

Andover Hockey Association
P.O. Box 323
Andover, MA 01810

Date: January 2010
Subject: Player Evaluation

Dear Players and Parents,

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a brief overview of the process Andover Hockey Association uses to evaluate and rank players at the Mite, Squirt, Pee Wee and Bantam levels. **The primary goal of the AHA evaluation effort is to execute an equitable and through process for assessing player abilities and skill with the objective of placing each player on a team most appropriate for their current skill level and ability. Placing players on teams in which they are best able to participate and compete promotes and maximizes individual development and team success.** Coordinating and executing the evaluation process is time consuming, spanning over a three-month period and involving hundreds of volunteer hours from over 50 coaches, evaluators and Evaluation Committee members working in concert to achieve fair team placement for all players.

Let's start with a brief explanation of the Evaluation Committee's duties and then we'll cover the process itself, involving coaches and evaluators.

The Evaluation Committee's role is to

1. Ensure that the process is executed in a thorough, objective manner whereby every player is treated fairly and given equal opportunity to play at the highest level,
2. Select and support evaluation coordinators and teams,
3. Address problems and/or issues as they arise, and
4. Annually review the process to improve quality, efficiency and outcome.

It is important to understand this group does not select teams or place individual players.

The evaluation process is made up of four components, as follows:

Coaches' Evaluations

Player evaluation by all approved AHA coaches has the greatest weight and impact on player placement on a team for the coming season. Head and assistant coaches are required to evaluate and rank players on their team based on their overall hockey ability. This does NOT necessarily translate into the leading scorer, fastest skater, best playmaker, etc. being ranked the #1 player. Players are judged by their impact on a game and individual skills, including skating ability, positional play, team work, stick handling, aggressiveness, etc.

Evaluation criteria and aids have been formulated by the Evaluation and Hockey Committees to ensure consistency amongst coaches and evaluators. *Some of the criteria used are outlined in the section that follows this letter.*

Once coaches rank their players, they must all sign off on evaluation forms that are then submitted to the Evaluation Committee Chairperson. Coaches are allowed to group no more than three players of similar ability; however, evaluation team rankings may be used to determine the final ranking within a cluster without a coaching staff's approval.

Evaluation Teams

Evaluation teams (comprised of a coordinator and 3-6 qualified individuals) evaluate and compare all players within a level, determine rank and team placement for the coming season, and validate coach's rankings. *No evaluator is assigned to a level where his or her child will be placed the coming season.* Each player is viewed a minimum of three times in games, scrimmages, and in practice (as needed) to obtain additional perspective in making a ranking decision. If a situation arises in which the Evaluation Committee Chairperson sees a conflict with the coaches' ranking regarding a particular player (and it happens!), the Evaluation Coordinator is responsible for resolving the discrepancy with that player's coaches, as needed.

The AHA Board of Directors approved a directive to govern the evaluation and placement process of the AHA Co-ed Travel membership. This approved directive provides the Evaluation Level Coordinators at each level and the Evaluation Committee with the authority to utilize their discretion when dealing with the sons/daughters of head and assistant coaches. The coaches' ranking carry a majority of the placement weight; however, when the evaluation team observes a significant discrepancy involving the son/daughter of a coach with the evaluation rankings and process, the Evaluation Level Coordinator and Evaluation Committee will meet to discuss the situation and will recommend and agree on a final resolution without input from the coaching staff from the team. The final resolution may impact where the coach's son/daughter will be placed for the upcoming season. While we do not anticipate that these situations will occur often, we believe that giving the Evaluation Committee some latitude to make such adjustments will ensure that the process is unbiased.

Birth Year Scrimmages

Birth year scrimmages take place at the Squirt, Pee Wee and Bantam levels to allow the evaluation team to see all players with the same birth year competing in one session. For example, all players born in 2000 will be divided into equal teams and play against one another without concern to current team assignment. This scrimmage helps the evaluation team to ascertain and compare the abilities of different players from different teams.

Placement Sessions

Placements sessions occur after registration for the new season and upon completion of evaluation teams' preliminary rankings. Coordinators may develop the placement session's format for their particular level, subject to review and approval of the Evaluation Committee and Hockey Committee, as needed. The placement sessions provide evaluation teams an opportunity to observe players in two (2) structured sessions focusing on skills and scrimmaging. More importantly, they give evaluators the chance to compare players with similar abilities to validate their assessments to date. Rankings and team assignments are finalized and submitted to the Evaluation Committee to compare against coaches' rankings and resolve discrepancies with the Evaluation Coordinators. *It is important to note that rarely does a players placement change once the evaluation process is completed.* Also, while it is acknowledged that a situation where a player does not move to a higher numbered team in the second year of a level is undesirable, the combination of an increasing number of players and teams at a particular level and the varied pace at which players develop makes this situation difficult to prevent on occasion.

The bottom line is that we place players on the team most appropriate for their current skill level and ability in the fairest way possible, using many "check and balances". We have looked at other towns' evaluation processes over several years and know that our process, though not perfect, is one of the most detailed and thorough around. We hope that this letter has been informative and provides you with an appreciation of the commitment and effort of all those involved.

We are grateful for your time and support in this important activity. If you have any questions regarding the evaluation process, don't hesitate to contact Gerry Wright 978-475-8735 (ahaevaluations@yahoo.com).

Sincerely,

The Evaluation Committee

Rick Abbott
Sean Croston
Chris O'Reilly
Chris Patten
Gerry Wright

Evaluation Criteria

- This document provides suggested criteria for evaluating and ranking players at the Mite through Bantam levels. The coach and evaluator's primary objective is to identify the best overall players, those who have the greatest impact during a game. Some attributes that contribute to a player's "impact" include
- Hockey Skills, including skating, stick handling, passing and shooting
- Speed and hustle
- Instincts (i.e., they are around the puck or in the action at the appropriate time)
- Positional play across all zones
- Team play (e.g. fore/back checking, passing to open teammates and puck support)
- Physical play and strength, including checking technique at Pee Wee and Bantam levels.

Here are some recommended criteria used at each level:

Mites

- Skating ability
- Stick handling and shooting (technique vs. actual results at this age)
- Game skills (reaction to puck and positional play)
- Team play
- Aggressiveness (positioning to or going after the puck at all times)

Squirts

- Skating ability
- Stick handling and shooting
- Speed and hustle
- Game skills
- Team play
- Aggressiveness
- Defensive coverage in defensive zone
- Scoring position in the offensive zone
- Strength to protect or take puck away

Pee Wee and Bantam

All squirt criteria above, plus:

- Physical play and strength (i.e., willing to take or give a hit and stay on skates)
- For defenseman in game situations:

Does a player pinch at right time?

Does a player hold the blue line?

Can a player handle and “head man” the puck on the breakout?

Can player jump into the offense?

Can a player create offensive opportunities from the point?

- Or forwards in game situations;

Can player breakout/handle puck along boards and take a hit and get the puck out?

Does a player forecheck and backcheck aggressively?

Can a player read and pass to the open man on odd-man rushes?