



October 2020

Newsletter

Postponed Tryouts Did not Dampen Enthusiasm at Strongsville Youth Hockey Club

By Greg Bates

Story from [*Red Line Editorial, Inc.*](#)

Tryouts were a little different this year for the Strongsville (Ohio) Youth Hockey Club (SYHC).

Instead of holding them in April for the upcoming fall season, the Strongsville Mustangs opted to push back tryouts until August due to the coronavirus pandemic.

“We just wanted to wait and make sure that local house guidelines were set up so we could bring all these kids back safely,” SYHC President Mindy Wahl said.

Players rotated in and out for the sessions and coaches were held to a minimum. Every age group — the SYHC offers 10U, 12U and 14U — had three sessions apiece. The first day was skills testing, the second day was filled with cross-ice and small area games and Day 3 was used for scrimmaging.

“We typically would split them into sessions,” SYHC Hockey Director Corey Hicar said. “We just had to control the number of players that were on the ice.”

Tryouts, in which about 180 kids took part, went off according to plan and, most importantly, everyone had fun and was safe.

“We’re just excited to have some hockey, to have some sports,” Wahl said. “It was just fun to watch the kids scrimmage after not really getting to watch much of anything. We’re just excited to return to the ice.”

Around mid-July, the Mustangs board sent out surveys to its members to obtain feedback and get a gauge of how the community was feeling about the pandemic and when hockey should start back up.

“Based on some of that feedback, we altered some of our summer ice program,” Wahl said. “We normally run a summer ice program where we invite all the kids out. We decided this year might be too many kids on the ice at once, so we let everybody choose one of three sessions [to attend]...we did make sure there was no more than 20-25 kids on the ice at one time.”

The SHYC board took everyone’s thoughts into account before setting tryout dates as well as practice start times.

“We kind of took the temperature of obviously the folks in the club, and our board members are made up of a good mix of people with kids of different ages,” Wahl said. “We have a couple [8U] moms, a few [10U] moms and then there is some of us that have been around quite a while. My youngest is a [12U player] and my oldest is in high school, so we have a good pulse I think on what every level of parents are thinking.”

The SHYC, which had shut down operations on March 17, along with the OBM Arena in Strongsville had plenty of safety measures in place to help ensure safety for the players, staff, and parents. A flawless approach made for smoothly run tryouts.

“Our rink’s been really good about following obviously whatever requirements by the health department,” Wahl said. “We have a one-way flow of traffic through the building, everyone’s required to wear a mask up until they take the ice. We also took temperatures of all of our kids that were getting on the ice and any parents that accompanied them into the building.”

The majority of kids came mostly dressed and laced up their skates in the lobby. Parents were asked not to accompany their kids to the locker rooms. Instead, parents could stay outside and enjoy what was dubbed “a party in the parking lot.” Cars were parked in every other space, families brought food and the rink set up a beer garden.

“We asked all the families to stay out there instead of kind of congregating in the lobby all close together, with faces up against the glass, like they always like to do during tryouts,” Wahl said. “Everyone really liked that.”

Tryouts were held Aug. 10-13 and 16, and the first day of fall practices started the next day. Since teams were not finalized for the first few practices, players skated with the kids in their same birth year.

As of right now, the Mustangs players can only practice and compete in internal squad scrimmages, but that does not change the enthusiasm of the players and coaches, said Hicar.

“I know the kids really love being back out there on the ice and our coaches do, too.”



From the  District

Communicate To Your Members



7 Best Tips to Communicate Top Down and Bottom Up

Communication is only communication if the message gets where it needs to go and is received by those who need to hear it. Here are seven tips to successfully communicate top down, bottom up and even across your organization:

