

President's Message...

August 20, 2013

As the summer comes to a close and a new season is upon us I wanted to update you on some summertime happenings and provide you information for the upcoming hockey year. It has been a busy few months since the Annual Meeting on June 15 and the Labor Day tournament is less than two weeks away....so let's get right to it.

STARS ANNOUNCE LITTLE ROOKIES PROGRAM

I am pleased to announce that the Dallas Stars have established a Youth Hockey Development team that is separate from the Stars' youth programs and StarCenter rinks. Those of you attending the Annual Meeting will remember that Jason Farris (Dallas Stars EVP) stated that was their plan, and it was intended to provide support to all rinks in the DFW area (to start) so that we could all be focused on growth of new players. The Little Rookies program is the first of what I understand to be many initiatives the NHL Stars are launching and involves providing all area rinks with starter sets of hockey gear. This is a great way to attract new players and minimizes the cost of getting into our sport. I know the Stars have talked to most of the Dallas area rinks already and will be communicating with all area rinks shortly.

We hope this will be the start of an Affiliate-wide program to benefit all of the rinks and help us attract new players.

HOCKEYFEST 2013

We are beginning discussions for HOCKEYFEST 2013 and are looking for volunteers to handle sponsorships, coordinate logistics and planning. If you are interested please contact Christine Dykstra at: christine-dykstra@usa.net

GREENE LAWSUIT

As I mentioned in the Annual Meeting in June, the Greene lawsuit has finally been resolved. TAHA accepted a financial settlement from Mr. Greene in exchange for our dropping the pursuit of damages and legal fees. Mr. Greene and his attorneys also agreed to forgo any appeals on either the TAHA Summary Judgment or the sanctions awarded in the USAH portion of the suit. This has ended the two year, and unnecessary drain of time and dollars on our Affiliate.

ICE JETS NON-RENEWAL

The TAHA decision to non-renew the Ice Jets' Member Agreement has progressed to its final stages. Over the summer we learned from USA Hockey that they would likely

deem our decision an “Administrative Action” and subject to Bylaw 10 hearing and appeal procedures. Without waiting for the official decision, and even though we vehemently disagree with non-renewal being considered an Administrative Action, TAHA initiated steps to provide the hearing procedures afforded the Jets under Bylaw 10. A three-member panel of reasonably disinterested parties was selected and a hearing was conducted on July 26th in Dallas. At issue was whether or not TAHA acted in an arbitrary and capricious manner in making the decision to non-renew the Jets’ Member Agreement. After two hours of testimony the panel concluded the hearing. On the morning of August 19, 2013 the panel issued its finding in a brief statement to the parties. It said, “please be advised that the hearing panel voted unanimously to uphold the decision of the Texas Amateur Hockey Association Board of Directors dated May 29, 2013 and to deny the Dallas Ice Jets Youth Hockey Association challenge to same.” The full written decision will be issued in the next two weeks.

With this affirmation, the Ice Jets are scheduled for non-renewal from TAHA and USAH effective at 12:01 AM September 17, 2013. At that time, all rights and protections afforded members of TAHA will cease for the Jets’ organization. All players currently affiliated with the Ice Jets will be free to consider joining another TAHA and USAH sanctioned organizations. If players signed financial agreements obligating them to pay monies to the Jets, those amounts may still be payable if the claim is pursued through legal means. TAHA however will not prevent any player from engaging with another organization due to funds that may be owed to a non-TAHA organization.

Second, and MOST importantly, NO Ice Jets’ player may be contacted or recruited, either directly or indirectly by any TAHA/USAH member organization while the Jets are still actively a member of TAHA. If any coach or organization is found to be recruiting Jets’ players prior to September 17, that coach, parent and/or organization will face disciplinary action for tampering and subject to suspension and/or fines. If an Ice Jets player contacts your organization between now and September 17 you are to advise them that you cannot discuss options with your Club until they have separated from the Jets either through written release from the Jets or after the effective date of the Jets’ non-renewal (September 17).

POTENTIAL AAU LEGAL ACTION

During the Annual Meeting in June I mentioned that there had been multiple threats of legal action on a variety of issues from the AAU. Since then we have received more communication complaining about TAHA and USAH activities throughout the summer. None of this was unexpected and much of the information being fed to the AAU was incorrect, incomplete and intended to strike at our ability to promote and

protect the USAH brand. The complaints from the AAU were vague and generally an attempt to keep us from being aggressive in promoting USAH and the benefits of playing in our Governing Body. We have responded appropriately to those threats and served notice that we intend to vigorously defend our position against all competitors.

