

## **Division Manager Role, House Hockey**

The Division Manager role is a logistics role but is a great way to help the association and much of it can be done from the home or office. You will be communicating with parents, association staff and volunteers, coaches, and other team officials so you will get to know a lot of people in the association. The role is key in producing fair and balanced teams lead by qualified team officials. The Division Manager is a great way to make a difference especially if you cannot volunteer to be at the rink in some capacity.

The key goals of the job are as follows:

- Keep parents informed on the logistics of their hockey season
- Produce final team rosters of team officials and players
- Organize the team ice times for games and practices
- Support the Team Managers in their role
- Call for and organize volunteers for different division events and needs
- Resolve disputes

## **Phase 1: Forming Teams**

The first phase of the season is to produce final team rosters of officials and players. The goal in our association for house hockey is to produce fair and balanced teams. We want competitive teams but also want to ensure coaching staff have time to develop all players of a variety of skill levels. For example, too many players new to hockey and it is hard to run a practice or devote the proper time for all players.

Key behaviors and outcomes in the phase are as follows:

- Organize coaching and other team officials into potential teams
- Organize the player evaluations
- Produce a final ranking of players for the draft
- Produce final team rosters of team officials and players

One of the first things you need from the association is access to your division in TeamSnap so you can view and organize all of the players registered. You will be able to also view which families have requested to volunteer as Coaches, Managers and Safety personnel. Many parents are anxious to start the season and will be concerned about not know when things get going. As well, rep teams start their process earlier so parents will start to hear that hockey has started and wonder if they are missing something! Communicating at a few stages will help a lot of parents and excited kids understand what to expect.

## **Determine Potential Coaching Groups**

Speak with the Division Manager from the previous season and the Manager from the previous division ie. U9 if you are the U11 Manager to get an idea of existing coaching groups that may be available and want to stay together. Here are some steps to gather potential team officials together:

- Review the registration volunteer information to determine potential Head Coaches and note all Assistants and Managers.
- Calculate the total number of potential teams based on current registrations to help determine how many coaching groups you need.
- Call Head Coaches and confirm their interest and ask if they have anyone in mind for Assistants. Often those Assistants have not noted their volunteer status at registration or they were on-ice Assistants previously and are willing to step up.
- As the rep tryouts proceed, players will be released to the house level. Not only will you have to accommodate them in the house evaluations, but their parents will also potentially want to volunteer for team official roles.
- If you still do not have enough volunteers, put out an email to all the parents in the association asking for volunteers.

## Player Evaluations

Try to get the ranking information from the previous Division Manager and if you can from the previous division level for the new kids coming into your division. This will help you form evaluation groups. If you have 90 players registered, you will need to split them into 3 or 4 groups based on ranking information that you have. In this example, if I had ice time for 3 groups, you would want all the top 30 players together—these will likely be all the returning players that are second year in the division. The second group of 30 maybe the remaining second year players and the top ranked players from the previous division. The final group would be the lower ranked first years and new players to the association that we don't have information on.

Based on the ice times available for evaluations, you may have 2 skill evaluation times for 3 groups of 30 kids each plus another 2 scrimmages for each of those 3 groups. Steps at this stage are as follows:

- Create the eval schedule and email out the first ice time only to each group. Ensure that they don't see that they are in groups A, B or C, just the time they are supposed to attend. You will be moving kids from group to group between the initial evaluations to better balance the groups. Scoring like players against like is easiest. You may find a player new to the association that started in group C should be in group A based on results of the first ice session so ask the coaches for recommendations on who in each group should move up or down and check the scores for that player and adjust accordingly.
- Invite Head Coaches and Assistants to the eval sessions to ensure decent player scoring but also to let coaches meet one another and potentially self-form into groups for the season. Create a scoring method and provide materials to recording the eval scores. Ask the coaches to come early before the first session so that you can detail the process.
- Support the evaluators with coffee, donuts or even pizza depending on the times of the sessions. Generally, it is a long day for these volunteers. Keep receipts and submit them early to the association—don't hold on to them forever.
- You will have to email all the parents asking for volunteers to help run the ice sessions. Here are some of the roles you need at each session:
  - Ice assistants to run the drills.

- People for the player check-in desk to help players know which dressing room and what jersey to wear and to help you confirm who showed up for evaluation.
- Someone to run the clock during scrimmages.
- Scoring for the skills portion of evals will be different than for the scrimmages. You will likely need a different method. The goal is to try to get the top players from each group identified especially in your top group as this impacts the draft process.
- Goalies are ranked by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party company specialized in goalie training. Their eval sessions are handled separately. Coordinate with the association goalie coordinator to ensure everything has been scheduled and goalies contacted but the coordinator handles this task so just support as required.
- You will need to schedule the goalies for the group scrimmages. Recommend that you assign the goalies based on rank ie. Goalies ranked 1-2 with group A scrimmages, 3-4 with group B etc.

Once all skill and scrimmage sessions are complete, you will have to collate all the scoring data together for every player and produce a rank order. In our example that would be from 1 to 90. Complicating this ranking are players returning from rep tryouts or new registrants that may come in partway through the eval process. Generally, rep cuts should be placed in your top group. If you have little eval data on them then you will have to ask any coaches that know that player how they compare against others that you do have in your list to slot them into the best position you can.

Once teams are formed, some teams will have empty roster spots to allow for new player registrations up to the max allowable for each team. As you approach that limit you will have to be in contact with the registrar to ensure that any new applicants are put on a waiting list. Some players that have already been rostered to a team may move so expect some mobility. You should be in pretty close contact with the registrar through this period.

