



## ***Executive Director Report***

**Steven Nelson**  
**Executive Director**

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1. Vending machines

With the exception of one machine we have all new vending operations functional.

2. Coke

The new Coke agreement has been executed and we have received our bonus of 4k.

3. Concessions

The concession area is newly painted and have received new equipment from the Coke bid. This should make operations more efficient.

4. Northern Storm Summer Tournaments

Dick Berthiaume and myself are currently looking over the financials of the Battle by the Bay tournaments to determine if this is a good avenue for the arena.

5. Wall Space update

I am still collecting artifacts for the wall space.

6. Live Barn update

Soon to be installed.

7. Summer Ice rental

8. Jersey Drive

9. WAHA Summer Mtg



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# A RADICAL APPROACH TO SQUIRT HOCKEY

By Minnesota Hockey, 07/25/17, 12:45PM CDT

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When the Duluth Amateur Hockey Association (DAHA) noticed its registration numbers starting to decline – particularly at the Pee wee levels – from 2009-2012, this historic hockey community decided to make a radical change.

DAHA decided to eliminate its Squirt A traveling hockey program.

That's right: no more traveling "A" Squirts for Duluth, a rule enacted starting with the 2012-13 season. Instead of selecting the best players from each of the unique Duluth community programs and forming a traveling "A" team, all Squirts stay and play at the "B" level for their neighborhoods.

"At this age, it should not be about talent identification. It should be about talent development," said DAHA President Brett Klosowski. "At the youth level, our overlying philosophical priorities should always be about development – always. Developing both the athlete, the player and the person."

What were the goals behind this move? Increase member retention and broaden the base of the pyramid; reduce costs for families; refocus on skill development and fun.

DAHA was seeing up to 40 percent of players quitting after Squirts. This was in step with a national trend, as USA Hockey was losing 60 percent of kids prior to reaching the Pee wee/12U levels.

The numbers show that it's working. In 2015-16, DAHA retained 87 percent of Squirts transitioning to Pee wees, a 27 percent improvement. DAHA has also seen its four-year average (comparing 2009-2012 to 2013-2016) increase from 703 to 745 for total players.

### **They're Too Young**

Klosowski has been an official for 25 years. He's worked pro, junior and Division I college hockey, and has picked the brains of countless hockey minds at the highest levels.

Squirts should not be separated by skill level, he says. They're just too young.

"Why are we telling kids as loud as we can from the mountaintops at ages 8, 9 and 10, 'You're not good enough. You stink.' That's stupid," Klosowski said. "That is so counterproductive to kids being kids. These kids just want to play with their friends. You're not retarding anybody's development as a player, in any sport, by not letting them play on some travel team or all-star team when they're 9."

This past spring, USA Hockey ADM Regional Manager Roger Grillo learned about DAHA's Squirt structure at the Hockey Director Conference put on by Minnesota Hockey.

"They get it," said the veteran coach with 20 years of experience at the collegiate level. "When you take the confidence and passion for the game away from a little kid, what good is that?"

"The bottom line is that they want to have fun and they want to have success. We don't put a little kid on a Tour de France bike. There's a progression there – a tricycle, training wheels, all kinds of stuff to make sure they want to ride the bike for the rest of their lives. We want our kids playing hockey for the rest of their lives. We just have to handle it properly and carefully."

### **Caught Up in Competition**

It's easy to get caught up in labels and trophies, but experts agree it is not what is best for development at these young ages.

"The trap that everybody falls into is that they get so caught up in the competition model," Grillo added. "They get so caught up on who's on what team, who they're playing against, what's the label of the team – is it AAA, AA – and they just lose sight of the most important thing: focusing on the development of the individual athlete. The focus on skill development and the focus on training and practice and doing things that are age-appropriate."

Age-appropriate training and age-appropriate environment and structure are absolutely critical to the development of young people and athletes.

"There's a reason why a 10-year-old would never be in an honors class – there's no such thing," Grillo said. "The sport science and child development experts will tell you that the way you train and the way you coach the best athlete and the weakest athlete at ages 8, 9 and 10 is exactly the same. There's no difference. In fact, a fork in the road doesn't really come until about 13 and 14."

### **Cutting Costs**

If Minnesota is the most unique hockey state in the country, Duluth may very well be its most unique community. DAHA includes 10 different neighborhood sub-associations that all have their own boards and decision-makers.

One added benefit to this Squirt B structure is cost reduction.

