PROGRESSING TO THE TOP

Thousands of boys and girls throughout the United States participate in the sport of hockey. Of those thousands, many dream of one day representing their country in international competition as a member of a U.S. National or Olympic Team. Earning a spot as a national-level hockey player for the United States is a long process that begins early in a player's career. Membership in USA Hockey and participation in the programs offered by USA Hockey provide an early start to young players who hope to one day experience the thrill of international competition.

For young men, the initial step usually begins at the local level. Evaluation camps are conducted within each of USA Hockey's 11 districts to identify players who will participate in the Select 14, 15, 16 and 17 Player Development Camps. A total of 240 athletes participate in each of the week-long camps. In addition to competing in a 12-team, national-level tournament, Player Development Camp participants receive on- and off-ice training under the direction of leading USA Hockey coaches, along with current and former National Hockey League and Olympic team players.

USA Hockey took an aggressive step forward in its player development efforts in 1996-97 with the introduction of the National Team Development Program. Based in Ann Arbor, Mich., the National Team Development Program is designed to select and train two standing National Teams consisting of 46 world-class American ice hockey players under the age of 18. The two teams each play a schedule of more than 60 games against Junior teams from the North American Hockey League (Tier II) and NCAA opponents. The schedule also includes participation in major international tournaments and series against leading national and select teams from Europe.

A full-time national coaching staff has been selected to oversee a concentrated on- and off-ice training program that emphasizes principles of athletic, academic and social development. The ultimate goal of the National Team Development Program is to better prepare America's national-caliber ice hockey players for success at the highest levels of competition, including the International Ice Hockey Federation World Junior Championship, the IIHF World Championship and the Olympic Winter Games.

In addition to monitoring the development of America's top women's ice hockey players through a series of regional and national training camps, USA Hockey directs the U.S. Women's National Team at the IIHF Women's World Championship and at the Olympic Winter Games. After capturing the first-ever Olympic gold-medal in women's ice hockey in 1998, the U.S. women have since earned silver in 2002 and bronze in 2006 and for the first time in IIHF history, the U.S. Women's National Team won the gold-medal at the 2005 IIHF Women's World Championship, beating Canada in a shootout.

WHERE TO PLAY IN YOUR AREA

USA Hockey strives to provide grassroots support and leadership to its members through a comprehensive network of volunteers in each of the organization's 11 geographical districts. For information about ice hockey teams and leagues registered with USA Hockey in your area, identify the state in which you live and contact the appropriate district representative.

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HOCKEY TALK

USA HOCKEY™

Answering The Most Commonly Asked Questions About The Sport Of Ice Hockey

rev. 7/06

THIS IS USA HOCKEY

USA Hockey, Inc., founded in 1936-37, is the National Governing Body for the sport of ice hockey in the United States. Its mission is to promote the growth of hockey in America and provide the best possible experience for all participants by encouraging, developing, advancing and administering the sport.

Headquartered in Colorado Springs, Colo., USA Hockey is the official representative to the United States Olympic Committee (USOC) and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). In this role, USA Hockey is responsible for organizing and training men's and women's teams for international tournaments that include the IIHF World Championships and the Olympic Winter Games.

With a membership of nearly 600,000 ice and inline hockey players, coaches, officials and volunteers, USA Hockey's primary emphasis is on the support and development of grassroots hockey programs. USA Hockey is divided into 11 geographical districts throughout the United States. Each district has a registrar to register teams; a referee-in-chief to register officials and organize clinics; a coach-in-chief to administer educational programs for coaches; a risk manager to oversee liability and safety programs; and an skill development program administrator to facilitate learn-to-play programs for youth players and their parents.

For the player, USA Hockey annually conducts regional and national championship tournaments in various age classifications; sponsors regional and national player identification and development camps; studies and makes recommendations for protective equipment; distributes Hat Trick, Playmaker and Zero Club Awards; and provides an insurance program that includes excess accident, general liability and catastrophic coverage.

For coaches and officials, USA Hockey conducts clinics and produces training manuals and videos through the Coaching Education Program and the Officiating Education Program. These programs enrich the knowledge of coaches and officials through careful study, training and examination. USA Hockey also promotes uniformity in playing rules and the interpretations of those rules.

USA Hockey has not forgotten parents, supplying this vital segment of the hockey family with a "Parent's Introduction To Youth Hockey" brochure, which includes tips on buying equipment, rules of the game and the role of parents in youth sports.

