

Partnership with University of Louisville has helped boost youth hockey growth

When Michael Pearce helped establish the Kentucky Amateur Ice Hockey Association as a nonprofit organization in 2015, his initial objective was to create an adult hockey program. Operating as the Pearce Hockey League, the association began to take shape.

Keith Kenitzer, then a USA Hockey representative living in Louisville, came to a KAIHA board meeting later that same year. What he said caught everyone by surprise, and ultimately changed the direction of the program.

“You guys are really dropping the ball on youth hockey,” Kenitzer told the board.

Once Pearce got over his initial shock, it did not take him long to spring into action. He began to realize the wisdom of Kenitzer’s words and the additional opportunities a youth program would create for the growth of the game in the Louisville area. Thanks to the Roger Sharrer Award, a USA Hockey Mid American District program assisting associations in growing the game, the Ice Cardinals began to make the cost of hockey gear more affordable for families. The club has been a beneficiary of the award over the past several years.

Pearce also started Learn to Play sessions, and 18 kids initially signed up. That number increased to 45 within the next several months. Parents began to see the advantage of allowing their kids to try the sport, and word began to spread in the area.

“By eliminating that hurdle with the Roger Sharrer Award, we would loan the equipment out,” explained Pearce, who grew up playing youth hockey in Salt Lake City.

Pearce did not stop there. A Nashville Predators season ticket holder, he was at a game in 2016 when he first noticed the Little Preds youth program. He began to envision an opportunity that would broaden the scope of his association even further and create a valuable relationship with an NHL team.

Pearce approached the Predators with his idea, and the club agreed to form a partnership with the Ice Cardinals. Since 2017, 334 kids between 4 and 9 have joined the program. Travel teams range from 10U to 18U, as well as an all-girls team, junior varsity, and varsity high school team

Welcome Back Week

“It changed everything,” Pearce said of the partnership with the Predators. “Our ability to get kids to be better skaters, keep the equipment ... it’s the greatest thing. Just having that tie-in with the NHL gives the kids a vision that [they] can get there someday.”

The club has an impressive online Spirit Wear Store, with hats, beanies, sweatshirts and other merchandise families and fans can purchase to show their Ice Cardinals pride.

“It was something everybody wanted,” explained Amanda Skinger, who created the store last year and serves as its spirit wear coordinator. “When you walk into a rink for a tournament or game, everybody wants to represent. People are very proud to show where they come from.”

Recently, the KAIHA board unanimously approved new uniforms for the Ice Cardinals. Under an agreement with the University of Louisville, the club will wear jerseys identical to the school’s ACHA Division II men’s hockey team. This has given the Ice Cardinals an additional marketing boost, according to Skinger.

“To have that logo benefits both the university and our program, because it’s easy to recognize,” said Skinger, whose son Henry plays for the 16U travel team. “The general consensus is people are really excited about it.”

The program is firmly committed to USA Hockey’s American Development Model and its concepts. Pearce is as passionate about ADM as anyone in the sport.

“We do everything we can with ADM,” he said. “We’re a young association, and we have growing pains. But we have also done some things right. We have attached ourselves to the model. With all the work and energy USA Hockey [has put into it], why wouldn’t we?”

Safety during the coronavirus pandemic is a top priority to hockey programs around the country, and the Ice Cardinals are no exception. The club shut down in March, when the NHL announced their stoppage. The Iceland Sports Complex, the Ice Cardinals’ home rink, put together a comprehensive plan for a gradual re-opening. Tryouts are underway for most teams and Learn to Play sessions are being scheduled.

Pearce does not believe the pandemic will slow down the enthusiasm for hockey his program has worked so hard to build.

“It’s the coolest game on earth,” Pearce said. “I believe the enjoyment of sports is going to hopefully resurrect this country as a whole. If we look back at this five year from now and ask, ‘What did it,’ I hope it’s that sports came back and allowed us to get back as close to normal as we can.”

Story from [Red Line Editorial, Inc.](#)



Happy Halloween from the



District



IMPORTANT

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Below you will find links to each of our states in the Mid-Am District and their current state of Covid-19. It is important that you review this information.

Indiana Back On Track Link: https://www.backontrack.in.gov/files/Stage4.5_Aug-1_update.pdf

Kentucky Health At Work :

https://govsite-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/GGiyf7ZGR4in6hlmgogS_Healthy%20at%20Work%20Reqs%20-%20Youth%20Sports%20-%20Final%20Version%201.0%20DPH%20KHSAA.pdf

Ohio Restart:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Contact-Sport-Practices-Non-Contact-Sport.pdf>

Reopen Pennsylvania: <https://www.governor.pa.gov/process-to-reopen-pennsylvania/>

West Virginia Strong: <https://governor.wv.gov/The-Comeback/Pages/default.aspx>

Additional Information: <https://www.sparxhockey.com/pages/usa-map>

USA Hockey Return To The Rink:

https://cdn1.sportngin.com/attachments/document/5e7c-2230755/MitigatingRisk.8.17.20.pdf#_ga=2.133042124.394263635.1597846809-107545318.1562521340

It is your responsibility to stay on top of this every changing situation. Please make sure you know what is going on in your state regarding this matter.