1. Communicate face to face wherever you can. Research shows that less than 10 percent of the meaning of a message is carried through the actual words. If we just have written communication without any face-to-face communication, people are going to miss the message. If your workforce is geographically dispersed, then make use of technology. Seeing each other's faces makes a huge difference.
2. Clarity and simplicity are key. The person who defines whether a message is clear is not the sender but the receiver. Unfortunately, I often hear people say, "I must have said it five times. I was perfectly clear." This shows the disconnect between what the speaker thinks is clear and what is actually clear. Be aware of your messages: Make sure your communication is to the point and not vague. A lack of clarity will only be magnified as the message gets relayed through the layers of the organization. Simple is powerful.
3. Remember that messages can get distorted. When people are stressed, their listening decreases and so what they do hear becomes distorted. If you are trying to convey tough messages (which will cause stress), try to keep your message short, and then actually invite dialogue. For tough messages, one-way communication is not sufficient. Invite questions. Talk with folks. This helps people to absorb the message.
4. Build in accountability. Many organizations suffer from what I call a thermal layer where communications do not penetrate. This is quite often the case when leadership conveys a message that they expect to get relayed down through the organization, and then they find out it was not relayed. When you have a message that needs to be cascaded down throughout the organization, give folks a deadline for making that happen and hold them accountable. One more thing: Check in with the bottom levels of your organization to make sure the message was received.
5. Use multiple means of communication. For example, hold town hall meetings when you have to convey strategic initiatives and other vital information so that people can hear it directly from the leader. Use your organization's intranet to post important information. Of course, you cannot expect people to always check that website, but you can incentivize them, so they are more likely to use it. Email, website, meetings, and town halls all have their place. Important messages need to be shared in multiple ways.
6. Make people aware of the central talking points. If you are expecting folks to cascade a message throughout your organization, make sure they are aware of the key talking points as well as the points not to say. This matter because people will often start expanding on less important points and miss the key ones. Be sure to emphasize what is most important so it cannot be missed.
7. Watch out for lengthy emails with multiple points. Generally, it is better to keep emails short. Remember, quick and easy is better than long and complicated.

Many organizations do surveys, and the results often show that there is an issue with communication. I have worked with a lot of leaders who get these results despite the fact that they have been working hard at communication. **Do not give up.** This is not an easy problem to solve, but it is one where you can make a difference step by step. You can always communicate more—and more effectively. Follow these guidelines and you can begin to make a real difference in your organization.

Indiana along with Indianapolis loses longtime friend!



Keith D. Slifer

In the early morning hours of October 1st, 2020, amid the shadows of the Rocky Mountains, Keith Slifer's inexorable spirit came to its final rest in his 55th year of life.

A native of Arlington Heights, Illinois, and firstborn son of Richard and Dolores Slifer, Keith's fervent drive and physical presence could only be described as larger than life. At age thirteen his 6'1" frame towered above his classmates, making him a natural leader and an imposing presence when playing his first and favorite sport, ice hockey. Even at an early age, Keith's persuasiveness knew no bounds, as evidenced by his younger brother Jay's willingness to be wrapped in cardboard and duct tape so Keith could practice his slapshot with real pucks or his ability to rally neighborhood friends to try out his self-built skateboard halfpipe.

Keith attended St. Viator High School, lettering in both Ice Hockey and Football prior to his admission to Indiana University in the fall of 1983. In a surprise to no one, Keith fast-tracked his college career, graduating Magna Cum Laude from IU's Kelley School of Business in just three and a half years.

His banking career began like many as a credit analyst for Chicago-based American National Bank. It did not take long for Keith to catch the eye of senior leadership. However, he was more interested in catching the eye of his true love, Maggie Sullivan. Daily detours by Maggie's desk got Keith into some hot water, but eventually, it also got him the girl. Keith and Maggie were wed in the fall of 1990, in Maggie's hometown of Oak Park, IL.

In the years that followed, Keith and Maggie would welcome two beautiful sons, Josh, and Jack, into this world. A burgeoning career and growing family would be more than enough for most, but not for Keith, who spent the majority of his 20's competing in dozens of marathons, triathlons, and Ironman's.

In 1997, the Slifer family began a new chapter in their lives, moving to Carmel, IN. Like their father, both young boys found a passion for ice hockey. As a coach, volunteer, and ultimately as the president of the Indy Racer's Travel Hockey Program board, Keith was always there to support. Nothing made him prouder, and you could not have a conversation with Keith that did not start and end with him gushing over his boys' accomplishments.

District Director Kaye Pinkowski remembers Keith leading the Racer program for 10 years while in Indy. He took it from various splintered groups to a successful cohesive group. Keith was a very hard worker and a joy to work with.

