

*President's Message...*



**December 26, 2013**

All...

With the year rapidly coming to a close and everyone gathering the families for festivities I wanted to take just a moment for a quick holiday update. It has been a few months since my last message which can only mean that (for the most part) we are all getting about the business of just “playing hockey”. That is great news for us all! But here are a few updates for you.

### **LITTLE ROOKIES PROGRAM**

The Dallas Stars launched the “Little Rookies” program earlier this fall and made sets of starter equipment available to all rinks in the DFW area, as well as several rinks outside the Metroplex. My understanding is that all these programs have been full (40 kids at a time) and the demand for starter gear is continuing to climb. The conversion rates for players entering the Little Rookies and then continuing with the rink based hockey programs has been good (great in some rinks) and the Stars are working now on future enhancements to the program, the marketing and conversion process. It is TAHA’s goal to try and get the Little Rookies program in more rinks in the coming months to continue the necessary growth of our sport at the youngest age levels.

### **GRANTS**

Continuing our commitment to the ADM concept and being more intelligent with the development of our youngest players, TAHA has issued four grants for hard dividers to various rinks, as well as provided matching funds grants for goalie gear to two programs. We still do have some funds available that can be used for dividers and equipment so if your building is interested then we want you to strongly consider taking full advantage of the financial support the Affiliate is offering. It is our goal to see hard dividers in EVERY building and our rinks continuing to provide a superior development process to every young player.

## **COACHES CERTIFICATION**

With December 31<sup>st</sup> rapidly approaching please remind ALL coaches that the cut-off for completing the age appropriate module is less than one week away. On January 1<sup>st</sup> the coaching modules will be “turned off” and anyone that has not completed their designated modules will be unable to do so until the spring. The result is that any coach currently on either a house or travel team roster will become INELIGIBLE if this module is not completed and will not be allowed on the bench or on the ice for the remainder of the season.

There will be **NO** grace period!

## **TEXAS OFFICIAL IN SOCHI**

Texas official Laura Johnson has been assigned to work the Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia in February. The assignment was made by the IIHF early in December. This is a great accomplishment for Laura and a testament to the training and growth opportunities for officials in our Affiliate. Congratulations to Laura who also worked the Four Nations Cup along with Dallas based Kendall Hanley.

## **LIPSETT TO COMPETE IN SOCHI**

USA Hockey also announced earlier this month the 17-member final roster for the U.S. Paralympic Sled Hockey Team that will compete in March in Sochi. Jeff Sauer, head coach disclosed the list which includes former TAHA Board member Taylor Lipsett (Plano, TX). Lipsett returns for a second shot at the gold medal having won a bronze medal at the 2006 Paralympic Games in Torino, Italy.

## **UPDATE MEMBER INFORMATION**

We are in the process of updating all information on our Member Associations and need your help in updating information about your organization. Please provide us by January 15 the name, mailing address, phone number and email address for:

- Association President
- Association Registrar
- Association TAHA Representative

## **ON ICE BEHAVIOR**

Thus far this season we have seen a disturbing spike in the number of confrontations between players, coaches and officials. These confrontations have been both verbal and in some cases physical, but in all cases these behaviors are clear and direct violations of the Codes of Conduct that USAH and your organizations require participants to sign. While TAHA is attempting to move responsibility for many of these situations to the disciplinary boards of the rinks and hockey clubs, we are monitoring all suspensions and fines that are being meted out to ensure they are appropriate for the circumstances. Any verbal or physical threat made against an official will be dealt with by the TAHA State Disciplinary Committee and in the last two six months TAHA has issued multiple suspensions ranging from 1 to 3 years for these actions.

Please make sure your players and coaches understand the degree to which these behaviors will NOT be accepted.

## **ICE JETS UPDATE**

Since my last update the Member Agreement between TAHA and the Ice Jets Organization officially expired and the Jets are no longer a member of our Affiliate. The process we were asked to go through by USA Hockey was arduous and consumed time and financial resources that we believe were unnecessary, but throughout the various meetings, and the hearing that we were asked to provide, the outcomes and decisions were the same. In each stage the panels concluded that TAHA has the right to non-renew a member organization with appropriate notice. There is one final step that we are required to participate in and that is arbitration through USA Hockey. We anticipate that arbitration on this matter will take place in January and will finally resolve this issue in our favor.

In the meantime, as most of you have heard, the Jets managed to take advantage of an old provision that allowed them to register some teams through Lafayette in the Southern Amateur Hockey Association (SAHA). This exploited loophole has been a source of frustration for many of us, but rest assured the rosters are being monitored closely by USA Hockey and this workaround will have a very short shelf life.

#### **KEY DATES IN 2014**

Please mark your calendars for several important events coming in the next several months.

The State Tournament will begin on Friday night February 21 and conclude on Sunday February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Hockey Weekend Across America will take place February 28 – March 2 2014. The dates for the Texas Assessment Camp (TAC) are March 14-16.

#### **FINALLY**

While there have been many positive developments this year and reasons for us to be thankful and happy this holiday season, there have also been a number of tragic events that weigh heavy on many of us. Please keep the Stryker and Viola families in your prayers and never lose sight of the fragility that we all face.

Also please do not forget the men and women of our military who ensure the safety of our nation and with their sacrifices and bravery provide us the opportunities that we have to share this great game.

Thank you to the many volunteers who expend countless hours making this game so incredibly special.

On behalf of the entire TAHA Board, Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays and best wishes for a great 2014 to you all!

Reggie