and seasonal structure which will help players progress toward Atom hockey. This will be clearly laid out in the OHF Player Development Model, which will be available in early 2018.

Q. What are these other changes in half-ice hockey and when will information on game formats be available?

A. The OHF Player Development Model brochure will outline how games are played for each age division and the ideal seasonal structure for players from 5-year-olds to 8-year-olds. It will be available in early 2018.

Q. Does this include the use of referees, goaltenders, pucks, nets, etc?

A. Yes, all of those details will be available around the end of February 2018. The OHF Player Development Model will outline the ideal scenario for the age divisions, while also offering some other situations for smaller associations. Additionally, your Member is also able to answer questions related to game programming which would be specific to your association.

OHF Members





Q. How are tournaments going to run in 2018-2019?

A. They can still run as they always have, except the size of the playing surface should reflect that of the OHF modified-ice progression.

Q. Will there be rep programming in 2018-2019?

A. By tiering players, those of similar skill will be placed on teams which can compete against one another. This can happen internal to an association (ie – house league) or external to it (ie – local league or rep programming). Regardless of tier, playing surface should reflect that of the OHF modified-ice progression as the physical size of the player has not changed.

Q. For associations with mixed programming (7-and-8-year-olds playing together on the same team in the same league) what happens to the 2010-born players in the 2018-2019 season?

A. In order to meet the requirements of the OHF modified-ice progression, these teams/leagues will play half-ice games for the first half of the 2018-2019 season (until December), then complete a development season in January to prepare for the progression to full-ice games in February and March. 2011-born players will repeat this progression in the 2019-2020 season, to fulfill the Hockey Canada mandate.

Q. How do associations with non-Olympic sized ice (~200x100ft) meet the requirement for half-ice hockey to be 100x100 (or cross-ice being 100x60)?

A. The dimensions outlined by Hockey Canada are the maximum guideline for those modified-ice categories, not the mandatory size. There are different options for ice layout, which will be provided to associations in early 2018. This will include alternative options to divider boards as well.

Q. How will players learn proper positioning without playing on full ice?

A. The purpose of modified-ice is to give players a foundation of skills. Similar to school, where students learn to add before they multiply, the modified-ice progression allows players to gain the necessary skills of skating, stick handling, passing and shooting before team tactics are introduced. This follows the player development pyramid for Hockey Canada Initiation hockey (85% technical skills and 15% individual tactics) and Novice hockey (75% technical skills, 15% individual tactics, 10% team tactics).

Q. What about learning off-sides and icing?

A. Similar to above, off-sides and icing are concepts more easily absorbed by players when they have already had a chance to focus on the basic skills of skating, stick handling, passing and shooting.

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