

COMPETITIVE TEAM TRYOUTS/PLAYER SELECTION

Tryout Objectives

The Association tryout process shall strive for the highest level of independence and competence in selecting and training coaches and evaluators. It recognizes that the responsibility to effectively evaluate players for placement on competitive teams is challenging. It is difficult to satisfy the expectations of all stakeholders in the evaluation process. Evaluation, by its very nature, is subjective because it is based upon the opinions of those evaluating. The intention of the Association is to bring as much quality, consistency, fairness and transparency to the process as is reasonably possible.

The Association shall strive to meet the following outcomes when conducting player evaluations:

- To create an environment where each player has an opportunity to be selected for the level appropriate to their skill, physical maturity and ability where they may continue to grow and develop as a player;
- To establish an evaluation and selection process that provides consistent and comprehensive evaluation based upon the demonstrated skills and ability of each player;
- To ensure that all players and parents understand the expectations upon which players will be evaluated;
- To ensure all evaluators are objective, unbiased, free of conflict of interest, and trained in player evaluation; and
- To provide for the ongoing review and improvement of the player evaluation and team selection process, ensuring that the process continues to meet the demands placed upon the Association

Overview of Tryout Process Steps

The following is an overview of the process aimed at assisting players and parents understand how the various steps will unfold:

Step 1: Skill Evaluation Players will attend skill evaluation sessions based upon the level that they played last season. Players will be divided with sessions for the skaters and separate sessions for the goalies; Players will be evaluated upon their technical skills such as skating, puck handling, and passing; Upon completion of the skill evaluation session, all players including goalies shall be reassigned into groups based upon their skill evaluation rating for the purposes of participating in intra-squad games' and Scores from the skill evaluation session are used to grade players in the skill factor only and will not carry forward to the next step.

Upon completion of the skill evaluation, players are regrouped into new groups with teams being formed. This may result in a player who was in the higher grouping for skill evaluation being placed in a lower grouping for intra-squad games. The reason for this is that players are grouped for skill based upon where they participated last season and the intra-squad games require placement by position. An example would be if there 15 defense in Group A of skill evaluation and only 12 (6 per team) were retained for Group A of the intra-squad.

The initial placement of players based upon the Level/Division that they participated in the previous season is to better assist the Evaluation team with being able to evaluate players of similar skill sets so as to be able to determine the better players within that skill set who should move up to the next higher skill set. By placing all players (i.e. alphabetical order) in one group, evaluation is far more challenging as the skill sets are widely dispersed within the group. Our experience in such cases is that we merely accomplish sorting the best players from the weaker players without being able to narrow in on decisions between players of similar skill sets.

Step 2: Intra-Squad Game Evaluation Players will participate in the assigned groups based upon the ratings from the previous 'Skill Evaluation Step' by position (forward, defense, and goalie). Intra-squad games will include both goalies and skaters formed into teams and players will be evaluated in the game environment. Scores from the skill evaluation session are used to grade players in the specific intra-squad game only and will not carry forward to the next game.

After each intra-squad game, players are placed into new groupings. Upon conclusion of the Intra-Squad Game Step, teams will be finalized for each level (AAA, AA, A, or B); and players being placed into the C division will be placed into teams by the C Division Director.

Evaluation Process

Players are evaluated by independent evaluators using a point rating system developed by Hockey Canada and utilized by Hockey Nova Scotia in its programs. The scoring guide ranges from 1-5 with 5 being the highest ranking.

Evaluation scores are tabulated after each session to determine the ranking of the players. In the event of ties or where scores are very close, the evaluation team will discuss the rankings to ensure that the scoring guide is being applied consistently and that the proper decisions are being made. This discussion is moderated by an independent facilitator.

Evaluation scoring shall be based on a player's performance during the current evaluation process. Consideration of past performance shall only be permitted when the Evaluation team encounters a situation where two or more players are scored similarly and additional insight will be helpful in making a decision or in cases where the player was unable to participate due to injury, illness or compassionate reasons and additional insight into the player's ability will assist in proper placement.

In these cases, the Evaluation Team shall refer to evaluation input from the player's previous coach in comparison to other players at the same position on the player's previous team that may assist in placing the player appropriately.

Evaluation Factors Skill Evaluation:

Players shall be evaluated on the following technical skills during the skill evaluation step:

- Skating - acceleration, speed, mobility/agility; balance; forward stride; backward stride; crossovers and pivoting; Passing - forehand passing; backhand passing; forehand receiving; backhand receiving; touch passing; and pass control;
- Puck Handling - head up/awareness; quick hands; and puck protection; Shooting - velocity; accuracy; quick release; shooting in stride (in motion); and shot selection (wrist, snap, slap, backhand); and
- Intangibles - work ethic; consistency, and attentiveness.