This information may also be found on the Mid-Am website: <https://www.midamhockey.com/>

10 Things to Love About 10U Hockey

07/15/2020, 4:00pm MDT

By Michael Rand

In many places, hockey players are taking cautious first steps – or, rather, glides on the ice – in a return to their sport. With that comes optimism and the hope of some semblance of normalcy. In the spirit of that idea, here are 10 things to look forward to this season at the 10U level:

1. Getting Back to Playing

“Obviously just getting back on the ice is the number one thing,” said Roger Grillo, a regional manager for USA Hockey’s American Development Model. Indeed, with much of organized sports shutting down in March in response to the pandemic, it has been several months since a lot of players have been on the ice in an organized way.

At 10U, a lot of players already have a good number of years invested in hockey, and for many this is as long as they have been without hockey since before, they could skate. Simply getting back on the ice is something to look forward to.

2. Finding a Silver Lining

Grillo is a proponent of making the best of a situation, that has been a general key to getting through the pandemic. In the case of its impact on hockey, perhaps the lessons of adversity can be applied to the ice – and make players even more thankful for what they have once they can play again.

“It’s a little adversity and challenge, but I think there’s a silver lining to everything,” Grillo said. “At that age, kids are pretty adaptable.”

3. The Smell of Hockey

Okay, maybe some parents will disagree with this one, but you know the awful smell that is pretty much baked into hockey equipment? Don’t you miss it? Maybe not the smell itself but smelling the awful smell. There is something about it that is unmistakably “hockey,” and it will be comforting in a way to have it back.

4. Showing Off Improvement

There was only so much a lot of kids could do while mostly staying at home. Some of you may have worked really hard on your shot, on passing or stickhandling. Maybe it was countless hours riding a bike or running around the neighborhood while burning off energy. All of that might translate into improvement once the games resume.

“Hopefully, some of our players got the chance to get stronger and more explosive,” Grillo said.

5. Seeing Old Friends

Hockey is a sport, but playing hockey produces lifelong bonds. A lot of those had already formed when things shut down and it is going to be pretty special to rekindle friendships with teammates.

“The big part of it is the social aspect,” Grillo said. “Being with your buddies doing something you love. I think that has been a big missing component and an important aspect of youth sports for kids. ... Sometimes your hockey buddies are totally different than neighborhood kids or school friends. Getting reacquainted with them is cool.”

6. Making New Friends

If we have allowed anyone into our “bubbles” in recent months, chances are they were trusted friends or family members. There has not been a lot of opportunity to meet new people, but a new season likely means some new teammates – and the chance not just to see old friends but to make new ones.

7. A Change of Scenery

One of the most frustrating – even while necessary – features of trying to flatten the curve of the pandemic is its confinement. Opportunities for new experiences or places were often few and far between. The hockey season, then, is a welcome venue change.

“It’s different scenery, different people, with a diversity of thought and environment,” Grillo said. “Those are all really valuable child development aspects.”

8. Showing Benefits of Being Refreshed

If there is another silver lining, Grillo says, it is that much of the shutdown happened when kids naturally would have taken a break from hockey anyway while focusing on other outdoor sports.

“The fun of the sport and the passion is so critical at 10U with the kids at that stage in life,” Grillo said. “When you step away from the game, I think it’s a growing moment. This was a forced break so it’s a little more painful, but for us, we got lucky that way, in terms it being a natural time for a break.”

9. Competing & Learning

Goals and saves are fun. Wins and losses matter. However, they are all by-products of the enjoyment of getting better. With 10U falling squarely in the golden age of skill development, there will be many opportunities to take another step this season.

“Some of the markers we’re seeing with kids moving forward are compete level, attention to some of the smaller things, their ability to adjust,” Grillo said. “A big thing we’ve been talking about doing during this downtime is at 10U they’re starting to come to an age where they are playing off of others and creating space for themselves.”

10. A New Way of Teaching

As many states ease back into team sports, hockey at the 10U level might actually benefit from the creativity needed to adhere to safety protocols.

“For the adults in charge of the kids, maybe they take the opportunity to relearn some things and look at how we coach our kids,” Grillo said. “With some of the rules in these areas, it will be more development-focused than competition-focused. That’s a huge positive for athletes.”



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In the current Covid-19 age we are in we are going to have to get creative. That goes for how we are running practices to keeping safe distancing in place. To how we are getting players dressed and on the ice. This entails how we use our locker rooms. Also making sure that you are following local protocols that are in place in our local community. How are we going to travel and what is the status of that state that we are traveling to?

