



## **Section 4 - The Canadian Development Model**

Junior hockey in Canada has come a long way in terms of their awareness and support of the different aspects of their players lives. It is no longer ok or acceptable to ignore other needs. Programs to support mental health awareness, physical health and fitness, anti-bullying initiatives, understanding of racism and other forms of discrimination, expected community involvement and charitable activities, expansion of career development opportunities and so much more are now a growing part of the junior hockey experience. There is much more to do but we now have model programs to follow and resource people and mentors to help us.

All these initiatives should be part of the holistic education of every young person. So should the formal education of each player. The role of education and training in their lives must be supported and valued. It is no longer acceptable to pay lip service to this critical component of there lives. Nor is it appropriate to expect players to put these things on hold or defer them until their junior hockey career is over.

### **I. Introduction**

When young boys and girls start playing hockey at a very young age within various sport organizations, they are in pursuit of an experience that is both fun and rewarding. As they grow older and move up in competitive levels, the game should still be fun. Wading through the many aspects concerning what is best for the player, however, can become more complicated. The following information about the process can offer quite a challenge for players and their parents as they try to navigate through the many obstacles attempting to find answers to questions before making critical decisions.

The critical "decision points" for parents and the player usually occur when Junior level scouts, coaches, and team administrators begin taking special interest in players as early as U13 (12 years old) and U15 (13 and 14 years old) levels of hockey. Being invited to play for teams at the elite U15, U18 and Junior levels, may mean the player will move to another community, live with another family, and transfer to a different school. In some cases, a player may be presented with the opportunity to move out of province or even to the United States.

This section of our guide has been developed and written by Hockey Canada with the goal of providing young players and their parents with information required to make these decisions and to insure that the choices being made are in the best interest of the athlete. This handbook serves as an introduction to what the Canadian hockey system offers young hockey players. For more detailed information on leagues and teams and the various programs and opportunities, you are encouraged to visit the Hockey Canada website area dedicated to the Canadian Development Model at [www.hockeycanada.ca](http://www.hockeycanada.ca).

### **What do we know about hockey in Canada?**

Hockey is an integral part of Canadian culture



The great passion among a vast majority of Canadians - young and old - is to participate in the game as a player, coach, official, or administrator at all levels

The evolution of the hockey development system in Canada has been unique compared to most sports developmental systems in North America. Consequently, for over 70 years, a hockey infrastructure has evolved in Canada on a community, district, and national level to meet the needs of all young athletes - male and female

Through the 1970's, a more formalized structure relative to the organization of leagues, player categories, and coaching certification evolved under the direction of Hockey Canada and its predecessor, the Canadian Hockey Association

Leadership by Canadian hockey governing bodies, along with provincial and federal government sports leaders, has resulted in the infusion of considerable funds to enhance growth, appropriate monitoring, consistent regulations, rules, and control across the country.

## **II. Hockey Canada - The Governing Body**

All amateur hockey in Canada falls under the auspices of Hockey Canada. The organization is headquartered in Calgary, Alberta at the Father David Bauer Arena. It is here that Canada's National Men's and Women's programs along with administrators, development, communications, and event staff are situated

Hockey Canada (HC) is the sole governing body for amateur hockey in Canada and is the organization that operates national hockey programs in cooperation with its many branch associations, the Canadian Hockey League (CHL), Canadian University Sport (U-Sport), and the Canadian College Athletics Association (CCAA)

The origin of hockey in Canada has never been established definitively. Claims have been made on behalf of many localities, notably Montreal, Halifax and Kingston and the controversy will no doubt go on as long as the sport continues

The first organization dealing with the administration and development of the sport was the Ontario Hockey Association which was organized on the 27th of November 1890

Over the years in other parts of Canada, more organizations came into existence, and, on December 4th, 1914, the first meeting of a national body known as the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, was held at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa. While it was fitting that the first meeting should be held in Canada's capital city, the impetus for the organization was provided by a group of men in Winnipeg - a Western city which has had such a notable connection with the sport

The Canadian Amateur Hockey Association became the Canadian Hockey Association in 1994 when the CAHA merged with Hockey Canada. In 2003, the organization became formally known as Hockey Canada

The structure of Hockey Canada consists of 13 member Branches that each administers Hockey Canada programming in their jurisdiction. Direct jurisdiction of amateur hockey, however, does not extend to the Canadian Hockey League, Canadian U-Sport, and the Canadian College Athletic Association. These organizations are referred to as Affiliate members of Hockey Canada and enjoy many of the privileges of



membership. These three groups have a formal structure in place that governs their activities within their specific leagues and conferences while maintaining a close working relationship with Hockey Canada.

