

Minnesota Hockey Executive Director Report

Glen Andresen – January 23, 2021

COVID-19 Response and Return to Play Guidelines

The top focus remains on returning our players to the rink and keeping them there through the State Tournament weekend, March 26-28. As we found out in November and December, this is going to be a challenge, but one that we can pull off if everyone across the state is working together to keep kids on the ice.

One of the most important steps we took in this was temporarily repurposing Mike Terwilliger's role and naming him our Minnesota Hockey Covid Coordinator. Twig has been a huge asset to us as he's responded to complaints, questions and comments through email and phone calls. He's handled each one with class and made Minnesota Hockey look like an organization that is listening and understanding of their concerns. He's also working closely with all of the Covid Coordinators from associations across the state, as well as with the Minnesota Department of Health.

Our fifth version of the Return to Play Guidelines and Rules was released right before games started on January 14. The Return to Play group has agreed that we will set benchmark dates of February 1, February 15 and March 1 to evaluate and potentially change any rules or guidelines. Much will depend on where things are at across the state in terms of cases, vaccinations, guidance from MDH, etc.

A huge thank you to all on the board for their support, and their efforts to keep kids playing. Everybody is in a very difficult situation, being asked to enforce rules that we didn't have a choice to implement. It is a struggle, and a thankless position for those asked to deal with people who don't think they should have to do what is being asked or mandated. Everyone is doing the best that they can in a situation nobody has ever had to deal with before. Thank you for all you are doing! We have to get through nine weeks, and we can do it together!

Diversity Project

With our primary focus on navigating the Return to Play, our efforts for Diversity and Inclusion have unfortunately not been at the forefront of this season, as we would like them to be. However, we have continued to take steps with the naming of Jeff Baidoo as our Equity Advisor. Jeff has been active with USA Hockey's Diversity and Inclusion efforts.

We are working on a diversity clinic in partnership with the Minnesota Wild and defenseman, Matt Dumba. This was originally slated to take place during Thanksgiving weekend, but was postponed due to the pause. The plan now is to hold a scaled down clinic at the Roseville Oval on February 27, which is now slated to be Hockey Day Minnesota, 2021. Players that have been invited to the clinic come from the Herb Brooks Foundation Rink Rats program and the New Directions program.

GIRSO Project

Our proposal to the University of Minnesota's Global Institute for Responsible Sport Organizations (GIRSO) Social Innovation in Sport Competition (SISC), which seeks proposals from sport entities (e.g., professional sport organizations, for profit organizations, athlete foundations, players' associations, non-profit sport organizations, community sport organizations, intercollegiate athletic departments, high school athletic departments) for partnerships for the 2021–2022 academic year, was accepted.

However, due to students learning remotely at the University of Minnesota, there was difficulty in getting student groups to sign up. The Sports Management department approached us and asked if we would be willing to move the project to the Fall semester of 2021. We said yes, knowing that if done, a project like this needs to be done right.

GIRSO SISC Partnerships are intended for sport entities interested in collaborating with the University of Minnesota

on developing and implementing a social innovative strategy to address a particular social priority in their respective community. We remain excited for the potential of this initiative once launched.

Community Sports Fraud Study

A byproduct of our relationship with the U of M and their GIRSO project is another venture. Their research team (Dr.'s Katie Misener, University of Waterloo, Canada; Graham Cuskelly, Griffith University, Australia; & Pamela Wicker, University Bielefeld, Germany and Dr. Lisa Kihl of the University of Minnesota) is conducting a survey to measure community sport organizations (CSOs) vulnerability to fraud. The study is the second phase of a broader study examining fraud in community sport (see Play by the rules blog <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/resources/articles/fraud-in-sports-clubs-is-an-international-concern>)

They are asking us to send out some surveys and reminders to our member associations starting in mid February.

Keep The Kids Playing

We have been working with Minnesota Youth Athletic Services on joint messaging to ask members of both organizations to do everything they can to keep kids in sports. We have been utilizing Bennett Witts to put together a video for this and then will be sharing it widely between the two organizations.

Little Wild

With the cancellation of the Little Wild Learn to Play program in September, we are now working with the Wild to offer it two times in 2021. On Monday, the announcement will go out for the Spring program, which will be across 16 locations, and will allow for 40 participants at each location. The program will begin the first week of April, and last until early May.

The Fall program will kick off in September, and hopefully will be back to 20 locations with a maximum of 65 participants at each location.

Hosts for 2016 will be: Bloomington, Brooklyn Park, Coon Rapids, Dodge County, Duluth, Eden Prairie, Hastings, Minneapolis, Moorhead, Plymouth, Rogers, Rosemount, St. Paul, Shakopee, Stillwater and Woodbury.

Legacy Fund

Despite all of the challenges over the past year, it's been great to have the Minnesota Hockey Legacy Fund provide some bright spots for some of our players in need this season. The committee has met twice since September, and has approved close to \$7,000 for six families that are experiencing tragedies or hardships that affect their ability to play hockey.

If you are aware of any situations that you think would provide us some great candidates, please don't hesitate to let the committee know, or encourage an association representative to fill out an application on behalf of a family in need.

Minnesota Wild Partnership

Due to the pandemic, most of the in-season initiatives that we work on with the Wild – Girls Hockey Weekend, Mite Jamboree, Youth Spotlight Games, Referee Spotlights – have been put on hold for this season. Some of these options were explored, but with so much uncertainty, there was just no way we could pull these off this year. The plan will be to bring all of these events back next season.

Corporate Partnerships

While it took much longer than we would have liked, it appears that we will receive payment from all of our corporate partners from the 2019-20 season. While frustrating, it was certainly understandable why some payments were late to come in. It was also difficult for us to fulfill all of our obligations with the cancellation of things like our State Tournaments and High Performance programs.

I am excited to announce that we have added another new partner (T-Mobile, \$15,000), and have renewed Dick's Sporting Goods (\$25,000 cash, \$25,000 VIK Gift Cards). It doesn't appear that we will lose any significant partners. Intercontinental Hotel is not coming back, but that was a trade out last year for use of rooms for the Disabled Hockey Festival.

Hockey Day Minnesota

A modified Hockey Day Minnesota will take place this year on February 27, however it will not be featuring any high school games. The event in Mankato will be moved to 2022. Fox Sports North will set up at the Rose Oval this year, and will still be doing some human interest features.

Minnesota Hockey Essay Contest

We are currently reviewing submissions for the Minnesota Hockey Essay Contest and will be picking our three finalists soon. Their three essays will be featured on the Hockey Day Minnesota broadcast.

State Tournament coverage and promotion

Our goal of this season is to make it through the end of March with no more shutdowns, and the completion of our State Tournaments. We will obviously be doing all we can to make these tournaments as close to normal as possible, but that may require some adjustments depending on how things are looking in March.

We have begun the process of getting banners ordered, and working on what the State Tournament program will look like. There will have to be some adjustments to it as we only have five days to turn it around between the completion of Regions and the start of State.

We're also working with Northwest Designs and Signature Concepts on apparel designs for Regions and State.

Let's Play Hockey Expo

While we haven't heard anything official, it would seem unlikely that the Let's Play Hockey Expo is happening this year. Even if it does, I'm not sure that it should be something that Minnesota Hockey takes part in. The only concern there is our commitments to our partners, but we will work on that once we know for sure what is happening around the high school State Tournaments.