Intra-Squad Game Evaluation:

Players shall be evaluated on the following technical and game skills during the intra-squad game evaluation step:

- Technical - skating; passing; puck handling; and shooting (as described in the skill evaluation);
- Offensive Play - creativity; determination; driving the net; play in traffic; deception; decisions with puck/low turnovers; positional play; transition to offence, and offensive support (playing without puck);
- Defensive Play - angling; gap control; checking; tracking check; positional play; forcing turnovers; net play (defence); board play; and transition to defence; and
- Intangibles - work ethic; consistency; competitiveness; intensity; and aggressiveness/willingness to battle; hockey sense; stamina; and discipline.

On-Ice Protocol

The Association shall designate specific drills for use in player evaluation during the 'Skill Evaluation' on-ice sessions. These plans will be created to maximize the exposure of the participants in key skill areas so as to enable the independent evaluators to better rate each. The On-Ice Coaches and Evaluation team follow the pre-planned sessions and specific timelines established for each drill.

The Association shall also designate individuals as on-ice 'drill leaders' (Skill session) and "line changers" (intra-squad games) for the purpose of executing the session plans and scrimmages so that players can be evaluated properly. Unless cleared of a conflict of interest, and specifically selected to be part of an evaluation team pursuant to this policy, these individuals shall not participate in, or influence, evaluations in any manner whatsoever.

Goalie Skill Evaluations

The Association shall conduct separate sessions in which to evaluate our goalies. These sessions are intended to provide greater insight into the abilities of the goalies that may not always be possible during games. These sessions will be led by independent goalie specialists while the evaluation team rates each player.

Only the scores rendered by the evaluation team shall be utilized in goalie selection and placement. Rating or opinions provided by the goaltending specialists that we utilize will only be considered in cases where goalies are tied or very close in ranking.

Player Identification

Players will be assigned a specific sweater number and colour for each session including any scrimmages or games. These sweater numbers and colours will be used to evaluate players and players shall be informed that they are not to change sweaters with another player. Players will be required to return the sweaters immediately following the specific session.

Player Selection by Position (Under 13, Under 15 and Under 18)

For the purposes of scoring and rating players, the Association requires that all players competing for positions on competitive teams identify the position for which they wish to compete (i.e. defence, forward) prior to tryouts. The Association also realizes that many players, especially those at the younger age divisions, are still developing and their original choice of a position may have been premature. In some cases, these players may fair very well at another position and find increased enjoyment.

The Association, given its objective to place players at the appropriate level based upon their skill and ability, feels compelled to afford such opportunities when identified by the Evaluation Team. If the Evaluation Team feels that a player at one position (i.e. defence) may be better suited or be more skilled to play another position (i.e. forward) than a player who has identified themselves as a forward for the purposes of tryouts, the Evaluation Team reserves the right to ask the player and family if they would like to consider playing another position for the purposes of team selection.

This decision will be solely that of the player and family and they may choose not to move to another position. Returning Players to an Division and Level In the past, there has been a mindset that a player who is returning to the level (i.e. Peewee AA) for a second consecutive season would be automatically placed on that team as a result of being a returning player.

It is important to note that any and all players must demonstrate the ability to be placed at any level regardless of they are a returning player or not. There are no guarantees of specific placement for any player. This applies to all divisions.

Player Selection (Under 11)

For the Under 11 division only, players will be selected based upon skill level with no reference to what position they may have played or play. This does not apply to goaltenders as the process for this position will remain the same as in previous years. This applies to all players who would have traditionally tried out as forwards or defencemen. Players will be ranked regardless of their position. In order to achieve fairness, players will be rotated and will play all positions during try-outs.

Given the expected number of teams each season (two Under 11 AA teams, one Under 11 A team and one Under 11 B team), the selection process will consist of assigning the highest scoring 30 players to the two Under 11 AA teams, followed by the next 15 for the Under 11 A team and the following 15 for the Under 11 B team. The players who are not selected for any of the four competitive teams will be asked to attend the Under 11 C team balancing process. If more competitive teams are added due to higher than expected registration numbers, the same process will be followed to fill the additional roster(s).

Final Placement of Players

The Association retains the right to place all players on the team and level that they deem is the most appropriate in accordance with the player's skill and ability.

Role of the Tryout Facilitator

- The Association will appoint an independent Facilitator for each age division whose role during tryouts will be:
- To oversee the tryout selection process for the specific division assigned and to ensure the integrity of the process is maintained at all times;
- To coordinate the assignment of evaluators for all on-ice sessions;
- To collect all player evaluation scores and rankings and develop ranking lists to guide final player selection;
- To facilitate discussion and dialogue between members of the Evaluation Team to assist in ensuring that player decisions are being made in a manner consistent with the process;
- Support the process by acting as an independent evaluator as and when required;
- To notify the Director of all decisions and player movements; and
- To retain all player evaluation information and records in confidence throughout the selection process.