### **III. The Canadian Development Model**

#### *a) Objectives of the Canadian Development Model:*

- To create an improved, more uniform system to assist in the progression and development of Canadian players within the Canadian club system
- To keep the top amateur players in the Canadian system by providing a program that meets their hockey and educational needs within Canada
- To ensure that club systems are designed to complement, not compete with one another
- To develop a Club System that allows a player to advance at an appropriate pace which is in the best interest of that player's individual development

#### *b) Keeping the Best Players in the Canadian System*

Canada has long been a nation renowned for producing elite hockey talent and has been the leading producer of NHL caliber players for decades

Not only is Canada home to the best hockey development system in the world, but it affords excellent educational opportunities without compromising academic objectives

For this reason, it is in the best interest of Canada's young elite players to pursue their entire amateur hockey careers in this country

By staying within the Canadian Hockey Development system, young players have the best opportunity not only to extend their hockey skills to the elite level necessary to advance to a professional league, but also to succeed in their scholastic pursuits

Hockey leaders understand the importance of linking elite hockey development with a focused educational program that encourages players to give appropriate attention to moving through high school, graduating on time, and securing the necessary credentials to enter a post-secondary program in university or technical school

To encourage this approach, hockey constituents from across the country spanning U18 age programs through Major Junior hockey have worked to develop the Canadian Development Model that facilitates this seamless process

Canadian Hockey League (CHL) produces more NHL players than any other development league in the world while also serving as the leading provider of post-secondary scholarships in Canada



The CHL experience is much more than hockey. Players in the CHL have a unique opportunity to develop crucial life skills. Teams in the three CHL member leagues are dedicated to producing not only top-quality hockey players, but also highly successful people. At the CHL level, a player can enjoy the game at the highest level in the Canadian system without compromising education objectives.

The underlying principle of the club system is that organizations at all levels compliment, rather than compete with one another, to allow players to advance through the developmental process and compete at the highest possible level appropriate to their ability

Although players are encouraged to play at the highest possible level within the Canadian System, the pace at which players advance will be determined and guided by the player's overall maturation and development

Players are encouraged to explore all options available to them within the Canadian System at the Major Junior, Junior A, Junior B, and ultimately Canadian University and Canadian College levels.

It is a priority to encourage players to compete at the highest possible level within the system. Players that possess extraordinary skill combined with the necessary physical and mental maturity need to advance to an appropriate level provided the opportunity is available to develop by playing on a regular basis. Teams must agree to exercise patience in setting the pace at which players advance through the system and to act in the best interest of the player's overall development. All levels agree that should a player not be capable of competing in the top level of the Canadian System - the CHL, it may be fitting to keep open all his avenues of opportunity. Should the circumstances not be favorable to the player's best interest, the player and parent/guardian will be counseled on the situation and advised of options on an appropriate career path.

To structure the system to ensure the top players in Canada remain in Canada and participate in the Canadian Development System. It is our goal to design a structure that meets the needs of all players and increase the number of players who choose each year to participate in the Canadian system. Players maintain the right, however, to consider alternatives outside of the Canadian model.

## **Table 1: Progression of Players Through Development Stages**

Professional Hockey

Canadian University / College Hockey

Senior Amateur Hockey

Canadian Hockey League (Major Junior)

Canadian Junior Hockey (AJHL etc.)

Junior B

U18 AAA

U18 AA



U15 AAA

U15 AA

### *c) Structure within the Canadian Club System*

#### **Major Junior**

Canadian Hockey League comprises 60 franchises in three regional member leagues.

- Western Hockey League (22)
- Ontario Hockey League (20)
- Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (18)

Leaders in developing players for the NHL and other professional leagues.

CHL players maintain eligibility to play within the Canadian University and College Systems.

Provide full academic scholarships for players who do not advance to top professional levels.

League championship teams qualify for the Memorial Cup (the CHL Championship).

Leading supplier of players, coaches and officials representing Canada at the annual World Junior Championships, World Under 18 Championships, and World Under 17 Hockey Challenge.

