

Age Change Considerations

Minnesota Hockey has been asked by constituents to consider adjusting our age cut-off from July 1 to June 1 to allow players to participate with their classmates and to promote a smoother transition from Bantams to High School hockey. The District Director Committee asked for info on this so they can understand the pro's and con's and make an informed decision.

Background

Both USA Hockey and Hockey Canada have traditionally used calendar years for their teams, but Minnesota wants to keep their players grouped by grade in school. This allows participants to play with their classmates and promotes a smooth transition from Bantams to HS. We used Sept. 1 as our cut-off for years, going back to the 80's or maybe even before. USA Hockey tried an experiment in the early 90's where they moved back six months and tried a July 1 cut-off. We could've dug our heels in and stuck with Sept. 1, but we agreed to move to their ages. This mid-year cut-off caused some problems with areas bordering Canada (Michigan, New York, etc.) because our teams were now six months older than Canadian teams. Due to that and other issues (camps, international), USAH went back to a Jan. 1 cut-off after two years. At that point, we needed to make a decision what we were going to do. Stick with July 1, go back to Sept. 1, or follow USAH's Jan 1 cut-off? The Planning Committee researched this, polling associations, coaches and parents. What they discovered was that due to so many summer birthdates starting KG at 6 rather than 5, the earlier cut-off worked fairly well for us. It was also discussed that since 99% of our games are among ourselves, we should set it up in a way that works for us and not worry about what other states or countries are doing. So the Board decided to stick with the July 1 cut off.

The Numbers

In 2010, a survey was done of seven large Mn Hockey associations to find out how many players with Summer birthdates were starting KG at 6 rather than 5.



These #'s are higher than the MN Dept. of Education #'s, but were explained as driven by hockey demographics.

- Hockey parents are typically middle or upper-middle class
- These parents are not anxious to get their kids started in school
- More driven to see them succeed in life
- They can afford another year of day care if needed

A second smaller survey was done this season, which indicates the number of June hold-backs is closer to 30%. That calculates to about 650 9-year old to 15-year old players that have June birthdates and were held back.

Pro's of Pushing the Cutoff Back To June 1

- Would allow June birthdates that started KG at six to participate with their classmates through their whole youth hockey experience (as we presently have for July and August birthdates).
- The Minn. Dept. of Education accepts hold-backs for June, July and August with no questions asked. However you have to petition to hold back a May birthdate or earlier.
- Moving the cut-off back one month would provide a smooth transition to HS for June birthdates who started KG at six. Otherwise, they will only have one year of Bantams before 10th Grade.
- June birthdate players that started school late have to hope they live in an area that has a Jr Gold program or their HS team will take 9th Graders. Otherwise they will not have a place to play in 9th Grade.
- The "Natural Break" for significant % of players starting school late appears to be June 1.
- If we make playing-up requests for summer birthdates mandatory if they started KG at age 5, those participants won't be negatively affected by this change. They'd have a choice to play up with their grade. This is typically called "Peering Up".
- The Con's are legit, but many of them affect a small number of participants. Need to keep in mind that this impacts 650 of our players and the vast majority of our competition is among ourselves.

Con's of Pushing the Cutoff Back To June 1

- Would make our in-season players up to seven months older than USAH or Hockey Canada teams.
- Many out-of-state tournaments presently accept our teams even though they are up to six months older. Pushing it to seven months would possibly reduce this acceptance.
- We are already out of sync with national HP programs. Our players born the last half of the year are disadvantaged because they are playing Peewee while the others are playing Bantams (for HP 14). Adding another month would add one more month to that issue.
- Parents of players with June birthdates who made the decision to start them in KG at age 6 had their reasons to do so – they will have to live with the fallout as it relates to hockey.
- No matter where we set the cut-off, somebody will feel disadvantaged.