While all this sounds so overwhelming, we will all get through all this. As administrators of the Mid-Am District we want to let you know we are here for you. Each of us is only a phone call away to assist you in any way we can. At this time, we are all fielding so many questions so it may take a day or two to get back to you. The current levels that each of our states are in is different. It is a very fluid situation that is every changing every day. But rest assured we as the administrators of your district are staying on top of this to the best of our ability.

Our players just want to play hockey and it our job as heads of local programs and league administrators to make that happen in the safest guarded manner as possible.

Many of us have returned to the rinks already so as the banner said, let us be creative in how we are approaching all of this and make our season as enjoyable as possible. Let us all remember that is why we are all here and that it is for each player that is in our local programs and to give them the skill they need to play our game .



Covid-19 Restrictions

While the geographic boundaries within the Mid-American Affiliate are in various states of permitting participation in the Sport of Hockey, we must all recognize we are held to the standards of compliance as required by Government Authority (Federal, State and Local).

USA Hockey and its Affiliates will always place the welfare and health of its member participants first and will operate with compliance to Government Authorities.

1. We must follow the guidelines established by Federal, State and Local Government Authorities.
2. The guidelines are mandatory, not only in your home state, but traveling to geographic locations outside your state you are required to follow all requirements established by government authorities for that respective state.
3. The responsibility of enforcing compliance is that of all local member organizations and coaches.
4. Noncompliance may subject local member organizations to a hearing for the non - compliance and violation of the Mid AM member agreement which may result in suspension of the organization, the administrators, coaches, managers, participants and any participation in USA Hockey playoffs at State, District and National events.
5. We cannot dictate to the respective facility(s) (rinks). Should they choose not to comply with the aforementioned regulations, the use of such facilities places your organization at risk of being non-compliant.



Have you completed your coaching education yet?

Have you read up on the new USA Hockey rules that are new for this season?



#HockeyIsBack...and so is the Declaration of Safety, Fair-Play, and Respect

Hockey is back! As more teams and players get back on to the ice, we want to again address the importance of USA Hockey's Declaration of Safety, Fair Play, and Respect. Here's a quick recap of the latest initiative with input from Scott Zelkin, manager of the junior officiating development program; Kenny Rausch, director of youth hockey; Matt Leaf, director of the officiating program; and Keith Barrett, vice president and chairman of the USA Hockey Youth Council.

What is the Declaration of Player Safety, Fair Play, and Respect

Beginning with the 2019-20 Season, USA Hockey launched the "Declaration of Player Safety, Fair-Play & Respect" initiative to improve player safety and overall competition? Its emphasis directs coaches to teach proper body contact and respect for an opponent's safety when executing a bodycheck. Officials are also required to hold players accountable when they execute dangerous contact.

What is the goal?

"We want to make kids better people and better hockey players," explains Rausch. "On the skill development side of it, with the ADM, we're giving our players more skill and hockey sense. Proper body contact is also a skill to be developed, just like any other hockey skill.

"What we found with the culture that was existing, players, coaches and parents were celebrating the wrong things. They were celebrating the big hits instead of the playmaking. We want the game physical and hard; we just do not want bad hits and kids getting hurt. That's not why they signed up to play hockey."

Barrett further points to how the culture of youth hockey was drifting from a focus on development when it came to big hits.

"It was over a number of years that we had seen a level of big hits, blow up hits, not taking the puck but taking the body. That culture was hanging around," he said. "When one of those hits would happen, it was usually followed with cheering and stick banging and really raised the whole level of the chippiness of the game.

"At the same time, the Mayo Clinic, and other medical journals across the country, showed body contact and head contact should not occur in 15-year-olds and younger, so the youth council started digging into it. We wanted to take that and look at making the game safer and refocused on development, so we put together a small committee to look at the current playing rules."

How did it get implemented?

“It started with the subcommittee putting together the document, principles and the concepts that went into the declaration,” said Leaf. “That was fine-tuned right up until June 2019 when it was presented to our board of directors for adoption and implementation. It was a unanimous vote to adopt and move forward with it. That put us in a position to start developing resources and video clips from a variety of different levels.”

How does it directly impact officials?

“There were no real rule changes with the Declaration. Ultimately, it was really just spreading awareness and establishing expectations as it relates to proper enforcement of the current rules. That is not only on the officiating side, but on the coaching side as far as teaching the skills and establishing expectations to hold players accountable on how to play the game the right way,” said Leaf.

What can we expect this season in relation to the Declaration?

“Going into this season you’re going to see an emphasis for change. However, we want to reemphasize that we understand that change, especially culture change, takes time,” said Leaf. “It’s not going to happen overnight, but USA Hockey as an organization is fully committed to this and look forward to making additional progress this year.”

For more information, watch the **E.9 Declaration of Player Safety** episode of [USA Hockey Officiating ZoomCasts](#)



Hockey Is for Everyone and the NHL's global influence to drive positive social change and foster more inclusive communities. We support any teammate, coach or fan who brings heart, energy, and passion to the rink. We believe all hockey programs - from professionals to youth organizations - should provide a safe, positive, and inclusive environment for players and families regardless of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.