



ENGLISH ICE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Limited by Guarantee

7th April 2015

Change Of Age Groups And League Structure, Time For Change

During recent months there have been a number of meetings with Club officials, Head Coaches, EIHA officials and Directors with responsibility running Junior Clubs, teams or leagues, from these meetings it was apparent that there is huge appetite for change within the Junior League structure.

The clubs were also very insistent that over the years there had been much talk on changing age groups with nothing ever happening and saw little likelihood of that changing or if it did it would just be dropped on them at the EIHA AGM and Section meetings.

At every opportunity the call was for change, for leadership and support, help us keep our older players in the sport in the hope that they will find a place on a senior team we need an U20's league we also need help keeping the younger players involved.

None of this is new and has been discussed time and again at board meetings, so often the question comes up, is now the right time to do this, where will the extra icetime come from.

Well the time is here – for the season 2015/16 season the age groups will be U20, U18, U15, U13, U11

As we are sure you are all aware everything has to come at price.

Accompanying this short Press Release is a Questions and Answers document that will we are sure help with the thought process behind this change.

It should also be noted that the coming months will see reviews of all leagues including Senior Men / Women / Girls and the England Programme – As many will be aware there is already an going review of the Conference Programme which will be completed prior to the EIHA AGM and Junior Section Meeting.

With the introduction of U20's & U11's leagues we now have a clear player pathway through competitive grass roots hockey for those wishing to progress into elite programmes.

The change in the league structure will impact on all leagues at every level and the board would like to encourage everyone in every club to support this change – while it is the board that are directing this it is the clubs, teams, rinks and league management committees working together that will make this work. With this initiative and everyone in hockey working together we will help change the sport we all care about for many years to come.

For and on behalf of the

English Ice Hockey Association Ltd

Irene Jones Company Secretary - issued behalf of Ken Taggart EIHA Chairman

Registered office – Springfield 12 Arnside Avenue Blackpool FY1 6NB Tel 01253 402212

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Q & A Change of Age Group

Q1. You are introducing an extra league how will teams fit into this?

- A1.
 - ❖ U18 Becomes U20 = 3 x 20 (1998 – 1997 – 1996)
 - ❖ U16 Becomes U18 = 3 x 15 (2000 – 1999)
 - ❖ U14 Becomes U15 = 3 x 15 (2002 – 2001)
 - ❖ U12 Becomes U13 = 3 x 15 OR 2 x 20 (2003 – 2004)
 - ❖ U11 = 3 x 15 OR 2 x 20 (2005 – 2006) U11'S will be played within the boundaries of the individual conference with the leagues built to reflect this and taking into account, this is the entry level into the sport. **Note:- all other league structures will mirror the league they are replacing as of the end of 2014/15 season (we believe the above format will help minimise the impact on icetime and allow some flexibility with clubs to maximise available icetime and negotiate the best fit with their rink management)**

Q2. What happens to player suspensions from season 2014/15

- A2. Any suspensions carry over to the new age group for season 2015/16.

Q3. Will players be able to play up?

- A3. Yes all players will be able to play up to the next age group – with the following exceptions to play U11 a player must have had his/her 8th birthday, to play U20 a player must have had his/her 15th birthday.

Q4. Where will the extra icetime come from?

- A4. Part 1 - A full review of the numbers required to have a second team at the same age group across all leagues will be carried out – currently in the junior leagues we have some 26 more teams than we had in 1996 but some 320 less players – this has led to having less players taking part but swallowing up huge amounts of icetime.
- A4. Part 2 – A full review of cross ice will be undertaken with this moving to U9's with a view to making it a 12 month Learn to Play Programme with cross ice events taking place in the summer months rather than traditional season. We are aware that this may have some impact on recreational teams and discussions will take place with this section to allay any fears of a mass attack on their traditional summer ice. It is understood that some Junior clubs shutdown for some weeks in the summer for those clubs, their cross ice programme would be required to operate during the regular season, clubs will be expected to accommodate the U9's programme within their club training structure.

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Q5. Can we still get dispensation for players?

- A5. A review of player dispensations across all leagues will take place to ensure they are suitable

Q6. Can a 16 year old still play senior ice hockey?

- A6. Yes.

Q7. What rules will U13 play will it be checking or non checking?

- A7. Non checking as it is considered that this is a natural progression from the U11's

Q8. Is there enough players to sustain an U20 league?

- A8. Yes, the biggest single reason given for drop out players at 18 is the lack of opportunity at senior level. By introducing the U20 league it will give the players an opportunity to play up into the senior leagues while giving an opportunity for other players to continue to develop.

Q9. It is understood IHUK are intending to run an U20 National League – how will that impact on the EIHA run League?

- Q9. Yes we understand that to be correct we believe that any such league that is created will attract players of certain a calibre while the EIHA league will be geared at retention of as many players as possible to allow them to develop and reach their full potential.

Q10. Why would IHUK want to be the driver behind an U20 league?

- A10. IHUK have been under pressure from the IIHF to ensure an U20 league is operational in Great Britain to ensure our continued eligibility to take part in U20 World Championships. We are sure some will say, why did the EIHA not make the move to change age groups before now, the answer is simple until recently we under estimated the drive for change at the club and grass roots and as the caretakers of the sport we have to take note.

Q11. Will the U20 League be ran by the Youth Management Committee?

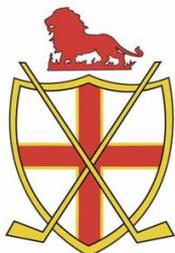
- A11. No a new League Management Committee will be put in place to manage and over see the U20 League.

Q12. Will there be an end of season playoff?

- A12. We see no reason why not but this will be confirmed once the new LMC is in place.

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Q13. How long will it take for the changes to show any benefits?

- A13. We believe the benefits of the changes at U20's will take 3 years to work their way through the system and show full retention of more players and development that leads to places on senior teams for those that wish to progress. While at younger age groups the benefits will become evident much sooner.

Q14. Will the U20 League be regional or National?

- A14. Regional i.e. South East – South West & North – Midlands “Refer to question A1” This will be part of a review that the U20 LMC will make at the end of season 2015/16

Q15. Why do we jump U15 to U18?

- A15. To ensure we meet the eligibility criteria to compete in the U18 World Championships we need to maintain the U18 League.

Q16. Why are the U18's games now only 3 x 15?

- A16. We need to ensure that we maximise the available icetime and this format will accommodate this.

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