Keith's trajectory continued upward in the banking world, beginning in 1997 as Senior VP and Division Head at LaSalle Bank. Keith would build and mentor an impressive commercial banking team that would continually shatter revenue goals while fostering new business growth across the region. In 2005, he would be promoted to Regional Head, and in 2007 Senior VP & Market Executive of Bank of America, a position he would hold until his retirement in 2018. With his banking career now in the rearview mirror, Keith's entrepreneurial spirit was unleashed. He and Maggie relocated to Colorado so Keith could dive headfirst into a new venture. Tragically, the last chapter of Keith's life ended long before the narrative was complete.

Keith is survived by his wife of 30 years, Maggie; two sons, Josh, and Jack; Mother Dolores; brother Jay (Amy); and numerous nieces and nephews. A memorial service will be held in Carmel, Indiana next month.

Try Hockey For Free Day!



On Saturday, November 7th, 2020, USA Hockey and 350 local associations across the country will host Try Hockey for Free Day! Participating locations encourage kids, ages 4 to 9, to come try youth hockey. All locations will have limited equipment available for use

For any questions, please contact us at (719) 538-1124 or email comeplayyouthhockey@usahockey.org

Send your photos and association stories on Try Hockey For Free day to rdavis9874@aol.com.

We will be featuring those associations who submit in the next edition of the Mid-Am newsletter.



Reminder - all Team Declarations are due by

December 3, 2020

(check twice and make sure all information is complete)

Please remit completed forms to Lori Billings Mid-Am Administrator

14U/16U: Taking the Driver's Seat in Development

10/21/2020, 11:30am MDT

By Michael Rand

Most youth hockey players who reach the 14U age group have developed a love of the sport, putting them in control of their own destiny as they pursue their dreams.

But – with a nod to Spider-Man – with great power comes great responsibility. It is an age where increased training becomes more heavily intertwined with improvement – with the onus falling more squarely on the athlete instead of coaches or parents to instigate that extra work. For those willing to put in the time, Bob Mancini has some advice.

Taking Responsibility

Mancini, a regional manager for USA Hockey's American Development Model, says the first lesson is responsibility. "Right around 14U is when kids who really want to become hockey players start to take on more of that responsibility," Mancini said. That means taking care of their bodies and seeking out optimal conditions for playing – all without being told or watched. "They have to learn that rest and recovery are important," Mancini said. "Nutrition, hydration, all those things really start to come into play."

Off-Ice Emphasis

They are particularly important because of an increased emphasis on additional training off-ice at that age. "Kids in general around that age are going through puberty and we start seeing an added emphasis on off-ice training," Mancini said. "That's something that players can really embrace and by following good training methods and regimen they will start to see improvements on the ice."

Much of that has to do with continuing to work on some of the core tenets USA Hockey embraces for players at 8U on up: strength, power, quickness, balance, agility, and coordination. One way to accomplish that: Play other sports like lacrosse or tennis during the hockey offseason. Speed training should be done in bursts that simulate the 45-second shifts common to hockey. "It's going to look very different and plans and exercises might be different, but it really is about continuing down that road of making better athletes," Mancini said.

Anywhere, Anytime

Some of that training is done in conjunction with organized team activities, but away from that structure is where true separation will happen. "We all know there are things you can do at home in the basement, in the backyard, in the driveway to make you a better shooter and puck handler," Mancini said. "These are all still very important at those ages." There is a fine line because, as Mancini notes, "You never want to do too much." That can lead to physical and/or mental burnout under the wrong circumstances. Again, that's part of the maturity level of a young player – knowing their own bodies so they are properly equipped to work and play hard without overdoing it.

Technique Is Important

Taking responsibility for your own work rate, though, does not mean freelancing your whole routine. A 14U/16U player should ask for guidance when it comes to proper technique, particularly when it comes to a weight training regimen, Mancini says.

The goal in building muscle is not to look like a world champion on the bench press but rather to work the muscle groups that will help on the ice.

“One of the most important things is that once you get to the age where you are going to add a good off-ice regimen to your workout, you have make sure you are getting the right direction and doing things the right way,” he said. “If you are going to be all of a sudden adding the proper weight room regimen to what you do, you need a coach or a trainer who is going to help you make sure you’re learning the right techniques and what’s appropriate for hockey players and athletes at your age.”