"Instead of playing in seven tournaments per year and traveling out of town for three of them and spending money on gas and hotels and that kind of stuff, it's another way we can reduce the cost of the sport for these parents," Klosowski said. "There's no reason that parents at that age group should have to expect to incur those kinds of travel costs. I get it – it happens in other sports. But anything we can do as administrators to reduce that is going to be beneficial to us in the long run."

### **Culture Keepers**

Duluth has produced a lot of college and pro hockey players. The city's rich hockey history, tradition and community, coupled with the many UMD Bulldog hockey players who stay in the area, result in a number of coaches and local board members with a strong hockey background.

Their support of the change has been and continues to be invaluable.

"The great part about it is that they buy in to this at a level that most average parents who've never played the game at a high level do," said Klosowski. "These guys are the ones leading the charge. They're saying, 'This is the way that we want to do it. This makes the most sense and we really believe in this.' When you get the people that have the most respect within your hockey community coming along for the ride and agreeing with this, then it's easier for other parents."

Duluth is bucking the youth sports culture trend, and people are taking notice.

"That's why I was so impressed with them, because the culture is kind of counter to that," said Grillo. "We call it the race to the wrong finish line. The real idea is to develop the best well-rounded athletes at the ages of 16 and 18, not 10. Patience is priority number one."

Klosowski said DAHA has been extremely happy with the outcomes it has produced. Moreover, the Squirt B program also hasn't hindered team success at the older levels. Duluth East took second place at the 2016 Peewee AA State Tournament with most of the kids having played two years of Squirt B.

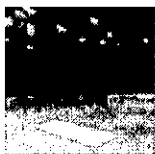
"In the end, from a development standpoint, everything I've seen with USA Hockey and the ADM, NHL and Division I scouts that I talk to on a regular basis, coaches I talk to – this makes so much more sense," he said. "We want to get the fun back into the game. We want to maximize the base of that pyramid. That's where the future of our sport lies."

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# DEVELOPMENT CMTE REPORT

## Evaluation Dates

PW 10/16 6:30-7:45 p

10/17 6:15-7:30 p

Bantams G1 10/15 6:30 p

G2 10/15 7:45p

G1 and G2 10/17 7:45-9 p

G1 and G2 10/18 7:45-8:45 p

Squirts Dev teams picked by 10/15

PWA 1<sup>st</sup> practice Friday 10/19 7:45 p

BA 1<sup>st</sup> practice Friday 10/19 9:00 p

## REGISTRATION NUMBERS

AS OF 8/13/18 8:00 AM

**REGISTRATION  
TOURNAMENTS**

### PLAYERS

- 118 registered
- 116 were registered in June/July when we offered a discount (in 2017, 18 were registered in June/July and in 2016, 12 were registered in June/July)
- Of the 118 registered; 3 JG, 13 Bantams, 6 14U, 15 PW, 5 12U, 18 SQ, 5 10U, 32 Mites, 15 Mini Mites, 6 Termites
- 7 families approved for Harrington fund
- Survey sent to 30 JG eligible players based on last year's registration- results attached.

### TOURNAMENTS

- 23 registered \*not including Superior teams – normal for this time of year
- Of the 23 registered; 3 BA, 3 10U, 4 12U, 1 14U, 3 JG, 3 PWA, 2 PWB, 2 BB, 2 SQB
- Spots filled for tournaments including Superior teams:

Mini Mite 4/12

BA 4/6

10U 4/8

12U 5/6

14U 2/6

JG 4/12

SQA 1/6

PWA 4/6

PWB 3/8

BB 3/8

SQB 4/12

Mite 6/12

10U

12U

SQB 4/12

Mite 6/12

	A	B	C
	Does your player plan on playing JR Gold this season?	Does your player plan on trying out for the High School team?	If your player tries out for the HS team, and does not make it, will they play IG?
1			
2	Yes	No	N/A
3	Maybe	Yes	Yes
4	Yes	No	N/A
5	Maybe	Yes	Yes
6	Maybe	Yes	Maybe
7	Yes	No	N/A
8	Yes	No	Yes
9	No	Yes	Maybe
10	Maybe	Maybe	Maybe
11	Maybe	Yes	Maybe
12	No	Yes	No
13	Yes	No	N/A
14	Maybe	Yes	Maybe
15	Yes	No	Yes
16			
17			
18			
19	6 yes	7 yes	4 yes
20	2 no	6 no	1 no
21	6 maybe	1 maybe	5 maybe