Role of the Evaluator

The Association shall utilize evaluators who are deemed to be independent in accordance with the conflict of interest clause. An independent Evaluator is one who does not have any child or relative involved in the tryouts for any team within the specific division where they are evaluating. These Evaluators may be coaches from other divisions within the Association or experienced Evaluators with no involvement with the Association other than to evaluate.

The role of the Evaluator during tryouts will be:

- Review the session plans and be prepared to evaluate the attributes associated with the specific step of the tryouts in which they are involved;
- Review the evaluation criteria for the stage being evaluated;
- Arrive early to obtain their assignments and locate a suitable position in the building from which to evaluate.
- Ensure that each assigned player receives a full evaluation and a representative score;
- Respect the confidentiality of the process at all times and do not discuss any evaluations with anyone outside of the actual process;
- Do not share your comments or opinions with any players/ parents or other interested observers; and
- Refer questions, comments or complaints that you may receive to the Category Director of the HHMHA Board of Directors without offering comment on the question or complaint.

Role of the Director

The Divisional Competitive Director carried out an important administrative role during tryouts including the following:

- To coordinate the assignment of volunteers who will be tasked to manage the registration of players at the door;
- To note any absences and contact the player as well as to notify the evaluation team of the reasons;

- To coordinate the issue of tryout sweaters to all participating players for each session and to ensure the player number lists are passed promptly to the Facilitator prior to each session;
- To coordinate any additional equipment requirements (i.e. goaltending equipment, pucks, etc.);
- To coordinate and assign volunteers to supervise the dressing rooms prior to and after each on-ice session;
- To coordinate and assign volunteers to manage the bench during all scrimmages and games. The Director is also responsible to ensure that these volunteers are briefed on the need to ensure that ice time distribution is equitable and that players are placed in lines on a rotational basis (i.e. next three out regardless of position or who plays with them);
- To provide prompt communication to players and families on session timings, player groupings, and player movements after each session. All communication will be carried out using the website and e-mail; and
- To provide onsite guidance and support to players and families with questions.

Conflict of Interest Guidelines

The Association has established 'Conflict of Interest' guidelines to improve transparency within our tryout process. Like any volunteer based organization, our Association relies heavily on parent volunteers and coaches who have children playing in our various divisions and we require their assistance in order to be able to conduct annual tryouts.

For this reason, these guidelines deal specifically with how coaches may become involved in player evaluation when they have children or relatives involved in those same tryouts. Parent coaches shall be considered in a conflict of interest if they have children and/or relatives playing in the division which they applied to coach who are trying out for a competitive team, regardless of what level (i.e. AAA, AA, A or B).

Once in a conflict of interest, the coach may not participate, directly or, in any evaluations in the division for which the player (child and/or relative) in question is trying out for until that player has been chosen for a specific team by independent evaluators, after which their conflict of interest will be removed.

Note: Coaches who have a conflict of interest in a specific division will be required to participate in player evaluation in another division where they are not in a conflict.

Divisional Directors by the very nature of their role (see Director's Role) regardless if they have children or relatives competing for positions within their specific division, shall not have any involvement in any player evaluation and will not be involved in any player selection meeting or discussion at any time. Upon conclusion of a session or game, the Director may be provided with grouping results for the purpose of posting the information on the website so as to communicate the session timings for the next groupings.

Appeals

The Association shall appoint an Appeals Committee annually to specifically handle any complaints arising from the tryout process. The Appeals Committee will be comprised of the four Competitive Directors (Atom-Midget) who will select a chairperson from their ranks each season.

In addition, the Appeals Committee shall be supported (ex-officio) by a resource person who is not a Competitive Director who is able to advise and assist the committee when and as required. NOTE: Any Director, who has a child participating in the division from which an appeal originates, shall be excused from the committee for the purposes of dealing with that specific appeal.

A player or his/her representative may appeal a tryout selection decision relating to him/her by giving notice of the appeal within 24 hours of notification of the decision. The notice of appeal must be in writing using the Appeal Submission Form, setting out the specific grounds for the appeal. The notice of appeal will be deemed to be delivered, if personally delivered by hand or e-mailed to one of the members of the Appeals Committee.

The Appeals Committee will only entertain an appeal if the established tryout evaluation process has not been adhered to. Appeals related to the decisions of the independent evaluation team will not be entertained.

The player or his/her representative will be entitled to appear personally before the Appeals Committee to make submissions. The Appeals Committee shall not review an Evaluation Team's discretionary assessment of a player's hockey ability.

