

A PROJECT TO RECRUIT MORE MALE JUNIOR MEMBERS

THE JUNIOR MEN'S HOCKEY MARATHON 2005

Country

Argentina- AAA Hockey Buenos Aires

Initiative

Promotion of boys hockey

Contact person:

Ruth Soneyra (TC-AAA) ruthsoneyra@yahoo.com.

Ana Vinue (DCC-AAH) av@romanelli.com.ar

Philosophy

The Development and Coaching Committee (DCC) and Tournament Committee (TC) in Buenos Aires decided to join forces for this project. The lack of growth in junior boys' hockey was a great concern for the Buenos Aires Hockey Association. Numbers for boys have been decreasing for the last 10 years. On the other hand girls' hockey has been increasing tremendously.

A yearly tournament competition was not enough to encourage young boys to stay in hockey and clubs were struggling to retain them, as soccer and rugby are major competitors in the country.

Project start

During March 2005, a general strategy was agreed. Geographical divisions were made, splitting the country into four zones, one for North/Centre and three for the South of Buenos Aires. Those clubs that would host the Marathon/Festival nominated a general coordinator for the event. They were invited to a meeting with the TC and DCC members to get familiarized with the organization. It was expected that in all the locations the same activities would be performed. We decided to name the first activity of the year: The Junior Men's Hockey Marathon, the subsequent events, to be named second and third Junior Men's Hockey Festival.

Activities

To promote hockey amongst boys we organised three special activities during this year such as, a Junior Men's Hockey Marathon or Festival. Clubs were invited to participate during a day playing at a club that hosted the Festival. Coaches, players and parents joined in to enjoy the games. There were:

- Matches
- Competitions, drills and skills with National players, men and women.
- Men's National Team Goalkeeper demonstrated and taught skills to the children.
- Stroke competition with National Goalkeeper.

Target group

7th to 13th years old boys.



Number of participants

53 teams with 500 young boy hockey players.

Format (pitch size, rules, equipment)

Boys born 1992/1993 (7th Division): Played on a regular size hockey pitch, one of the goals is placed at the centre line of D. (25 yards line). Two bibs will be placed on the lateral lines of the pitch at 20 mts from the moved goal. Fouls within this area will be penalized with a free hit on 20mts line, players from both teams will be required to be five yards from the free hit. No more than 4 defenders and the goalkeeper will be allowed in the area at this time. Teams will have 9 players (1 goalkeeper and 8 field players) on the pitch. Three periods of 15 minutes with 5 min. rest in each period will be played.

Boys born 1994/1995 (8th division): Played across half pitch. Players will be 7 (1 goalkeeper and 6 field players). Matches will be played in 15 minutes periods with 5 minutes rest. Only three players from the defending teams will be allowed in the D. Intentional fouls will be penalized with a free hit (Australian Style), one forward player will take the hit and will have 10 seconds after the whistle to score, the goal keeper will be the only defender. Building a wooden goal with only three 40 cm boards, with no upper structure is recommended.

Boys born 1996/1997 (9th division) will play in a quarter of a hockey pitch, 27,50m x 23 mts. Teams will have 5 field players. Playing time is, 4 periods of 10 minutes each with 5 minutes rest. Two matches at the same time could be played. Defence free hits would be played as in 8th division game with only two players defending and 3 at midfield. Five yards distance from the free hit should be considered. It is highly recommended for the rest of team players not on the field, to be performing skills drills and individual techniques while waiting to go on the pitch.

Materials and equipment: each team or club should bring goalkeeping gear. Bibs, cones and balls, numbers therefore will depend on the activities planned. Soft drinks should be available.

Promotion

The Buenos Aires Hockey Association announced the activities schedule on the official bulletin 3 weeks before it started. Coaches, club coordinators and club officials were asked to encourage youngsters to participate. The webpage was used to extensively to publicise, promote and report, whilst also communicating the next exciting venue.

Teaching / coaching

Through experience, we can say that youngsters enjoy playing games and matches all the time. Being active is natural for them; children getting bored are something coaches should fight against. To keep boys motivated requires a great deal of preparation and organisation beforehand. Since they are children they like informality and the programme should be carefully planned upfront. PE teachers, with hockey knowledge are ideal to conduct this activity. Volunteers are very much needed, assistant coaches as well as young umpires.

Administration

The Junior men championship should be scheduled to allow these Festivals to be held 3 or 4 times a year. Club coordinators should be appointed at least one month in advance so they have time to organize activities. National team players juniors, seniors, men and women should participate as role models for children. Local office administrators communicate activities through official bulletins and the webpage.

Support from NA and other institutions

Buenos Aires Hockey Association presented stickers as souvenirs for the event. Sponsors got involved on subsequent occasions and they provided soft drinks, and hockey sticks as a raffle price.

Financing

Buenos Aires- Amateur Argentine Hockey Association provided funding. All coaches, coordinators and staff worked without payment.

Challenges so far

Parents should get more involved in the activities, since they enjoy being close to their children and they can still influence their child's decision whether to play hockey or not. Sometimes parents are former hockey players, other times just supporters for young ones. It will be a big success if everybody participates during the event.

Another challenge has been to become involved with other local hockey federations, at regional level or even national level.

Future activities

During 2006, it is the plan to organize 3 to 4 Festivals within the Buenos Aires area.

Tips for NAs

The identification of the target group should be accurate. Coordinators and volunteers should be able to get organized with sufficient time before - a month or more. Everybody has to cooperate to make young players feel that hockey is fun!

