

RICHMOND JETS MHA

U7 & U9 PATHWAY UPDATES 2023-24



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INTRODUCTION

- PCAHA is excited to announce that starting in the 2023-2024 season it will be aligning with Hockey Canada's U7 and U9 Pathways and having our U6/7 and U8/9 divisions combined.
- U7 and U9 hockey should be delivered through a progressive, learn-to-play teaching curriculum. Children learn best through practice drills and skill sessions, as well as informal games such as shinny, freeze tag and obstacle courses.
- The skills of skating, puck control, passing and shooting are introduced and refined one step at a time. The focus should always be on **FUN and skill development**, but the early years of hockey should also allow youngsters to experience fitness, fair play, and cooperation.
- Hockey Canada wants every Canadian youngster to have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from a program designed to meet their specific needs, one that ensures progressive skill development through well-delivered practice sessions and age-appropriate game play in an environment suited to their skill level.
- U7 and U9 hockey serves as the foundation upon which the entire hockey experience is built. It is a crucial piece in building the skills of players at every level – players benefit from getting the 'right start' in the game.



RATIONALE FOR COMBINING AGE GROUPS

- The Hockey Canada model combines 5 & 6 year old players in the U7 division and 7 & 8 year old players in U9 division.
- The pathways recommend that **like-skilled players** be grouped together.
- The development philosophy aims to maximize puck touches by all players, by using small area games and skill stations in practices and a reduced ice surface size in games.
 - *This approach yields 2 times more puck touches, 6 times more shot attempts and 3 times as many shots on goal, twice as many pass attempts and 5 times more passes received than in full-ice practices and games.*
- The development philosophy is to maximize puck touches by all players. When there is a large disparity in skill, less skilled players do not touch the puck with the same frequency as more skilled players. **Hockey Canada stresses a skills-based development model as opposed to an age-based model.**



U7 & U9 SEASON START UP

1. Pre-Evaluation Skates

Recommended we have a minimum of 2 to 4 ice times (practices and/or skill sessions) 'shake-the-rust-out skates' prior to formal player evaluations.

- This gives all players the opportunity to get back on the ice in a “player-friendly” scenario and level the playing field.

2. Player Evaluation Process

Player evaluation skates should be a minimum of three sessions. Recommendation is one skills session, one small-area games session, and one cross-ice game for U7 and one half-ice game for U9.

- Players need a chance to be evaluated – standardization means transparency, fairness, and consistency. Evaluations will be conducted by our qualified skills coaches and team head coaches.



U7 & U9 MAJOR & MINOR DIVISIONS

- In both U7 and U9 **two streams** will exist in each age group.
 - 1. U7 Minor (development stream) / U7 Major (proficient stream)**
 - 2. U9 Minor (development stream) / U9 Major (proficient stream)**
- Each association will make their own determination on the number of U7/U9 Major (proficient) and Minor (developing) teams they will ice each season.
- All teams within each division **must be balanced** as per PCAHA rules.
- Each association will determine the number of teams in both Major and Minor divisions based on their own internal Association requirements, number and skill level of their players, ice availability and coach availability.
- We will do our best to communicate the plan at the start of the season.



TEAM BALANCING

- All players shall be rostered within the Major or Minor streams in accordance with Section R of the PCAHA Rule Book:
 - *An Association forming teams for house league play and/or inter-Association play shall divide all players within each of U7 and U9 into **equally balanced teams** prior to commencing inter-Association play. “**Equally balanced teams**” shall mean teams which are balanced on the basis of the skill levels of the players and competitive strength. **There will be no all-star teams!** Players will be evaluated by our Director of Hockey, RJMHA skills coaches and team head coaches.*
 - **Associations having multiple teams in a category (Major or Minor) must balance their teams.**

Roster Size:

- The Jets will be looking at roster sizes of 15-16 players in the U9 division and 14 to 16 players in the U7 division, for both Major & Minor teams.
- Final rosters will be determined after the evaluation process and the coaches have had an opportunity to work with the players prior to the start of game play. Please note, there potentially could be some player movement from minor to major teams prior to November 20th.

GAME PLAY GUIDELINES



U7 DIVISION:

- U7 may play cross-ice games within their Association from November 1st until Christmas. Inter-Association exhibition or league games may be organized starting **January 1st**.
- For Associations only registering one team in a division, inter-Association exhibition games may be arranged with another Association in that division prior to January 1st, with the approval of the applicable Managing Director.

U9 DIVISION:

- U9 may play half-ice or cross-ice games within their Association from October 15th until November 30th. Inter-Association exhibition or league games may be organized starting **December 1st**.
- **U7 and U9** will play two 4 vs 4 games with goalies simultaneously, therefore eight skaters and two goalies are always required on the ice. If the number of players available for a game warrant it, 3 vs 3 or 5 vs 5 may also be permitted.