USA Hockey also publishes *USA Hockey Magazine*, one of the primary communication vehicles for the organization which is sent to the household of every registered member as a benefit of membership. The organization's official website, **usahockey.com**, also provides up-to-the-minute coverage of news and events.

In December 1994, USA Hockey introduced its official inline hockey program – USA Hockey InLine – to provide structure and support for the growth of the sport across America. Through valuable membership packages which include standardized playing rules, competitive playing opportunities at the regional and national levels, and a variety of educational programs for players, coaches and officials, USA Hockey InLine is dedicated to providing a positive experience for all participants.

USA Hockey Merchandise

USA Hockey offers a complete line of officially-licensed merchandise and apparel, including custom designed sweatshirts, T-shirts, jerseys and caps. USA Hockey also offers instructional videotapes, manuals and other resource materials for players, coaches, officials and parents.

For more information about USA Hockey merchandise and resource materials, log on to the official USA Hockey website, **usahockey.com.**

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOCKEY

Begin by visiting your community or school library. The library is a terrific resource for information and contains books on the history and rules of hockey as well as instructional manuals that offer tips and drills to help improve playing skills. You can also learn more about hockey by talking to the players, coaches, referees and volunteers who are involved with the sport in your community.

THE HOCKEY DICTIONARY

Assist: Point awarded to a player or players for helping set up a goal; usually the last two offensive players to handle the puck prior to a goal being scored are credited for assists.

Boards: The wooden and glass walls that surround the rink.

Body Check: Using the hip or shoulder to impede the progress of an opponent who has the puck.

Breakaway: A scoring opportunity that occurs when there are no defending players between the puck carrier and the opposing goaltender.

Changing on the Fly: Substitution of players without a stoppage in play.

Face-Off: To initiate play, the puck is dropped between two opposing players who face each other.

Forechecking: Pressuring the opposition when they control the puck in the neutral or defensive zone.

Hat Trick: Three goals scored by one player in a single game.

Power Play: When a team has more players on the ice because of a penalty (or penalties) called against the opposing team.

Pull the Goalie: In an attempt to tie the score, a team trailing by one or two goals may take its goalie off the ice and send out an extra skater. This usually occurs in the closing minute(s) of a game.

Shorthanded: When a team is forced to play with fewer than six players because one or more have been sent to the penalty box.

Slap Shot: A sweeping motion with an accentuated back swing to shoot the puck.

Wrist Shot: The motion of shooting with the puck directly against the blade of the stick.

HOW? WHAT? WHY? WHEN?

How many players are on a team?

Each team may have six players on the ice at one time — generally three forwards, two defensemen and one goaltender. In addition to the players on the ice, each team keeps extra players on the bench to rotate into the game when on-ice players become tired.

What kind of gear is required?

All youth players wear protective helmets with face shields (made of plexiglas or reinforced wire), gloves and plenty of padding to help protect their shoulders, ribs, chest, hips, groin and lower back. The goalie's padding is heavier than that of other players and includes extra-thick leg pads. The goalie also wears a face guard that is attached to his or her helmet and has a catching glove and a blocker for use in handling and deflecting the puck.

How fast does the puck travel?

Some professional players can shoot the puck between 90-100 miles per hour. Speeds of up to 120 miles per hour have actually been recorded by some of the hardest shooters in hockey.

Why do players deflect the puck?

Many people think that deflections are mere luck. Actually, players practice deflections by standing off to the side or in front of the net and deflecting shots from that position into another area of the goal. Seldom does a goaltender have sufficient time to react to a deflection since the puck suddenly changes direction off an offensive player's stick.

Can a puck be kicked into the net for a score?

A puck cannot intentionally be kicked in and still count as a goal. However, a puck can be deflected off a skate or a player's body and still count as a goal if no attempt was made to deliberately throw or kick it in.

What does offside mean?

A team is offside when any attacking player crosses the blue line before the puck. The puck must always cross the blue line before an attacking player may legally enter the offensive zone. All players from the attacking team must maintain skate contact with the neutral zone at the instant the puck crosses the blue line.

When does icing occur?

Icing occurs when a player shoots the puck from within his or her own offensive zone across the opponent's goal line. Icing is nullified if: (1) the team shooting the puck is shorthanded; (2) a player from the defending team could have played the puck before it crossed the goal line; or (3) a player from the icing team plays the puck before it crosses the goal line.