

President's Message...

December 21, 2012

My apologies for the timing of this edition of the President's Message. I started it in November prior to the Thanksgiving holiday with all best intentions of getting it to you then, but time got away from me with several activities (some hockey related and some not) preventing me from finishing it. But with Christmas and the turn of the New Year upon us, I wanted to get one last communication and information update to you before January.

HOCKEYFEST 2012

As we noted on the TAHA web site, HOCKEYFEST 2012 was a success and it appears this will become an annual event. We still have contributions and sponsorship money coming in but expect to net close to \$4,000 for use in expanding our game. We had a great turnout and tremendous support from the hockey community, and particularly the Dallas Stars, their alumni and of course, Ralph and Razor. Next year we envision expanding the HOCKEYFEST event to include more organizations and games at all age groups (mitten to adult), as well as girls and disabled hockey. Ideally we would like to align the event with "Try Hockey For Free" day and offer the opportunity for new players to be able to see games and then jump right on the ice.

In case you missed the opportunity to purchase t-shirts or programs, we do have both available.

We welcome all ideas and suggestions on improving and expanding this event. And if you are interested in becoming a sponsor or exhibitor for the event please contact Director of Communications, Christine Dykstra.

Texas Producing Prospects

In spite of a few naysayers, Texas Hockey continues to produce top level players with bright futures ahead of them. A recent report in the Edmonton Sun highlighted the growth of the game here along with the quality of hockey we are delivering. We are battling some geographic and cost disadvantages but with perseverance we continue to see success in our market. Here is a link to the article and video story in case you missed it: <http://www.edmontonsun.com/2012/11/29/texas-city-becoming-hockey-prospect-factory>

Social Media

The TAHA web site continues to be one of our key channels of information distribution

but in October we also launched our own Facebook page and Twitter account. We recognize that different segments of our stakeholders prefer a variety of sources for updates so we are going to leverage them all. You can connect with us here:

Web: www.tahahockey.org

Twitter: twitter@hockeytaha

Facebook: Texas Amateur Hockey

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter and stay up to date on activities with youth hockey.

Committees

In August I announced we would be forming two Task Forces to address key issues facing our game. One would be targeted on the Grow the Game initiative and the other would focus on ways to get costs down for our current and potential athletes. With the help of many of you who submitted names of potential volunteers we have now formed the initial two teams. I know there were others that offered to help and we may yet call on you as well, but the composition of the two groups is diverse and I believe will get us started in the right direction.

The Chairpersons will be in touch right after the new year to set a time for the initial conference call and to layout the expectations and goals for each team.

Grow the Game

TC Lewis (Chair) – Aerodrome – Houston

Aubrey Berkowitz – College Station

Don Girard – TAHA Treasurer

Nate Mauer – McKinney Ice Hockey

Knute Anderson – NYTEX

Keith Andresen – DPSC

Helene Honeybone - DJHA

Cost Reduction

Jon Carson – (Chair) Parent

Jim Koch – ITC

Jay Ray – McKinney Ice Hockey

Jamie Feltus – Sugarland

Travis Heiser – Wild

David Plattner – DJHA

Rodney Wooters – Ice Jets

TAHA Guidebook Update

There have been a number of updates to the TAHA Guidebook since the Spring that necessitated a revision be issued. The update is attached for your records and is posted on the TAHA web site.

The most significant updates relate to a change in both the name and the procedure for the "Not in Good Standing" list. The new name of this list is the "Outstanding Debt List" or ODL. There are financial and other potential penalties for using players that are on the ODL effective January 1, 2013.

You will also note several other changes ranging from elimination of the Travel Permit requirement (for domestic travel) and removal of any language related to Leagues as they are not managed or maintained by the Affiliate.

Greene Lawsuit

As we reported in October, the 44th District Court handed down a 39-page order for sanctions (\$110,000) against Bob Greene (Ice Jet parent) and his legal team in the Greene vs. USA Hockey matter. The Court's scathing commentary on the improper actions, misrepresentations and false statements in obtaining the initial TRO that halted tryouts in June of 2011, led the way for the substantial financial sanctions the Court imposed. And while we were pleased to see the Court address Greene's true purpose, lack of standing and appropriately criticize the deceptive tactics employed by Greene and his lawyers, it is important to note that this issue has not gone away.

Bob Greene still has an active lawsuit against TAHA that is scheduled to go to trial next April. While we believe the Court's findings in the USA Hockey portion of the action will ultimately lead to favorable results for TAHA and additional sanctions for the very same reasons cited in the Judge's order in the USA Hockey matter, until then we will be vigorously defending the suit.

Trial is currently set for April of 2013. Updates will be provided throughout the coming months as we get closer to trial.

Unsanctioned Games

Just a reminder that USA Hockey registered teams are NOT permitted to play games against teams that are not USA Hockey registered games unless the contest has prior written approval from the District and the Affiliate. This is not a new rule and has been in place for years. The rule can be found in the USA Hockey Guidebook on page 129. Violations of this rule are serious and may result in suspension of the team that plays unsanctioned games.

Games against international opponents are typically sanctioned through the IIHF and pose no issue as long as the team is a duly registered team in the country of origin.

If you are unsure about the registration of a team you are wanting to play/scrimmage you are advised to consult with TAHA prior to taking the ice.

Racial/Gender Slurs

There have been a growing number of game misconducts assessed of late for the use of racial or gender slurs towards players and officials in both youth and adult games. These are taken very seriously and we continue to review each such incident to determine if additional discipline is warranted. There is no place in our game for these verbal attacks and we are deeply committed to taking action to ensure these are completely removed from our sport. I would encourage all organizations and rink operators to communicate directly to all players and coaches the lack of tolerance on this subject and the potential for long-term discipline for anyone using slurs.

Organizational Disciplinary Committees

And while on the subject of discipline, we encourage all organizations to formally establish disciplinary committees with responsibility for assessing actions of players, coaches and parents/fans. Historically TAHA has been responsible for dealing with supplemental discipline for non-match related penalties or actions but we are attempting to move that task to the Member Associations. We monitor game misconducts assessed in all leagues and tournaments; adult and youth, both local and national and will be calling on your Disciplinary Committees to conduct investigations and assess appropriate discipline for certain actions that resulted in game misconducts. We will work with your Committee to ensure additional discipline is appropriately assessed and consistent.

In Closing

I know that all of us were struck by the senseless shooting in Newtown, Connecticut just a week ago. With the Christmas holiday just days away, and for us the chance to have our families together even if for just a day, there are 20 sets of young parents who will never again have that opportunity. Their lives forever changed; their hearts forever scarred. It is frankly unfathomable to me how they find the courage to get up and face each day with the heartache they must be feeling. Their pain and loss was a searing and indelible reminder that as difficult as we think our lives are, and no matter how frustrating we think our interactions and daily battles might be....they simply pale in comparison. The tragedy at Sandy Hook should never be forgotten by any of us, and will serve as a constant reminder to all of us exactly where our priorities should lie.

I wish for all of you a joyous and safe holiday. Enjoy your time with family and friends.

Happy Holidays!

Reggie