



Path to Higher Level Hockey

From mites to midgets we see our players grow and develop in life and in hockey. The little kids who looked forward to playing tag in the hallways and post-game donuts suddenly start caring about their workouts, their diets, getting enough sleep...they become serious about hockey. This transition typically happens to some players who hit their bantam years, as they see themselves getting physically stronger, better every day and are performing at a high level with their teams. A select few players start wondering if they should explore options on how to reach the next level and achieve their goals. The Blackhawks as an organization have seen a number of its players take the leap to the next level, and take pride in its core value of teaching technical fundamental skills that form the foundation for a player's success. We asked the Blackhawks Justin Alonzo Jr (Manager of Coaches) and Eric Pane (Director of Hockey Operations) a few questions about their personal experiences with this transition.

Q: At what age do you see players leaving home?

Justin: I left home at the age of 14, which was my freshman year of high school. The first year I billeted with a family and then the following year my mom and her husband moved out to join me.

Eric: Our son, Kobe, is currently 15 and he chose to leave home this season, his first Midget year and his sophomore year of high school. He lives with a billet family in the Anaheim area.

Q: What are some of the challenges of moving away from home at that age?

Justin: My biggest challenge moving away was having to adapt to a whole new life style. Living in someone else's house, following their rules, going to a new school, meeting new people, trying to make new friends, playing on a new team with much older kids. I had to grow up a little quicker since i didn't have my parents there to help me with everything.

Eric: Kobe is lucky in that his current billet family is one that he spent a lot of time with before this season. He spent both his Bantam seasons living at home but traveling to practice and play with his Anaheim team very frequently, so his current billet family hosted him several weekends over the past 2 years.continued next page

One Timers



- The **14B** team is off to a great start this season. They went undefeated in their first 4 games! In November they will be competing in the Silver Sticks tournament.
- The **Mites** played their first exhibition game against TriValley on 10/22 and had the traditional visit from Darth Skater to celebrate Halloween (*below*). They participated in the first Norcal Jamboree on Nov 4th.



- The **16AA-1** team traveled to Boston for the Jr. Bruins Shootout Showcase Tournament in Sept and went 3-0! The team then played in the first CAHA weekend in the beginning of October, going 3-1. Next on their agenda was a trip to the CCM World Invite in Chicago, November 3rd -5th.
- The Blackhawks **12B** team is looking forward to the Silver Sticks tournament! The team has been using game footage to identify clear areas for improvement and then working on drills to improve in those areas.
- Our **14AA** team went 2-2 in their first CAHA weekend. The boys headed to the Windy City for the CCM 200 X 85 November 3-5 where they played teams from Illinois, Virginia and Michigan.
- After consultation with parents and the Board, the club will not be doing the **poinsettia** fundraiser this year.
- The Blackhawks will have four teams competing at the **International Silver Sticks Tournament** over the long Thanksgiving weekend. Check out the schedule and tournament details at:

<http://www.sjrsharks.com/page/show/811238-international-silver-sticks-2017-san-jose-regional>



President's Corner

The Santa Clara Blackhawks are very proud of our alumni. A few include Ryan Miller, Robby Jackson, Cameron Khuong and Kobe Pane. You can see these players playing on NHL, NCAA D1, Juniors and high level AAA teams. Our own Kobe Pane currently plays for the number 2 nationally ranked Anaheim Jr. Ducks 16AAA team who will be playing in a Tier 1 Elite Hockey League Intra-division tournament in San Jose, Dec 1-3. I know I will be out there supporting Kobe and I hope to see his Blackhawks family out there too.

So there is a high level of comfort for him living with the family this year. One adjustment he commented on is having to say "Thank you" a lot more frequently when you live with a billet family than you might at home..... Billeting requires a highly specific set of skills/abilities, and it seems to fit Kobe well.

Q: What advice would you have for a player considering making a move to a higher level or wanting to develop a personal path to play in the NCAA or Juniors?

Justin: My advice for young players is to trust your path to get you where you want to go. Many kids want to play Juniors, college hockey and or pro hockey but what path is the right one to get there? Everyone wants to play at the highest level all of the time and think if they don't, they have failed or are not going to make it anywhere, which is not true at all. Just because a player is playing A/B or AA does not mean that player will not be able to play high level hockey. Everyone develops at a different pace and you just have to trust the process. It is hard to do because everyone wants immediate results. Unfortunately for most, it does not work that way. There are times a player will make the team they want to be on, and there are times a player will get cut from teams they want to be on. It is the player who doesn't take "no" for an answer and works hard every day and pushes themselves to be better every day who will achieve the long term goal. Chris Chelios was cut from multiple AAA teams and HS teams growing up but never let that get the best of him, and look where he ended up. For the kids who are interested in making the jump to juniors, there are more junior leagues to get you to college and pro than just the USHL. There is the NAHL, BCHL, USPHL (which has 3 divisions - NCDC, Premier, and Elite) EHL, NA3HL, WSHL and a handful more. When a player is looking at where to go, seek out places that they will enjoy being, along with places that fits the player best for hockey. Also, coaches are always looking for players to play *their* game the best they can. What I mean by that is, if a player is a defensive defenseman, do not try and stick handle through 2 or 3 guys to look flashy. Make the quick smart play and make sure you win every 1 on 1 battle.

Eric: Prepping your son/daughter for life after youth hockey, or for hockey out of the area requires a couple of fairly steadfast commitments. First, focus on bullet-proof fundamental skills. More specifically, understand the difference between "Development" and "Pure fundamental skill". Some folks who say they're "all about development" mean that they're all about pushing kids to compete against the best of the best starting at a young

age. That's not fundamental skill development. Ten+ years of research and planning at USA Hockey to optimize LTAD (Long-term Athletic Development) has shown that 7 and 8 years old is the peak time for developing quickness and multi-directional speed, and 9 to 12 is the optimal window for pure skill development. The USA Hockey LTAD program has no emphasis on competition level before about age 15. Secondly, max out the local area as best you can before looking outside the area. There are a few truly excellent skill coaches and skate and skill instructors in this area, and many may be in unexpected places. If you take the approach that no one cares whether your kid plays B or A or AA or AAA or AAAA or AAAAA at age 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13, then you can look for those coaches that have the ability to effectively teach high-level skate and puck skills to kids during practices. And lastly, if your son or daughter clearly lets you know that they're ready to move on - do your homework. Every team within every club (or prep school) within every state is different. Even across birth years within the same club you can find one group has a phenomenal culture of skill, hockey sense, discipline, team work, work ethic, etc...and just one birth year away in the same club could be seriously lacking in all of those areas. Once you like what you see at a specific club and team, look at the strength of their league and their performance. You don't need to pick an undefeated team in the top league in the country, but you do need to look for competitive balance to make the investment worthwhile. Every player and family needs to choose what works best for them, but the more homework you do, the more informed opinion you can make.

Q: How has the junior hockey landscape changed at the high school level since you went through it?

Justin: Juniors has developed a lot since I was playing there. There are more leagues now. More and more colleges are wanting 20 year old Freshman, so even when you see these kids committing to college at 16 or 17 their college coach tells them to play a few years of juniors so they can develop, get bigger, stronger, and become more mature. Junior hockey is growing every year with more and more kids being watched and scouted. The past 3 years we have taken our 16AA team to the BJB Shootout in Boston where they have divisions at 16, 18, Elite, Premier, and NCDC and it is one of the most scouted events in the country. Here is the list of scouts who attended last year:

<http://bjbshootout.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/2016-BJB-Shootout-Coach-Scout-sign-in.pdf>