GAME PLAY GUIDELINES

U9 FULL ICE TRANSITION:

- U9 teams may transition to **FULL ICE** games after January 15th each season.
- This should be to a maximum of **12 full ice games** and one tournament or jamboree.
- Scores or PCAHA league standings will not be kept for these games.

TOURNAMENTS / JAMBOREES:

- The playing of Tournaments/Jamborees is an important part of culture, team building and the fun of hockey playing experience.
- PCAHA and Hockey Canada encourage teams and associations to continue to operate and attend these events while staying within the “Maximum Game” guidelines as presented.
- No scores or standings will be kept at tournaments.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)



Q – Why are we making this change?

The reason for this change is to properly align with the Hockey Canada Long Term Development Model and Pathway. This will enable a better experience for all athletes as the skill gaps will be narrowed, allowing for coaches to deliver a program better tailored to the needs of each player. From a game perspective, having players of more similar skill level on the ice together will allow for more puck touches, allow them to develop at their own pace and have more fun and enjoyment. Our goal is to keep kids playing for the long term!

Q – Isn't this Rep Hockey for younger kids?

No, definitely not and the program is still focused on skill development. Players will be placed into their skill groups based on their skill level and for team play, players will be placed in one of 2 groups (Major or Minor), that will have **balanced teams** to ensure a good development situation for each player.

Q – Will there be tryouts?

No, there will not be tryouts. The evaluation process will be done by our Director of Hockey Operations and our skills coaches, and they will assess the players over the course of multiple skates that will be discussed in advance with the parents. All players will then be placed in the appropriate skills group with like skilled players in each division.

Q – How many teams will there be in each group?

The number of teams will be determined on a year-to-year basis and based on the number of players registered. The objective is to deliver a better, more tailored development experience. The configuration of the 2 groups will be driven by the needs of the participants. It will not be a predetermined metric.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)



Q – Will there be a minimum number of players from each birth year in the top group?

No, there will not be a minimum number. The groups will be split based on developmental ability with the needs of each child placed as the priority.

Q – Will the teams be balanced?

Yes, players will be placed in one of 2 groups (Major or Minor), that will have balanced teams to ensure a good development situation for each player. There will be no all-star teams formed and teams will be formed in U7 and U9 in accordance with the RJMHA C Hockey Policy and draft process.

Q – Will there be a difference in the number of ice times between the two groups?

No, both groups in each division will have access to the same amount of ice as it relates to practices, games and sessions with our skill development providers.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)



Q – Will some players be moved to full ice hockey sooner in U9?

No, we fully support and believe in the Hockey Canada Development Pathway, which calls for cross/half ice hockey until approximately the mid to end of January of the U9 season. Small area hockey promotes more puck touches and encourages the utilization and development of more skills, so that will not change. Typically, full ice for U9 begins in mid-to the end of January of each year per PCAHA regulations.

Q – Are other associations also doing this?

All associations within PCAHA and the Presidents C League (PCL), which we are part of will be required to align with this new model. The PCAHA has formed a task group to continue working out the details. We will keep our families informed as any new information becomes available.

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Hockey Canada Pathways:

For further information about the U7 and U9 pathways along with an FAQ, please refer to the Hockey Canada website:

[U7 Hockey Canada Pathway](#)

[U9 Hockey Canada Pathway](#)

U7 & U9 SCHEDULE

(Subject to Change)



We are still working on the ice schedule and with the Richmond Ice Centre Forum and Gardens rinks under construction until early October, we will be having an interim schedule in September, that the division managers will communicate in the next few weeks. Our regular schedule will commence sometime in October, pending the completion of the construction and we will update our members accordingly.

PROPOSED U7 SCHEDULE:

From Oct. to Dec:

- **Powerskating & Skills** - Tuesdays evenings after 3:45PM and Saturday mornings after 9AM to mid-afternoon (skills groups will rotate)
- **Team Practices (Shared)** – Sunday afternoons after 1PM

From Jan. to March:

- **Skills** - Tuesdays evenings after 3:45PM, Friday mornings before school or Friday evenings (skill groups will rotate)
- **Team Practices (Shared)/Game Slot** – Based on U7 game schedule. Saturday or Sunday afternoons after 11:45AM

U7 & U9 SCHEDULE

(Subject to Change)



PROPOSED U9 SCHEDULE:

From Oct. to March:

- **Skills** - Wednesday evenings starting at 3:45PM (skills groups will rotate)
- **Team Practice/Game Slot** – Saturday and Sunday afternoons after 12PM

*Note – In U7 and U9, teams that do not have games scheduled, will have shared practices and share the leftover ice times.

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QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our Director of Hockey Operations, Linden Saip at hockeydirector@richmondjetsmha.com or our Executive Director, Wayne Carleton at wayne.carleton@richmondjetsmha.com