NA3HL COMES TO TEXAS

I am very excited to share the arrival of the NA3HL in Texas. We have been working with the NAHL for several months to bring USAH sanctioned Junior hockey back to this area and with the NA3HL that has been accomplished. The NA3 has placed teams in Sugarland, Euless and McKinney, as well as a fourth team in Topeka. The South Division currently is comprised of four teams with projected growth next season of two more clubs in possibly Oklahoma, Louisiana or West Texas. This is a prime area for Junior hockey with six NAHL teams in Texas and many opportunities for NA3 players to see upward movement into the Tier II ranks. These clubs will need lots of support from our hockey communities and I encourage all Associations to get involved and volunteer where possible. There are many opportunities to get involved with Junior hockey and you should visit the sites of the clubs to see how you might help.

(McKinney – www.mkwarriors.com, Sugarland – www.imperialshockey.com, Euless – www.starsjrshockey.com).

Also please note, that unlike other leagues that operate in our geography, or even other NA3 divisions, the NA3 South has established a policy of taking only High School graduates and older players. TAHA did not want to support Junior expansion that further eroded our Midget ranks and we worked with the NAHL/NA3HL to ensure that players still in HS would not be recruited. It is our goal to help create a Junior opportunity that encourages players to stay local and not believe they have to leave town to pursue higher level competition. The current structure of the NA3 South Division accomplishes all those goals and we believe will soon be the destination league for local players who may be on the cusp of playing Tier II or Tier I juniors.

NAHL MOVES TO NORTH RICHLAND HILLS

In what was probably the most anticipated move of the summer, the Texas Tornado franchise was purchased and relocated back the building where it all began for them....NYTEX Sports Centre in North Richland Hills. The Tornado began as an expansion club in 1999/2000 playing at the then named; Blueline Ice Complex. This building has been home to the Central League's Texas Brahmas for six seasons but will now go back to its roots as the Tornado become the Lone Star Brahmas with the move to NYTEX. Head Coach Dan Wildfong will lead the NAHL Brahmas and as with all the clubs in the NAHL they need help with billets, staffing and of course ticket sales. Visit

the Brahmas web site for information about to help (www.lonestarbrahmas.com). For additional information about all the NAHL teams in Texas, please visit the www.nahl.com. We want to continue to support all USAH sanctioned Juniors in our Affiliate.

RULE CHANGES

As communicated by Ken Reinhard in the Annual Meeting there are a number of rule changes coming over the next two years. Some are being implemented NOW while others are being deferred until the 2014/15 season. Please review the rule changes on the TAHA web site and if your organization wishes, a representative from MHOA will come address your coaches and players before the season is underway. One rule changes that is immediate is the safety certification sticker on the players' helmets. The HECC sticker must be visible and the helmet must not have "expired". Officials may not let your player take the ice if they notice a missing or expired certification sticker.

UNSANCTIONED GAMES

Just a reminder to all organizations that contests against organizations that are NOT members of USAH may not be played unless you obtain a specific waiver in advance from TAHA and the District's Risk Manager. Teams from outside the U.S. must have appropriate travel permits from their home federation certifying they are both registered as a legitimate team in that federation and that they are traveling with the approval and knowledge of that federation. Playing unsanctioned games is a violation and will be subject to discipline up to and including suspension of the team. If you have any doubt....ASK FIRST!!!!

COACHES HELMETS

Just a gentle reminder that all coaches on the ice are required to wear buckets. I know they hate them and don't think they need them but they are a requirement. Please establish this as a standard in your organization and do not accept anything less than full compliance.

HARD DIVIDERS

TAHA has set aside money for partial grants on the hard dividers that can be used to section your rink. This makes all the difference for those players and parents that might still think that cross or half ice isn't "real" hockey. Get your requests in if you are interested.

REGISTRARS

I could not end this month's update without a tip of the hat to our registrars. This is a crazy time of year with the volume of rosters that have to be generated and verified in our Affiliate. Darla Thompson, Bettepat Graves and Ann Hetrick do a tremendous job every year and without their efforts we would really be in trouble. Please remember to express your appreciation to these volunteers who make sure our teams can take the ice each season.

AND FINALLY.....

I am proud to report that TAHA had two members of our Affiliate selected by USAH to travel to international tournaments this summer as part of the volunteer support staff. TC Lewis (Houston) accompanied the 18U National team to the Ivan Hlinka tournament in Slovakia. The team captured second losing to Canada in the finals by a 4-0 score. Mark Servaes (Houston) accompanied the 17U National team to the Five Nations tournament where the team posted a perfect 4-0-0 record en route to the Championship. Thanks to you both for representing our Affiliate.

All for now. Good luck to all this season.

Volunteer early and often.

Reggie