



## ***President's Message***

April 20, 2015

The 14/15 season has come to a close and all eyes are now shifting to Spring activities, camps and tryouts which will be here before we know it.

All indications are that the just completed season was a successful one on many fronts. TAHA again saw increased player numbers at both the Adult and Youth categories, sent a record 10 Tier teams to the USAH National tournaments, hosted a very successful 16U National tournament (as well as the District Tier I tournament) and sent two HS champions to the HS National tournaments. (TAHA youth teams captured three Bronze medals this season.) Our Texas entry in the Adult Sled Festival captured a Gold medal and our defending champion Women's team will compete this month.

We have a record number of ice rinks and Associations that have taken advantage of TAHA grants for the purchase of hard dividers and other grow the game initiatives and collectively have set a course for growth across the Affiliate. Since much of the emphasis on growth has been concentrated on the youngest age groups we must contend with lower participation numbers at some of our older age groups for a few more years. But there is little doubt, and the numbers reflect that our participation is trending up and that is due to the efforts of so many of our members.

As always there are some updates that we need to share with you as you prepare for the coming season. (The most recent revision to the TAHA Guidebook is attached and will be posted on the TAHA web site shortly.)

## **TRYOUTS**

The tryout schedule for the 2015/16 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 and compete in the playdown process.

## **OUTSTANDING DEBT LIST (ODL) UPDATE**

Two years ago we modified the procedures governing adding and removing players to the Outstanding Debt List to ensure that organizations were not using the list in a punitive way or as a means to restrict players from changing organizations. The change has resulted in a more efficient management of the collections process for many organizations. It does presume that all organizations will be more documented and buttoned up in their contracting methodology and will have rigor around the payment/collections process.

As you know the list of players owing money is maintained on a private section of the TAHA web site which is accessible to all Member organizations. It is your responsibility to ensure that the appropriate persons in your organization have access (contact Don Girard for needed changes to access) and have reviewed the list prior to allowing players on the ice for Spring skates or tryouts. Discipline and fines are spelled out for any organization that does not follow the ODL procedures. Please make sure all members of your organization that are responsible for registering or checking-in players know who is on the list.

We have made two changes to the ODL process that you should be aware of; first is the last date on which organizations may add players for the prior youth season. Previously the cut-off was the Tuesday following the completion of USAH Nationals. Now that all national tournaments conclude on Monday....this cut-off is being moved to the WEDNESDAY following the completion of USAH Nationals. All additions to the list must be made by 5:00 PM Central time.

The second change that has been made focuses on players that have been placed on the ODL but are then allowed to skate or tryout with the organization that placed them on the ODL list. As stated clearly in the current policy, NO PLAYER who is listed on the ODL may skate or tryout for ANY organization INCLUDING the Club that added them to the list. The current policy simply outlines a \$1,000 fine for the organization that allows the ODL player to skate. And that remains in effect and will be strictly applied. However, if the organization that placed the player on the list subsequently allows a listed player to skate without notifying TAHA that the player has paid up, the amounts owed will also be forfeited and the player will be automatically removed from the ODL. Notification to TAHA must occur 24 hours prior to the time the player takes the ice. If you add a player to the ODL and allow them to skate without notifying TAHA ahead of time, the member will be fined \$1,000 AND will forfeit the owed amounts.

## **MITE POLICY UPDATE**

Several years ago TAHA took the lead on the transition to cross/half ice hockey for Mites. The research data clearly supports this move to shrink the ice and has made clear that those that continue to advocate full ice hockey for Mites are doing a disservice to young players and their development. This is no longer a “philosophical” disagreement, it is a data driven fact that cross/half ice is a better teaching and development model than full ice for Mites. As such we will energetically advocate for elimination of any full ice Mite activities in the Affiliate and enforce appropriate discipline on those that violate this policy.

In the original TAHA Mite policy there was also a restriction on the number of Mite aged players that could “Play Up” to Squirts. As with all policies, this has been under constant review and discussion with Member organizations. The current policy allows only two (2) Mite Major aged players to play Squirts and requires that they be on the organizations “highest level team”. Now that our Mite policy is maturing the TAHA Board has modified this restriction to allow each organization to advance two (2) Mite Majors to Squirts, but they no longer have to play on the “highest level team”. They may simply play on any available Squirt team the Member offers.

## **ANNUAL MEETING**

The date for the TAHA annual meeting has been set for June 13, 2015 in Dallas. The exact times and location has not yet been determined. Watch for the specifics on the TAHA web site. All current TAHA member organizations are required to have a representative in attendance. Associate members of TAHA (parents/players/coaches/officials) are invited to attend. Member Associations may submit items for the Agenda consideration via email to the President at [reggiehall@tahahockey.org](mailto:reggiehall@tahahockey.org).

## **ELECTIONS**

During the Annual Meeting in June there will be five (5) TAHA Board positions up for election. They include President, Treasurer, House Section President, High School Section President and Adult Section President. Nominations for these positions will open on May 15, 2015 and close at midnight on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2015. Any individual may self-nominate or be nominated by another. Nominees for the office of Board President MUST have served on the TAHA Board during the preceding two year period. For all other 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](mailto:reggiehall@tahahockey.org).

## **TIER I DESIGNATIONS**

Tier I applications were received from three TAHA organizations during the designation open application period. Representatives from all three organizations were invited to present their qualifications to the Tier I Committee in March. Following the presentations each application was reviewed and the TAHA Board voted to approve the following Tier I designations:

Stars Elite (18U, 16U, 14U)

HCD (18U, 16U)

Tier I designations are awarded for a period of TWO (2) years, plus a TAHA option for a third year. TAHA reserves the right to continually monitor the actions and performance of the Tier I designees and make changes and/or additions at our discretion.

## **CONTRACTION**

In recent days and weeks we have heard several announcements about organizations combining with the effect of offering fewer travel teams. Several parents have written to me and other members of the TAHA Board to express concerns. While TAHA did not have a role in the announced mergers, I do believe the number of “travel” teams exceeded the available player pool which has resulted in greater costs for our families and players rostered on teams at the wrong skill level. We have been in a much needed state of “travel” contraction for the past couple of years but in no way does that mean that we want fewer players actually playing. Quite the contrary. We want to see a renewed emphasis on house level hockey as a competitive training ground. We are working now with rink operators to invest and commit to strengthening house hockey making it a viable option at all age levels. We also believe these changes may serve to bolster sagging High School hockey numbers in the Affiliate...again to continue to offer playing options...not limit them.

We encourage all travel Associations to lend support and manpower to the rinks to assist in this process.

## **LEGAL UPDATE**

I suppose no update could be completed without some update on legal activities being included. As you are aware, the management of Grapevine Mills last year filed suit against the Dallas Stars, the Dallas Stars Travel League (DSTHL) and several individuals including Paul Freudigman and me. Although it is fairly evident that the suit lacks merit on multiple grounds the Judge has thus far resisted the motions to dismiss. Presently, the case is slated for trial in October but until such time as the case is dismissed or decided, we will continue to incur legal expenses.

## **AND FINALLY**

While so many are already starting to focus on next season, please allow your athletes some down time. Get them away from the rink for a few weeks to let them recharge. Ours is a long season and the wall players hit in January/February is real. Encourage them to take some time off to engage in non-hockey activities. They and you will be better for it.

Please don't forget our men and women in the military and law enforcement. It is because of them we get to do what we do.

Have a great summer!



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**We are working hard to get you a YES answer!**