

# MICHIGAN AMATEUR HOCKEY ASSOCIATION MITE HOCKEY GUIDEBOOK

## INTRODUCTION

### **What is the ADM?**

The American Development Model (ADM) is a comprehensive development model from 8u to 18u. It provides guidance on optimal, age specific programming based on Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) principles (sports science, physical education and child development research)

### **Where did LTAD and ADM come from?**

The ADM was developed after a review of USA Hockey's current development system and how players progress from Mites to the very highest levels of our sport. Best practices for hockey and sport development were looked at from sources inside and out-side our sport. Much of the proven developmental material in the ADM has been around for a long time, but in the past was not applied to ice hockey on a broad scale.

### **What other countries use LTAD principles?**

LTAD principles are being utilized by over 100 different sport federations and government ministries for athlete development in a wide variety of countries including Australia, New Zealand, England, Sweden, Russia, Czech Republic and Finland. Closer to home, Sport Canada (the equivalent of our United State Olympic Committee) has adopted the LTAD platform across all sport in their country. Each NSO (National Sports Organization) including Hockey Canada has developed or is in the process of developing individual sports specific LTAD plans.

### **If this is funded by the NHL and promoted by USA Hockey, why is a lot of the ADM focused on non-hockey activities?**

The better you are as an athlete the greater your potential in any specific sport. We want to encourage our kids to develop a wide range of athletic skills so that when they reach an age where they should start to specialize in hockey, they have the foundation for much greater success.

### **What kind of changes will the ADM cause?**

We believe that the ADM will cause people to look closely at how our current system affects kids and their development through our sport. In many cases our current system places our nine-year-olds the same structure as our eighteen-year-olds. Much of the current structure that has evolved makes sense for adults in administrative areas or even in the coach's realm as we look at things from our adult perspectives. However,

more often than not, it does not have any basis in the development for our kids. The ADM is an athlete centered model. It places what is best for our kid first.

### **What are the advantages of practicing in small areas and playing cross-ice/half-ice games?**

The USA Hockey Red, White, and Blue program is based on a model of practicing and playing hockey across the ice surface as compared to practicing and playing along the full length of the ice surface. This cross-ice practicing and playing model actually has been around for as long as the game has been played. When players played on a pond did they use an ice surface 200 x 85 feet? No, they played in a small area that developed and sharpen their skills without the rules of off-sides, icing, penalties, face-offs, or even positional play. Hockey sense and hockey instincts were developed. This model has been used in many of the leading hockey nations and by the world's best players for a number of years and has stood the test of time. It has been shown that children who begin their hockey training in this environment have an outstanding hockey experience and develop a better base of skills as they progress through our sport.

### **Why does the ADM call for Mites to use a smaller surface for games?**

Like other sports, we are fitting the playing environment to fit the physical size of our kids. By doing this, kids get to play a version of the real hockey game that is actually more comparable in key areas that a full ice game is for kids on this size. Physical contact is increased, repetition of the most important skating and puck control skills are increased and the environment is better suited to the cognitive development of the players.

### **I have heard it is not currently a mandate from USA Hockey, why is MAHA trying to Mandate this?**

It is true that cross ice hockey is not currently mandated by USA Hockey. One of reasons is because of a timing issue within USA Hockey's by-laws. MAHA, along with other affiliates are trying to find a way to ease the transition into cross-ice hockey for all mites. MAHA is looking to take a proactive leadership role by completing the implementation process in a way that is most conducive and least interruptive to the current system, before it is mandated at the national level for all of USA Hockey.

### **Why is MAHA eliminating Mite travel?**

While MAHA is not eliminating travel between associations for Mites, it is looking to eliminate Mite travel hockey as we know it. The reason is simply there is too much emphasis on the formation of travel teams, winning and losing at the 8U level. There is not enough emphasis on building the foundation for developing skilled hockey players in the future.

### **I have heard MAHA is eliminating tournaments at eight and under, is this true?**

MAHA is not advocating the elimination of tournaments, jamborees, or inter-association game play. However, MAHA is advocating the reduction of the playing surface size to cross/half-ice at the 8u age group for all competition.

### **Will players compete against other players of a similar ability?**

One of the most important ADM principles is the grouping of players of like ability. At 8U this is a cornerstone of a player's development. It is important in both practice and in cross-ice game competition for players to be grouped by similar ability whenever possible.

### **Why not teach off-sides at Mites?**

Age appropriate training is one of the most important cornerstones of the ADM. 8U players should concentrate the large majority of their time on skating and puck handling skills. Concepts such as off-sides, positions, and face-off positioning should be introduced at the 10U level. These concepts are easier to learn as the cognitive ability of players increase with age.