#### **Junior "A"**

Canadian Junior "A" Hockey League comprised of over 140 teams in 10 provincial and regional member leagues.

Provides additional development for players 16-18 prior to advancing to Major Junior.

Provides additional development for players 19-20 who are seeking other opportunities.

Provides development and maintains eligibility for players seeking university and college opportunities throughout North America and abroad.

Provides opportunities to showcase athletes to the NHL through CJHL Program of Excellence including the CJHL Prospects Game and the World Junior A challenge.

#### **Junior "B"**

Provincially, regionally and locally organized and governed leagues.

Junior "B" provides additional development for players 16-20 years old prior to advancing to Junior "A", Major Junior, university and/or professional hockey.



### ***U18 "AAA"***

The top level of the U18 category. Provincially and regionally organized and governed leagues.

One objective is to provide development opportunities for players to advance to Junior and Major Junior hockey programs.

Compete for regional championships and Hockey Canada's National Championship, the Telus Cup.

### ***U18 "AA"/"A"***

One focus is to develop players for advancement to U18 AAA and/or Junior programs.

### ***U15 "MA"***

The top level of competition for the highest ranked players in U15 age categories (13-14 years old).

One objective is to develop players to advance to U18 AM level.

## ***d) Movement within the Canadian Development Model***

A realigned development system, based on a more cooperative approach by constituents (leagues and teams) in all categories is structured to encourage all top-rated players coming from the Canadian minor hockey system to remain in Canada progressing to Major Junior and/or Junior A after completing U15 or U18 levels of hockey

Players are encouraged to play at the highest possible level within the Canadian Club system. However, the constituents agree to use patience in the pace at which players advance through the system and to act in the best interest of the player's overall development

Players who are not capable of playing Major Junior hockey are encouraged to explore other options within the Canadian system, including Junior A or B, or at the Canadian University or College level

Should a player possess extraordinary skill combined with the necessary physical and mental maturity, he should be encouraged to advance to the next level. If circumstances are not favorable to the player's best interest developmentally, the player will be advised to delay advancing to the next level.

## ***IV. Education within the Canadian Hockey System***

### ***An Overview of the Emphasis on Education***

Elite hockey players desire to pursue the game at the highest competitive level possible. Many elite level players choose Major Junior Hockey Leagues in order to enhance their chances of advancing to the professional level



Normally, players entering Major Junior and other Junior Leagues at age 16 or 17 have not achieved high school graduation. As a result, parents may be concerned about the ongoing educational development of their sons in this highly intense competitive environment. In the CHL, players have every opportunity to move forward academically, graduate from high school on time, and take post-secondary courses while playing in the League

Administrators, coaches, and volunteers involved at elite levels of hockey are committed to the development of the "whole" person entrusted to their care. Since education is a critical component within all these organizations, leadership in fulfilling the academic needs of these young men is of utmost importance

Major Junior and Junior Hockey provide an environment in which a player can combine high performance development without compromising education

During a player's tenure in elite hockey programs, a formalized academic team of professionals is in place to support him academically. Such personnel include:

- League Directors of Educational Services
- Individual Club Education Advisors
- High School and College Counsellors at the site of Junior Teams
- The High School Counsellor at the player's home school

**All Major Junior and Junior A Clubs have a team of education experts who are responsible:**

Provide guidance and advice to players prior to moving into a top elite program

Monitor academic progress throughout the school term - both during the season and when the player returns to his home school

Advise players about course selection and graduation requirements

Inform players about College, Technical School, and University opportunities once high school graduation has been achieved

All elite sport, such as Canadian Major Junior and Junior hockey, should provide an outstanding environment to help young men develop very valuable basic personal qualities that will enhance any career once their playing days are over. These include:

- Athletic ability and a high level of physical fitness
- Personal discipline
- Ability to deal with adversity and pressure



- Time management in balancing the demands of intense competition, practice times, travel, and maintaining appropriate academic performance
- A sound understanding of "team-ness"
- The mental skills required in analyzing and making decisions quickly in stress filled situations
- Understanding the meaning of commitment

Built into these traits are other personal qualities such as integrity, honesty, good moral character, and personal deportment that are integral to playing the game at any level

