



ONTARIO MINOR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
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New Cross-Ice Hockey mandate added as part of Initiation Program Changes Announced for Next Season

Richmond Hill, ON: Beginning in the 2017-18 season, Hockey Canada is implementing a new policy that mandates cross-ice/half-ice hockey for players at the Initiation age level (traditionally 5- and 6-year-olds).

While the policy making it mandatory is new, half-ice/cross-ice hockey has been part of the Initiation Program in the Ontario Minor Hockey Association since it was first developed more than 35 years ago. The purpose of the Initiation Program is to introduce the basic skills of the game, and make a child's first introduction to the game one that is safe, enjoyable, and fun:

- Make it a positive experience for kids and their families - focus is on fun, learning, and playing in a team atmosphere, not on structured games
- Build the player's confidence and give them a sense of accomplishing a skill while developing as a young player
- The program is based with the players' development in mind, starting with basic, technical skills.

"The Initiation Program was developed to allow kids to have fun, learn skills, and develop confidence," said Paul Carson, vice-president of membership development for Hockey Canada. "Re-sizing the playing surface to cross-ice or half-ice means more puck-touches, which result in more chances to practice puck-control and shooting, as well as overall more movement and motor skill-development - twisting, turning, balance, coordination, agility. Their field-of-play matches their size, and these players hone in on their skill-development in a way that larger ice surfaces just aren't conducive to."

The differences in skill-development opportunities with cross-ice hockey are significant: players receive five times more passes and take six times more shots. They're called on to have to make more decisions more quickly, and are overall more engaged in the game.

"The Initiation Program has always been the foundation of skill development for our beginner hockey players. Station-based practices, small area games and cross-ice hockey ensure players are engaged and have the right start in their hockey experience," said OMHA Executive Director Ian Taylor. "Scaling the playing surface





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through cross-ice games allows young players the opportunity for more puck-touches which promotes greater opportunity for skill-development in puck-handling, shooting, skating, coordination and decision-making.”

A modified playing environment and the continued use of age-appropriate equipment such as the 4 oz. lightweight blue puck is consistent with others sports such as soccer, baseball, basketball and tennis and is reinforced through Hockey Canada’s Long Term Player Development model.

The Ontario Minor Hockey Association continues to work closely with our associations and our partners in hockey to deliver resources and best practices for coaches and administrators to create the best possible programming at this pivotal stage in the player development pathway.

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