### **What is age appropriate training?**

Age appropriate training is one of the cornerstones of the ADM. It helps form the foundation for developing athletes and hockey players by integrating training, competition, and recovery with relation to biological age and maturation. For more information on age appropriate training, please see the chart at [www.admkids.com](http://www.admkids.com)

### **The ADM seems more complicated. Will we need better coaches to teach it?**

Let's remember that the ADM is different at every age level. At the 8U building the foundation level, there is no need for associations to worry about the competency level or experience of their coaches, because players at this age 'Learn by Doing.' The large majority of development comes from the participants playing, and experiencing through repeated activity, in order to learn.

At 10U, the focus shifts to 'Do by Learning.' This is the 'Golden age of Skill Development' and it is important for our best coaches to be training the players at both the 10U and 12U age levels. Players at these age groups will be able to make big strides in their level skill and technical proficiency.

### **Will the ADM take away Coaches flexibility to tailor their curriculum to their players?**

No. While the ADM has produced a season worth of practice plans for coaches to use at the 8U level, both associations and coaches should feel free to adjust these practices or add their own based on the needs of their team or association. It is,

however, very important for coaches and associations to stay within the skill based station type format recommended by the ADM.

**My son/daughter is not going to the NHL so why should they participate in what sounds like a more elite training program?**

The basic philosophy of the ADM is to help each boy or girl who joins a hockey program to fulfill his or her potential. It will give every player the opportunity to increase their skill level and, therefore, make the game more enjoyable for every youngster to play.

**What is the Red Wings Premiere program?**

The Red Wing Premier program was created as a way to recognize associations across the state of Michigan who are doing their very best to follow the ADM principles.

**Is an evaluation being done by the associations that have already embraced this program?**

Yes, MAHA distributed a survey to all the associations who followed the ADM suggested practices and played cross-ice hockey in 2010-2011. You can find the summary of the results of this survey at the end of this guidebook. If you are interested in the entire survey, you can download from the MAHA website..

**Does the ADM costs more than a traditional full-ice Mite team?**

No. While each association will still have the ability to establish their individual fee structure, associations that follow the suggested ice-touches and player participation numbers at the 8U, 10U and 12U age groups should see a cost reduction for its participants.

**Will there still be a progression in Mites or will my child do the same thing for 4 years if he/she starts hockey at age four?**

Each association will continue to be in charge of the progression for their players in their association. MAHA and USA Hockey have provided suggestions for this progression.

**Why does it seem like MAHA is in a hurry to implement this new ADM program?**

Following its Mission Statement, MAHA is looking to provide the very best experience for all its players. The ADM was created to fulfill these same goals. More development, more fun, and greater participation

### **Why ADM? Why now?**

As it has been stated, “An-eight-year old is only an eight-year-old once”. Every delay in implementing the ADM with its LTAD principles is shortchanging our kids. This is a program that USA Hockey should have put in place years ago.

### **My teams are consistent winners. Why should I implement the ADM?**

Most coaches can make sacrifices in development in order to gain wins in the short run. But it could end up being detrimental to a kid somewhere down the line. It's always great to win, but at the same time, we need to be more careful with how we develop kids. If you've been doing something that's netted you wins, then we'd still encourage you to implement parts of this program so down the line, you'll see the same kids you coached playing in the NHL.

### **Is the ADM trying to change the way I coach?**

Yes, the ADM wants to make coaches aware of what is most important at each stage of a child's athletic development. We only have so much time with the kids so we need to be efficient and give them what they need most at each stage. Understanding these 'Windows of Opportunity' will optimize player development and limit coaches' frustrations.

### **Once the ADM is implemented at the Mite level will MAHA or USA Hockey mandate cross-ice hockey at the Squirts age level also?**

No. Cross-ice and half-ice games and competition are an integral part of the ADM at 8U. Nowhere in the ADM do we require 10U squirts to play cross/half-ice games.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLEMENTATION**

### **DEVELOPMENT AS A PRIORITY**

Associations, teams, coaches and parents are asked to put development first when it comes to administering their 8u programs. This includes station - based practices focused on movement, fun and the development of basic fundamentals. Cross-ice and half-ice hockey is an important part of the development process at this age.

### **EDUCATE/COMMUNICATE WITH THE PARENTS**

As with any change or new direction, both the communication and the education of our constituents, and in this case their parents, is of top priority. Associations need to

have good communication in order to educate the parents. Enlist the Parents Help/Educating the Parents – As USA Hockey, MAHA, and your local association move forward in its quest to make hockey more fun and better for our children, it is important that coaches and associations take the time to inform and educate the parents of our players in regard to the ADM and in the role it plays in the life long enjoyment of the game of hockey.

