



Winnetka Hockey Club

Travel Hockey
League Communication

Illinois Youth Hockey Structure



Winnetka Mites




Chicago United Hockey League



Est. in 2017 as a response to the USA edict to not allow Mite hockey full ice games, the CUHL provides a way for the Tier 2 programs to have full ice Mite games in a sanctioned league by AAU.

Winnetka Squirts - Midgets



Amateur Hockey Association of Illinois (AHA)

Governing body for all youth hockey in the Illinois. Member of USA Hockey since 1975.

Northern Illinois Hockey League (NIHL)



Est. 1975 as the primary hockey league for all AHA AA & A hockey clubs. Currently has 4 levels: Elite, Gold, Silver and Bronze for age levels Squirt through Midget.

Central States Developmental Hockey League



Est 1999 as the high-end AA league for IL youth clubs' top teams. League admission is done by a closed-door selection committee for age levels Squirt through Midget.

Past NIHL & Central States League Structure



CENTRAL STATES

- Clubs play a seeding round at the beginning of each season
- Teams are placed into divisions based on seeding round performance
- Division champions are eligible for post season tournaments including state championship

ELITE

GOLD

SILVER

BRONZE

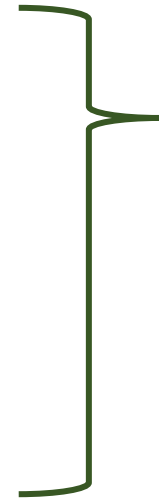
- Positions itself as a top tier league
- Clubs must apply in the spring and present to a selection committee
- Teams are invited by closed door selection process
- WHC has historically had a less than 50% admission rate regardless of past team success

2021-22 NIHL & Central States League Structure



New NIHL Premier Select league

- A seeding round and previous year's experience earns right to play in league
- Teams are by birth year (Major and Minor) Squirts through Bantams, but qualified minor aged players can play up on major teams
- Periods will be 1-2 minutes longer than Elite and equal to CSHL
- Off-ice training programs offered by Blackhawks training staff
- State Championship (AHAI) will still include both NIHL and CSHL
- ***If you apply for Central States, you will be banned from NIHL Premier Select for up to 1-3 years***



WHC will embrace NIHL Premier Select and not enter the Central States League. Why?



PREMIER
SELECT

1

Supports WHC Strategic Plan

Allows us to play at the highest competitive level of Tier II hockey (where our talent allows), is consistent with our strategic plan and commitment to developing a top tier community-based hockey program.

2

Competition & Player Development Improves

- Earning a spot on the ice creates league competitiveness parity
 - CSHL application & selection process results in a strong top third and highly variable bottom
 - Competitive scrimmages can always be scheduled to complement the season schedule
 - All teams can meet up in the AHA! State Tournament, and at select tournaments throughout the year
 - Proper implementation of Premier Select improves player development for top tier program players
-

3

Transparency and Fairness Matter to Our Program

- CSHL spring application process is confusing, creates unnecessary angst, and is prone to error. Seeding should be determined by on-ice performance.
- CSHL application process often driven by a subset of individuals vs connected to our program. Causes fracturing.
- NIHL Premier Select supports WHC strategy to “...prioritize teams playing at the appropriate competitive level”

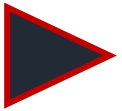


**PREMIER
SELECT**

Premier Select Implementation for WHC

Similar to CSHL, NIHL Premier Select leagues are birth-year based, allowing clubs to enter a Major and a Minor team for each level if desired. WHC will only submit teams to the Major league, but our Major team can include capable minor age (first year) players.

2021-2022
Season
Example



PeeWee Major = all player born in 2009 or 2010



PeeWee Minor = all players born in 2010



WHC major only approach allows us to put the best ~12-15 players on the 1st team and the next best group of players on each subsequent team, at each level, whether a first year or second year player.

Why Only The Major Level?

Program Impact....

- Best rosters are set w/o consideration of age (Major Teams can have capable first year players). Results in more WHC competitive teams and a better experience for players.
- If we pick teams designed around Major and Minor aspirations, we disenfranchise players not making those team or the proper team.
- Lesson Learned: We recognize that our spring team placement is a departure from this approach and that experience has helped to inform this.



....Player Development Impact

- Strong/capable first year players are better served playing with the age above vs on a Minor team.
- What happens to the 2nd year player that just missed the Major cut and can't play on the Minor team? 3rd and 4th teams would be a suboptimal mix, impacting development

Note: consideration for Major & Minor could be made at the Bantam level where checking is introduced and size can vary greatly