

**TEXAS AMATEUR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION
(TAHA)**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MAY 2018

As we close the book on the 17/18 season I wanted to take this opportunity to recap the year and announce some changes coming over the summer and for next season.

Last year was another strong year for the Affiliate and our growth and successes demonstrate the strength we have in Texas and Oklahoma. Thanks to the efforts of our rink partners, and the Dallas Stars' commitment to grassroots growth we continue to experience substantial increases at our youngest age groups.

TAHA remains one of the top Affiliates for growth in all of USA Hockey and you can all take pride in your efforts to expand our game and expose more athletes to this great sport.

So here are some things you need to know.

ANNUAL MEETING

The TAHA annual meeting will be held June 30th in Farmers Branch, TX at the Doubletree Hotel on Luna Road. Lunch will be served at 12:30 noon and the meeting will run from 1:00 PM until 4:00 PM.

All TAHA members (rinks, associations, official's associations) are **REQUIRED** to have at least one representative present for the entire meeting. **Please click on the link below to register online by Sunday June, 24 at 5:00 PM** so we can order the correct number of meals.

The Registration "" is not currently available.

Member Associations may submit agenda items for consideration via email to me at reggiehall@tahahockey.org.

Suggestions must be received by midnight on June 10th.

Associate members of TAHA (players/parents/officials/coaches) are invited to attend, however all discussion items must be presented through the Associate Members' Association.

BOARD ELECTIONS

During the Annual Meeting in June there will be five (5) TAHA Board positions up for election. They include Vice President, Secretary, Women's Section President, Disabled Section President and Travel Section President.

At this time, Lori Wolf (President of Girl's/Women's Section) and Rick Hall (Secretary) have indicated they will not be seeking reelection.

Mark Servaes will not seek reelection to Vice President but has indicated his intent to run for Travel Section President.

Lucas Reid has indicated he will not seek reelection as Travel Section President but intends to run for Vice President.

Alfredo Corona has indicated he will seek reelection to the Disabled Section President role.

Nominations for these positions will open on June 1, 2018 and close at midnight on June 22, 2018. Any individual may self-nominate or be nominated by another. For all Board positions the nominee must be a current or former Associate member of TAHA.

Nominations may be made during the nomination period by emailing the President at reggiehall@tahahockey.org. Please include in your nomination and a statement confirming the candidate is willing to serve, along with their contact information.

TIER I DESIGNATION

As communicated earlier this year, TAHA conducted a Tier I application process in keeping with our Tier I policies. We grant Tier I for a two-year period (plus an option year at TAHA's discretion).

Since 2011 the Affiliate has operated with two Tier I organizations; a decision made based on the number of players within the Affiliate in the then National Bound, Tier age groups (12U, 14U, 16U, 18U), strength and stability of the organizations at that time, and the overall competitiveness of the area clubs. Since then USA Hockey as dropped the 12U National Tournament and added a 15U pure National Tournament.

For the past seven years we have accepted applications several times and conducted an extensive evaluation process each time to ensure the needs of our Affiliate and the players are being properly served by our designated Associations.

For the first time since TAHA formalized the Tier I structure, we have made the decision to reduce the number of Tier I organizations in our Affiliate. As I mentioned in my Tier I notification letter in March, we considered several factors in making this difficult decision:

- Strength and stability of the bidder organizations
- Competitiveness of teams (locally and nationally)
- Community engagement and commitment to TAHA growth objectives
- Financials (cost to players and financial stability)
- Player pool at critical (Tier I) age groups

In the end, there was really only one logical conclusion, and that was to reduce to a single Tier I organization, and we have granted The Dallas Stars' Elite Tier I status.

Make no mistake, we view this as a temporary contraction until the growth in numbers we have at the youngest age groups, reaches national bound age categories.

LIMITED WAIVERS FOR TIER I ORGANIZATIONS' (HOUSE/REC TEAMS)

Current TAHA policies prohibit players from playing in a different city or community if the team they want to play for is either a Tier II or House/Rec rostered team, and their home area has a team rostered at the same level. We have been very diligent in applying this policy in order to protect smaller market clubs, help parents hold down costs and prevent players from unnecessary commutes.

We also recognize that each year there are one to two players at younger age groups that display exceptional skill and potential, whose growth and development would be maximized if they had the opportunity to play with and against exceptional talent from around the country.

Beginning in the 2018/19 season, TAHA is granting TWO out of Dallas exemptions to Tier I organizations for 13U and/or 12U teams. Tier I organizations may roster up to TWO players from outside the DFW area for the 13U team and TWO for the 12U team.