New Dates Announced for 16th Annual Toyota-USA Hockey Disabled Hockey Festival

Event will take place April 8-11 and April 15-18 in Pittsburgh, Pa.

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. – The 16th annual [Toyota-USA Hockey Disabled Hockey Festival](#) will take place April 8-11, 2021, and April 15-18, 2021, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Games will be played at the UPMC Lemieux Sports Complex, RMU Island Sports Center and Baierl Ice Complex.



The largest disabled event of its kind and one of USA Hockey's most significant events each season, the USA Hockey Disabled Hockey Festival brings together all six disabled hockey disciplines, spanning over two weekends.

The first weekend of the Festival runs April 8-11 with [sled hockey](#), including the USA Hockey Sled Hockey National Championship.

The Festival concludes the following weekend (April 15-18) and features five of USA Hockey's disabled disciplines, including [blind](#), [deaf/hard of hearing](#), [special](#), [standing amputee](#) and [warrior](#).

More information, including the full schedule of events for the 2021 [Toyota-USA Hockey Disabled Hockey Festival](#) will be available at a later date.

NOTES: In 2018, the Disabled Hockey Festival was spread across two weekends for the first time to accommodate a record 128 teams and nearly 1,700 players ... The inaugural Festival in 2005 included 24 teams and nearly 300 players ... The mission of the Festival is to provide a fun and exciting weekend of hockey in a grand event as well as promote and grow disabled hockey throughout the country ... For more information on disabled hockey, click [here](#).

For more information, contact Jennifer Greene (Jennifer.Greene@usahockey.org/719-538-1159)

2021 National Championships – Youth and Girls dates Tier, I are March 24-29, 2021; Tier II Youth and Girls March 25-29, 2021; High School March 18 -22, 2021. Locations and hosts provided in the next newsletter.

Congratulations

The Ohio Youth Tier 2 Pre-post tournament was held in Sylvania this past weekend and **Team Ohio won both the 18U and 16U age classifications.**

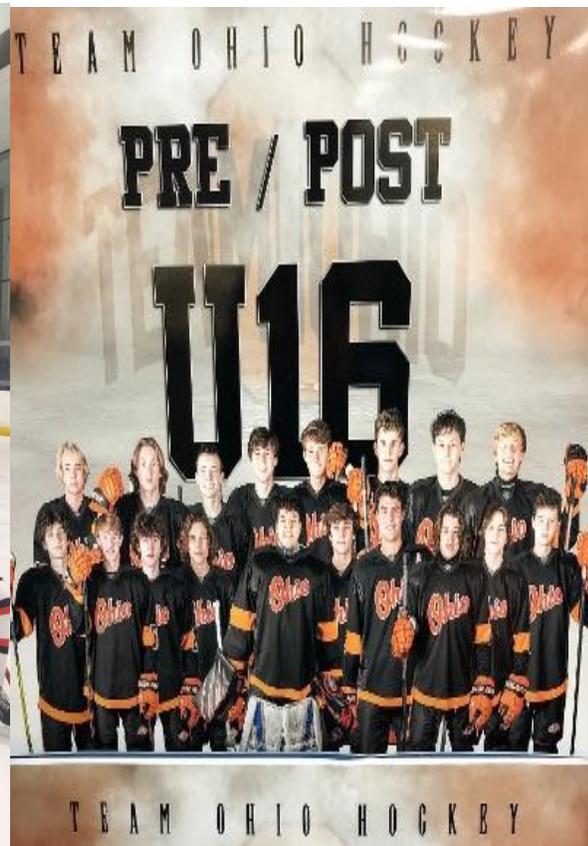
The 18U and 16U full year teams will play their tournament in March 2021.

The Pre-post winner will play the full year winner in a one game playoff with the winner of that game advancing to the USA Hockey National Tournament.

The USA Hockey National Tournament will be held March 25-29, 2021, with the 18U tournament in Green Bay, WI and the 16U tournament in Grand Rapids, MI.



Team Ohio 18U



Team Ohio 16U