

Willowdale Red Wings

Team Organisation and Player Eligibility

The Willowdale Red Wings have established that one of their objectives is to operate a Girl's Hockey organization that is competitive in the Tier 1 level of the North Metro Girls Hockey League, implying that the teams will play in the OWHA "AA" or "A" categories. Ideally these teams should be playing at the 60 - 70% success level.

To keep these teams competitive they require practice ice and the Red Wings strive to provide each team with at least 2.5 hours of ice per week. This provides each team with ice for one game as well as one practice hour each week and a second practice hour is provided every other week. We attempt to resolve conflicts arising due to scheduling constraints by adjusting practice times etc., but may not be able to maintain the ideal ratio of game to practice time. Generally the Club has been able to find sufficient ice to field 4 teams and thus has had to be selective in the choice of teams it operates.

Throughout its history the Red Wings have generally followed an orderly transition that allows skilled older girls to continue to play with the Red Wings. This led to providing Atom, Peewee, Bantam and Midget teams for the 2001-02 season, but in the past we have had two teams at the same age level. To resolve any potential concerns about the strength of such teams to Club decided several years ago to develop a position of team selection procedures.

Guiding Principles for Player Selection

On several occasions the Red Wings have had to assess various factors regarding player selection. This has helped us develop a vision of the Club we are attempting to run, and also to define issues that are important for the well-being of the players, coaches, parents and the Club as a whole. Without players having an atmosphere where they feel they are comfortable, and they can take the risks to excel while playing hockey, the experience may to be positive. Since the Red Wings would like to see the players continue with the organisation we are striving to provide a setting where the players and their parents will want to return. Above all, the Red Wings see their teams as playing at the top end of the skill categories, thus all teams should be picked with the objective of qualifying to play in Tier 1 of the North Metro Girls Hockey League.

To build a solid organisation, there needs to be a logical progression of players from the Atom through the highest age categories. Continuity can only be maintained when most teams are comprised of a mix of players from both ages included in the category. One could say there should be a mix of Major and Minor players on each team. To achieve such a goal requires that players not skip a year in any given age category and thus they play at an age appropriate level.

The Red Wings actively discourage players participating in divisions that are outside their age range. That is, if the player is of Peewee age next year, she should play Peewee. To put a player into a social setting where she may not be comfortable, no matter what her skill level, can be disruptive of a team's fine balance and none of us need that type of disruption. Furthermore, we believe that every player can benefit from the opportunity to be the leader of the team. We know that older skilled players are more likely to take the risks to develop new skills than is the younger player striving to keep up with her older teammates.

For single teams in any age category, the younger players need the older players to help them with the competition, particularly when they are playing teams from larger organizations who have minor and major teams playing in the age category. A team of first year Atom players that consistently meets teams who are predominantly 2nd year players can be demoralized no matter how skilled the younger team and their coaching staff.

Exceptions to the selection criteria are possible; however, final approval will be made by Club personnel, not the coaches who are directly involved. We do not want coaches being placed in awkward positions either by over zealous parents or by their own perception of what is best for their team. Decisions will be made for the good of the Red Wings and will only be approved after discussions between the Executive, the coaches involved, the player and her parents. In the past we have made exceptions more often at the Atom level than at the older ages. When a talented Novice is identified and she and her parents want to play with the Red Wings and the Executive think the player will fit into the team, we have made the exception. Once in the Organization though, we expect the player to compete at an age appropriate level while in the RedWing organization.

We recognize that this policy may result in a player not being able to play on the team of her choice, or indeed in the Red Wings organization. Unfortunately, this might result in the Red Wings having to lose a good player. This is a sacrifice we feel may be appropriate for the good of the Club and to ensure that all players have an enjoyable experience.

Above all, coaches should recognize that the players they select in May will be the players that will be on the ice with the team for the full season, unless they are injured or move out of the area. Careful selection of players whose skills match the needs of the team will ensure that neither the players nor the coaching staff are disappointed with their Red Wings experience.

Playing Situations

Philosophically the coaching staff shall aim for fairness, fun, communication and caring. Playing time for every player will be reasonable for the most part except for penalty situations and during important games. Each player shall have equal opportunity but not necessarily equal ice time. The emphasis will be on listening, giving the extra effort and being committed. The Red Wings believe in Fair Play and willing participation for the fun of it.

The Red Wings' Executive view the Club as an organization, not a group of coaches who happen to have teams that wear the same sweaters. Teams will be managed to ensure that all players have a good experience.