Roster decisions will rest solely with the organizations, and Tier I organizations may or may not exercise their option to roster players from out of the DFW area for these teams.

Players who wish to play outside their home markets for any other organization or team will be required to follow existing waiver request procedures.

STATE TOURNAMENT FORMAT CHANGE - TIER II

The TAHA Board has approved a significant change to qualifying for the Tier II State Tournament for next season. Effective with the start of the 2018/19 season, state tournament teams will be determined in coordination with the DSTHL using final regular season league standings.

Based on feedback from Associations and considering that currently ALL Tier II teams participate in the DSTHL, coordinating with the League makes sense in order to avoid conflicts with League playoffs, shorten the playoff cycle and

reduce the repetitive games among the same teams in a three-week period at the end of the season.

The Tier II State Tournament participants (18U, 16U and 14U) will be determined utilizing the DSTHL final regular season standings, with the top four teams participating in a four-team round robin tournament on a predetermined weekend in February. Following round robin play, the top two teams will play in the Championship game on Sunday to determine the State Champions as well as the DSTHL league Champions.

TAHA will administer and have jurisdiction over the tournament, with input from the DSTHL executive board.

If a team from Oklahoma finishes in the top four, they will be allowed to compete in the event. If they win the event, the runner-up from Texas will receive the bid to Nationals.

Some Tier I teams are permitted to play in the regular season of the DSTHL, although they are not permitted to participate in the playoffs, (aside from the 10U minor team). This will remain the same, and Tier I teams will not qualify for the Tier II State Tournament if they finish in the top four. In this case the next highest team in the standings would qualify for the four-team state tournament.

If an independent team is interested in participating in the State tournament, they will need to apply to the Travel Section President by November 1st, submitting a check for \$1,250.

PLEASE NOTE: Any independent team interested in applying for the Tier II State Tournament will be required to participate in a playdown series with the fourth ranked DSTHL team (as of December 1st) in a best 2 out of 3 series. The winner will become the fourth seed in the Texas State Tournament. The loser of the series will be required to pay 75% of the game costs of the series. If the independent team beats the fourth place DSTHL team in the series, it will be included as the fourth seed in the Texas State Tournament. (If multiple

independent teams apply a format for playdowns will be determined in November.)

MITE JAMBOREE POLICY

TAHA has been at the forefront when addressing how Mite (8U) hockey should align with the goals of the American Development Model (ADM). We led the way more than 10 years ago by eliminating “travel” Mites, mandating that all Mite hockey be delegated to our rink partners, implementing “play up” rules and establishing limits on the number of full-ice games that Mites could play each season.

We were among the first Affiliates four years ago to eliminate full-ice Mite hockey games. We financially supported our members by contributing more than \$50,000 in grants toward the purchase of hard dividers and smaller nets in order to simulate actual game conditions on a smaller surface.

Over the past two seasons, some rink-based Mite teams have attempted to bypass our restrictions on Mite Travel Hockey by hosting/participating in Jamborees. Using the “Jamboree” label, organizers and teams were attempting to mimic a travel hockey experience for Mites. This is simply NOT consistent with the spirit or the letter of the current TAHA Mite policy.

Effective with the 2018/19 season, TAHA is announcing the following policy regarding Mites and hosting or participating in Jamborees.

Mite Jamborees

- **Sanctions:** Jamborees conducted within the Affiliate **MUST** receive an Affiliate Sanction. There will be no charge for obtaining a sanction, but sanctions will **require** organizers to submit the event format in advance, adherence to all USAH/TAHA Mite rules, and use of certified rosters for all teams as a condition for approval. Jamboree sanctions will be processed in the same manner as tournament sanctions.