### **CREATING A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT**

It is important for all our coaches, and parents, to help create a positive environment for all players at 8U. Children that play in a learning environment this is fun, will strive to get better and continue to play the game.

### **FOSTERING A COMPETITIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Fostering a competitive environment is an important part of a child's development. It is important for the games and practices at the 8U level to foster a competitive environment for all the players involved. This does not mean that the formation of teams, winning, losing, and the winning of championships are the most important things at 8U. Rather this competitiveness must be fostered and enhanced at an individual level. Players should be encouraged to be the very best they can be, to battle for the puck, and to compete hard in every cross/half -ice game, competition and practice.

### **HALF-ICE VS CROSS-ICE HOCKEY**

Associations are free to choose whether there 6u and 8u programs play cross-ice or half-ice hockey, as well as whether they play 3v3 or 4v4.

***6u Hockey - MAHA suggests that 6u hockey is played in a 3v3 cross-ice format.***

***8u Hockey – MAHA suggests that 8u hockey is played either in a 3v3 cross-ice, 4v4 cross-ice or 4v4 half-ice format.***

### **FUN/ACTIVITY/MOVEMENT/PLAY**

Coaching at the 8U level is all about the kids engaged and active. Remember that it is critical at this age for kids to have fun. Players that have fun will want to return and by getting them to return we can further their development. Remember when coaching this age group: no lines, no laps, and no lectures.

### **COACHING EDUCATION PROGRAM (CEP)**

The new Coaching Education Program has been designed to train our coaches in regard to age-appropriate coaching. This has been designed to be launched in conjunction with the American Development Model and will better prepare our coaches for the specifics of coaching and training players at each individual age level.

## **FLEXIBILITY**

Flexibility is a key component of cross-ice hockey at the 8u age level. Each association's is unique to itself in terms of its registered players, age demographics, ice time availability, etc. Associations are free to tailor their cross/half-ice programs to their individual situation in their quest to provide the best experience possible.

## **ROSTERS**

Cross-Ice rosters have different requirements than full-ice Mite teams. All cross-ice/half-ice programs are to be rostered as ADM and treated the same as the previous I/P rosters. This means that rosters of 20 players each with participating coaches need to be created by the local registrar and submitted to the district registrar to track the number of players participating in each association. The players being on a roster assures associations that their players are properly claimed.

1. All coaches involved with the cross-ice or half-ice program from each individual association must be included on each roster page.
2. The roster, complete with all on-ice coaches, needs to be submitted to the district registrar as soon as possible.
3. There do not need to be any player's signatures on the roster. There should not be any participation in cross-ice leagues, association exchanges or jamborees prior to the rosters being submitted to the district registrar.
4. Teams will not need a specific team roster to play in jamborees or tournaments and moving players from team to team within an association will not require changes to a team roster at this level. This flexibility will allow associations to manage their rosters and teams without having to do a lot of extra paperwork each time a player moves from one team to another within the association.
5. The master rosters are all that is needed for associations and or teams to participate in a jamboree or tournament format. USA Hockey registration confirmation letters are also acceptable as proof of proper player registration.

## **TEAMS**

Associations are free to form teams in order to help facilitate the best possible program. MAHA rules for players at the 6u & 8u age levels must be followed.

Note: Because of the flexibility of 6u & 8u rostering requirements, associations can change teams throughout the year if the situation is warranted...ie: changes in numbers, changes in ability, tournament and/or jamboree opportunities.

***6u/8u – MAHA suggests that teams are formed to highlight the camaraderie and relationships built through team sports.***

## **TRAVEL TO AND FROM GAMES**

One of the tenets of cross-ice hockey and the ADM at the 8u age level is to limit the amount of travel and eliminate missing school for hockey.

***8u – MAHA suggests that no 8u player misses any portion of any school day for games, tournaments or jamborees.***

## **OFFICIATING**

It is up to each association, league, tournament and/or jamboree organizer to decide the level of importance that officiating plays in their situation. While some associations may choose to use coaches in the process of officiating games at the youngest levels, others may choose to employ uniformed referees during games.

***6u - MAHA suggests that except for special events and jamborees, coaches are used to facilitate games at 6u level.***

***8u – MAHA suggests that except for scrimmages, referees are used for all games.***

***IMPORTANT NOTE: PLEASE REFER TO THE USA HOCKEY CROSS-ICE OFFICIATING GUIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THIS TOPIC.***

## **LOCKER ROOMS**

The locker room environment is an important part of the game of hockey. Playing cross-ice hockey or playing on a cross-ice team should not in any way inhibit associations, teams, and coaches from the camaraderie and bonding that is essentially part of the hockey locker room environment.