As a result of these inherent qualities, graduates of Major Junior and Junior A hockey are heavily recruited by Canadian Universities and Colleges. Hockey coaches in these institutions seek these athletes to enhance their programs. The reality is that the inherent qualities described above provide a solid platform for Major Junior and Junior A graduates to be very successful academically and achieve a degree or diploma at the post-secondary level

For athletes who do not have the opportunity to play hockey at the highest professional level, the University/College hockey programs are a natural progression in the Canadian Development Model. It is here that players can continue to improve their skills, compete at a very high level, and often, move on to professional hockey once their degree or diploma is completed

All member clubs and Leagues within the Canadian Hockey League Western Hockey League, Ontario Hockey League, and QMJHL) offer scholarships which allow players the opportunity to pursue a college or University education in Canada following their graduation from Major Junior hockey. The scholarships available to players in the CHL may vary slightly on a league-to-league basis.

	OHL	WHL	QMJHL
Player Eligibility	One year for every year played or a portion thereof of the club's active roster	One year for every year or portion thereof of the club's active roster	Must have played a min of 2 yrs Must have played at age of 19
Annual Cap	Negotiated by each club	Based on full cost of tuition, compulsory fees, and textbooks at a publicly funded university in the player's home province.	\$10,500 max played 3 yrs. \$7,000 max played 2 yrs \$3,500 yr max of 3 yrs
Activation of the scholarship	Max of 18 months following graduation for the OHL	After one full season or one academic yr following graduation from the WHL	In the month of September following the players Junior training period.
Tiered Benefits	1 <sup>st</sup> Round draft pick: books, tuition, board, and compulsory fees 2 <sup>nd</sup> – 15 <sup>th</sup> Round: book, tuition, and fees	No tiered	Not tiered
Max number of year player eligible	5	5	3





University Partnership	Yes	A formal CWUAA-WHL Partnership Agreement. An active Joint CW/Colleges subcommittee	Yes
Local Club Fundraising	Yes	Yes – all teams through 50/50 draws, golf tournaments etc	Yes
Annual Education Liability Reporting	Yes	Each club reports scholarship liabilities to League Office	Yes

Further and more detailed information on Canadian Scholarship Programs related to Major and Junior A Leagues can be found on the Websites listed below:

#### CANADIAN HOCKEY LEAGUE

Ontario Hockey League	<a href="http://www.ontariohockeyleague.com">www.ontariohockeyleague.com</a>
Best of Both Worlds	<a href="http://www.bestofbothworlds.ca/hm">www.bestofbothworlds.ca/hm</a>
Quebec Major Junior Hockey League	<a href="http://www.lhjm.qc.ca">www.lhjm.qc.ca</a>
Western Hockey League	<a href="http://www.whl.ca/education">www.whl.ca/education</a>

#### CANADIAN JUNIOR A HOCKEY LEAGUE

Canadian Junior A Hockey League	<a href="http://www.cjhlhockey.com">www.cjhlhockey.com</a>
British Columbia Hockey League	<a href="http://www.bchl.bc.ca">www.bchl.bc.ca</a>
Alberta Junior Hockey League	<a href="http://www.ajhl.ab.ca">www.ajhl.ab.ca</a>
Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League	<a href="http://www.sjhl.sk.ca">www.sjhl.sk.ca</a>
Manitoba Junior Hockey League	<a href="http://www.mjhlhockey.ca">www.mjhlhockey.ca</a>
Superior International Junior Hockey League	<a href="http://www.sijhl.com">www.sijhl.com</a>
Ontario Provincial Junior Hockey League	<a href="http://www.opjhl.ca">www.opjhl.ca</a>
Northern Ontario Junior Hockey League	<a href="http://www.nojhl.com">www.nojhl.com</a>
Central Junior A Hockey League	<a href="http://www.cjhl.on.ca">www.cjhl.on.ca</a>
Ligue de hockey junior AAA du Quebec	<a href="http://www.lhjaaa.qc.ca">www.lhjaaa.qc.ca</a>
Maritime Junior A Hockey League	<a href="http://www.mjahl.com">www.mjahl.com</a>

For more information on the Canadian Development Model, please contact Hockey Canada or visit the Hockey Canada website at [www.hockeycanada.ca](http://www.hockeycanada.ca). Telephone: (403) 777-3636; Facsimile: (403) 777-3635