The Appeals Committee will hear submissions within 48 hours of receiving an appeal and shall communicate their decision no later than 24 hours after such hearing. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final and no further appeals shall be permitted.

Tryout Absenteeism

The success of our annual tryout process is based upon the premise that our independent evaluators are able to observe and fully evaluate all participating players during the various stages of the process. This is necessary to enable our evaluators to suitably rate each player as well as to compare the player against the other players in the process.

Absenteeism places significant pressure on the Evaluation Team's effectiveness and for this reason, attendance is critical. Our expectation is that all players will attend all tryout sessions. We also understand that from time to time, there are valid circumstances that preclude participants from attending. For this reason, we have established this policy to guide our actions in the following situations that we consider to be an excusable absence:

Sickness or Injury

If any participant becomes sick or injured and cannot attend a session, it is the player's responsibility to ensure that the Director is notified of the absence and the reasons for such as soon as is possible prior to the session that they will miss.

In the event that the same player will be absent for a second consecutive session resulting from being sick, a note from a doctor shall be provided to the Director. If a player becomes sick or injured and is unable to attend multiple sessions but will be able to attend a portion of the tryouts, the player shall be ranked for the sessions in which they did participate in and their score shall be pro-rated for the sessions they miss. In addition, the evaluation team will consider additional background information (i.e. evaluation report from past coach, etc.) to assist in making an appropriate ranking.

If a player becomes sick or injured and is unable attend any portion of the tryout process whatsoever, the player will be ranked based upon any background information that the evaluators can access such as past performance with prior teams, coaching reports from those teams, and any other pertinent information available to them.

In cases where injuries eliminate participation in tryouts and the player's injury will extend into the playing season, the player will be assigned to a specific level based upon the ranking of the independent evaluators and a roster spot will be held open for the player until such time that player is able to return.

It is important to note that while sickness or injury is considered an excusable absence with the Association attempting to properly place the player in the tryout process, failure to properly notify the Director in a timely manner and/or failure to provide a doctor's note for subsequent absences shall be considered an 'unexcused' absence.

Compassionate Reasons

In addition to sickness or injury, the Association recognizes that there are specific activities that are significant to our players in addition to family matters that may arise and which take precedence. The following situations shall be considered for compassionate reasons:

- A family tragedy;
- Attendance at a regional or national event (i.e. sporting championship) that arises from the player's participation in an activity over the summer where the activity necessitates the player to attend as part of their commitment to that activity; or
- Specific religious holidays. In all cases related to compassionate reasons, it is critical that the parent/guardian notify the respective Divisional Director as soon as they become aware that the player will be absent and when the player is expected to return.

In addition, the family should provide documented evidence to the Director. Failing this will cause the absence to be treated as an 'unexcused' absence. Players who absent themselves for any other reason (school trips, other sport activities, etc.) shall be considered as being in an 'unexcused' absence situation.

Unlike an 'excusable' absence where the Association makes a considerable effort to ensure that the player is properly placed, it is important to note that the Association cannot ensure proper placement for players who have an 'unexcused' absence.

Player Releases

Hockey Nova Scotia regulations permit players released from our "AAA" tryouts to tryout with another Association's 'AAA' team within the Halifax Region of the HNS Minor Council. It is important to note that should a player opt to exercise this option, they are required to notify the Director as soon as the opportunity is established.

During the timeframe that such a player is attending another Association's 'AAA' tryouts and, as a result of the session being in a direct conflict, the player's absence for that specific session shall be considered 'excused'. For the purpose of this policy, a direct conflict shall be when the sessions are at the same time, overlap in timings or the timing of sessions would not provide reasonable time for the player to travel back to our arena. The player shall, however, be required to attend all Association tryout sessions where no direct conflict exists. In addition, it is the responsibility of the player to notify the Director of any session where such a conflict exists and where they are unable to attend. Failing this, our Association shall treat any absence as 'unexcused'. NOTE: Just as Hockey Nova Scotia allows our players to opt to try out for AAA teams in other Associations, players from other Associations may opt to join our AAA tryouts and shall be evaluated within our process from the time that they join our process.

Balancing Teams

In any division where the Association will ice two teams at the same category/level (i.e. AA, A, B), the teams will be balanced as equitably as possible. The final determination in balancing the teams will be made by the Facilitator and the Evaluation Team.

The overall balancing shall be based upon the overall player rankings with a view to place players fairly on each team. The Director will be consulted to determine if there are any extenuating circumstances in existence that may be considered. The teams will be balanced prior to playing a 'balancing' game and minor adjustments will be made after the game to further balance the teams. It is important to note that the Association retains the right to place all players as deemed appropriate.