- **Participant Rosters:** All sanctioned Jamborees MUST require official USAH rosters, certified and approved by TAHA registrars. Rosters MUST be pulled by the rink Registrar. No independent Mite teams may participate in a sanctioned TAHA Jamboree. All players/coaches must be currently registered with USAH, all coaches must be current on background checks, SafeSport and age modules to be listed.
- **Format:** Jamborees are intended to be festivals and celebrate the “playing” of the game rather than “winning”. Toward this end, all sanctioned Jamborees must focus on fun rather than competition or outcomes. Jamborees must always feature an equal number of games for all teams and may not “play down to a champion”. Participation medals may be awarded, but no trophies or banners may be given that signify final standings.
- **Attendance:** Jamborees should not be used as a substitute for “travel” hockey. TAHA recognizes that rinks in remote markets may have no option for games unless they host and participate regularly in Jamborees. However, teams in major markets do have options for games which greatly diminishes the need to participate in such events. To accommodate teams in all markets, the following participation in Jamborees will be permitted:
 - **For teams in markets with 10 or more Mite teams** – ONE Jamboree per season
 - **For teams in markets with five but not more than nine Mite teams** – TWO Jamborees per season
 - **For teams in markets with four or fewer Mite teams** – FOUR Jamborees per season.
- **Jamborees Out of Affiliate:** No TAHA based Mite team will be permitted to travel to a Jamboree outside of the Affiliate without prior approval by the House Section President. Approval MAY be granted only to teams in markets that are in close proximity to state borders. Major market Mite teams will NOT be permitted to travel outside of the Affiliate at any time. Mite teams from outside the Affiliate will be permitted to participate in a TAHA Jamboree if they are from a neighboring (contiguous) state and are playing in a small market event.

Questions about this Jamboree policy may be directed to either TC Lewis, (House Section President) or me.

ADULT STATE TOURNAMENT

In January, TAHA hosted the second annual adult state tournament in Dallas. The event was held at the NYTEX Sports Centre in North Richland Hills. This year, 16 teams competed in four divisions (A, B, C, D), doubling the size of the event from the first year. There were four champions crowned this year. Congrats to the following champions:

A Division – Hawks (NYTEX)

B Division – Men in Boats (NYTEX)

C Division – Thunder (Eules StarCenter)

D Division – Ice Dogs (NYTEX)

Thanks to Austin Sutter (President, Adult Section), primary sponsor Howie's Hockey and NYTEX for putting the tournament together.

Stay tuned for more information about this growing event.

TRYOUTS

The tryout schedule for the 2018/19 season has been posted on the TAHA web site and all should be aware of those dates. As a reminder, while organizations may conduct "prospect" or "coach" skates during the Spring, no player can be contracted prior to the tryout dates identified for the player's age and skill level. And please don't forget that any organization that tries out on a "Tier" weekend is required to apply for the State Tournament "at that level" and compete in the playdown process.

Failure to apply for the State Tournament carries a substantial fine to the organization as well as potential sanctions.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REQUIREMENTS

Last year all travel associations were required to post team costs, along with services players could expect on the organization's web site seven days prior to

tryouts. Actual costs may not be materially higher than the amounts posted giving players and parents information, in advance, so they may make more informed decisions.

Effective with the upcoming tryouts, travel organizations will be required to post cost information, in a prominent location on the “homepage”, clearly labeled as “TEAM COSTS”.

This transparency and ease of access ensures parents don’t get hit with unexpected costs during or after the season.

Please make sure your cost sheets for each team you sponsor is submitted to the Travel Section President seven days prior to tryouts.

AND FINALLY...

We continue to see substantial increases in number of players in our youngest age groups and we have every confidence that trend will continue. The amount of time, money and energy invested by all our rink partners simply cannot be overstated. TAHA stands ready to support your growth initiatives and activities in whatever ways we can.

You are the leaders in our sport. You play an incredibly vital role in how well our game does, year in and year out. We all enjoy the strength of our game when the numbers increase, and teams and rinks are full. But we also must share when we lose players as they get older.

As players age we lose some to evolving interests and distractions that are inevitable when getting older. It is our task then to evolve our offerings; to make them easier to fit into the schedules of teenagers and to maintain the elements of fun and enjoyment that will keep them on the ice. Be creative with the design of your leagues and teams.

We also lose players of all ages due to the cost of our game. As I have from the beginning, I want to strongly encourage each of you to examine your programs, review your cost models, be diligent in examining your cost/value relationship.

And I want to challenge each of you to bring costs down for our players.

Having just completed the Rocky Mountain Development Camp, I am pleased to announce that of the 36 players selected to attend National camps, half are from Texas and Oklahoma. That is a record and signals our player development approach is absolutely on the right track

I would also like to send a personal thanks to Jason Farris at the NHL Dallas Stars for his unwavering support of TAHA and his commitment to our sport at the youth levels. As many of you know, Jason is moving to a new role within the Gagliardi organization and won't be as active interfacing with us going forward. But much of what we have accomplished in the last six years is the direct result of his focus on grassroots hockey.

As always, please keep our first responders and members of the military in your thoughts and prayers as they sacrifice daily to keep us safe to play the game we love so dearly.

Good luck during tryouts and have a great summer!!

Reggie Hall

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We are working hard to get you a YES answer!