## **COACHES**

Teams will have set coaches in place to coordinate activities that are team based...ie: games, tournaments, jamborees, off-ice activities and get-togethers. Coaches involved in station based practices will stay at their station while the players rotate, thereby giving all the coaches and players in an association the opportunity for interaction.

## **TEAMS**

The number of players on an individual team should be based on a number of factors including age, skill level, number of players participating, cross-ice or half-ice, etc. Priority should be given to the number of players that would maximize actual playing time for each child.

***MAHA suggests using between 7-9 players per team when playing 3v3***

***MAHA suggests using between 9-13 players per team when playing 4v4***

## **GAME DURATION**

The duration of an individual competition (game) is left up to the association and can be based on a number of factors including length of ice session, number of teams involved, etc.

***MAHA suggests that the duration of a single game on a day where teams will be playing in more than one game be limited to no longer than 30 minutes per game.***

## **KEEPING SCORE**

Keeping score in cross-ice and/or half-ice games should be a tool that is used by associations to enhance the progression of players and teams from 6U through 8U.

***6u - MAHA suggests that no score is kept at 6U***

***8u – MAHA suggests that keeping score be introduced at the 8U level, but wins, losses, and standings should not come into play until 10U.***

## **EXCEPTIONAL PLAYER STATUS**

As with all USA Hockey Programs, the ADM and Red, White and Blue Hockey provides for the exceptional player to move from one level to another based on both age and ability. A player who shows exceptional ability at the 8u level may be moved to a 10u classification at the discretion of the local association and in accordance with USA Hockey, MAHA and Association rules.

***6u – MAHA suggests that no players be moved up from the 6u level.***

***8u - MAHA suggest that no player be moved to an older age group unless that player would be within the top 25% of players in the next age group.***

# **ON-ICE IMPLEMENTATION**

## **MAHA 8U – Red, White & Blue Cross-Ice Hockey Game Guidelines**

### **Definitions:**

1. An 'Exchange' or 'Game' is defined by any non practice competition between 4 or less associations
2. A 'Jamboree' or 'Mite Tournament' is defined as any 1 or 2 day non practice competition between more than 4 associations.
3. Game Days are any combination of no more than 3 hours of competition, whether they are intra-association, games (in house) or inter-association games (games, exchanges, jamborees)

### **Limits:**

1. There is no limit to the number of game days per season
2. There is a limit of 6 Jamborees per season

3. Jamborees or tournaments at the 8u age category can not be held on any day when school is in session.

**Recommendations:**

1. MAHA recommends that an association participates in no more than 20 game days per season.
2. No more than a 3 minute warm-up shall take place before each game
3. Games should consist of 1 (Ideal) or 2 periods in order to maximize actual play time.
4. Teams should consist of between 7-9 players per team when playing 3v3, or 9-13 players per team when playing 4x4 to maximize actual playing time

**Game Rules:**

Associations, teams, jamborees, tournaments and organizers can choose any of the below options, a combination of these options or options that follow the Red, White and Blue guidelines tailored to fit their unique cross/half - ice programs and game day competition.

**Option 1:** No scores, no referees, when one team scores they must hustle back and touch their own post. The team that gets scored on must dig the puck out of the net and take the puck behind the net before they can attack offensively. No puck dropping, just lots of puck touches and play time. Opponents can be rotated based on the number of teams on the ice and amount of time available. Games should be played with buzzer hockey shifts and shifts should be no longer than 1 minute in length (8u) and 1.5 minutes in length (6u)\*

**Option 2:** Score is kept for each game but no score is recorded or posted. Referees are utilized to facilitate the game. After a goal is scored, a quick faceoff is used to restart the game. (The referee gets the puck quickly out of the net and skates to center and drops the puck) There is puck dropping but the emphasis is still on lots of puck touches and play time. Opponents can be rotated based on the number of teams on the ice and amount of time available. Games should be played with buzzer hockey shifts and shifts should be no longer than 1 minute in length (8u) and 1.5 minutes in length (6u)\*

**KEY POINTS:**

1. Game scores, wins and losses are never recorded or posted.
2. Participation medals, pins, trophies and/or gifts etc., are encouraged for each player who participates. (There are no medals, pins, trophies and/or gifts, etc., based on wins.)
3. Referees do not call penalties but rather help instruct players as to the rules. For any flagrant infractions, situations which could result in injury or repeated penalty situations to one player, the referee will escort that player to the coach for further instruction and/or discipline if needed

4. Shift lengths are designed to allow each age group to involve themselves in play based on the age, size and skill level as well as to begin to introduce a sense of urgency into each shift.

5. There are no cross-ice game counts for cross-ice programs. Cross-ice games are part of the learning experience of the cross-ice program.