Other issues are players wanting to be on another team either because of a coach they feel comfortable with or other players that they want to play with or commute with. Take notes of all requests as these issues can be brought up at the draft process but there are no guarantees. Sometimes these issues come up after the draft process and as long as you can get both coaches to agree, some movement is permitted within reason. In some cases, there may need to be a trade to keep things balanced or because there was not a roster spot. In such a case, coaches and all affected parties need to understand and agree to the request.

At the end of this stage, you should have a complete ranking of all the players. You will also have a complete ranking given to you of the goalies. You will also have all relevant notes of any special requests from a variety of players or even coaches. You are almost ready for the draft!

### **Confirm Your Team Official Groupings**

By this point in the player evaluations, you need to start firming up the required number of team official groupings. Who are going to be the Head Coaches? What assistants do they want and if they don't have enough, can you introduce an assistant volunteer to chat with the Head Coach candidate? Does the Head Coach have a Team Manager in mind? If not, can you provide some people for the coach to meet and chat with about the opportunity? A solid Team Manager and Head Coach are the foundation for a successful season for any team. Focus on facilitating good parings with these two roles if you can.

Now it is time to confirm the team official groups and get final commitments from everyone. It is best if you have the complete picture of Head Coach, two assistants and a Team Manager as it will affect the drafting process.

## **The Draft**

Going into the draft, here is what you will need:

- Have your final player rankings
- Noted special requests to accommodate if you can
- Noted siblings as they will have to be on the same team
- Confirmed your core team officials
- Send the final rankings as a .csv file to the Director for House hockey who will run the draft for your division.
- Confirm a draft date with the Director that works for all Head Coaches.
- Determine the number of “protects” the association is going to use for the draft.

“Protects” are players of the team officials. The goal is to ensure the team official units that you have formed can stay together. Sometimes that number may be 3: Head Coach, one assistant, and Team Manager. Some teams may take Head Coach, and two assistants and gamble with a Team Manager. I don’t recommend this as it makes your job harder and because teams need solid Team Managers for a well-run and successful season. It may be decided that 4 protects are okay but it can start to become a problem if a team official has two players as suddenly a team has 5 players already secured and if those 5 are all top 20 ranked, it can lead to a pretty unfair and unbalanced situation. Do your best to coordinate with the Director to figure out how you want to handle “protects” at the draft.

Another consideration is any safety picks. These are players that have special circumstances that have been cleared by the Director of House hockey. An example maybe a child with a learning issue that knows a particular coach well. It may be decided, skill aside, that it is in the best interest of the player to be placed on a particular team.

Now hold the draft but don’t forget to organize some drinks and beers for draft night as it can take several hours and usually is scheduled in the evening!

Hopefully you have a great draft night, and the results are balanced rosters. Congrats, that is a major hurdle overcome! There are a few final steps to take:

- Send all the completed rosters in the form the registrar requires—these will be entered into Hockey Canada and are in a set format.
- Provide each Team Manager with their rosters so that they can send out their team welcoming messages.

## **Phase 2: Starting the Season**

There will be a meeting schedule in the first month or so with the PCAHA for all Team Managers and Head Coaches—feel free to attend. They will learn about the logistics or ensuring refs are

assigned to games, ensuring certification for team officials, dealing with scheduling conflicts and a variety of other regular issues that teams will face.

At this time, the association Ice Allocator would have given you preliminary ice for you to assign to your teams. You can organize team practices and scrimmages within the association to get things started. You will also get an initial exhibition schedule soon after the PCAHA meeting. Those games will give the Team Managers a dry run on how everything works.

You will work with the ice allocator to assign teams to regular home game time slots, and you will also be given practice ice time and skill ice times. You can either decide to rotate practice teams which is most efficient for using ice or have set times which is more efficient for hockey families in most cases. With the latter, people can organize their other events around a mostly predictable schedule—this also has the benefit of having less work for the Division Manager. A downside is that you must look at the ice exclusion list to ensure not only that teams learn when regularly scheduled ice is not available but also whether there is a balance in the amount of ice time per team. There will be extra ice available from time to time. Use these extra times to help balance things out by offering teams these bonus times.

After the exhibition teams, there will be a brief delay while the PCAHA schedules all games. Based on the game results, teams in your division will be balanced across others and put into different tiers. Schedules per tier are then created based on the home ice times allocated for each time and available ice times and this takes some time.

Once the schedule is given, your teams are set until the Christmas break!

### **Now What?**

The games are on, things are happening, and the hectic div manager time is over. Here are some things you can now expect:

- Helping with game schedule conflicts
- Assigning skill sessions to teams (usually two teams per session)
- Facilitating any disputes
- Supporting your Team Managers with a variety of questions
- Handling transfers into the association and placement on teams
- Players affiliating with other teams ie. U9 call ups when an U11 team is short or U11 to U13 or U11C to one of the rep teams
- Helping to find volunteers for Christmas tournaments or other association events

After Christmas, you will have to work with the Ice Allocator one more time on setting up the second part of the season schedule for the teams. You would have noticed that your workload diminishes as the season progresses and once that second schedule is done, it will mostly be tumbleweeds unless there is the odd dispute.

### **Other Recommendations:**

Encourage Team Managers to register for tournaments early as they fill up quickly. Also encourage them to have a tournament early in the season, especially an away tournament that

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gets the kids and parents together and away from the usual routine. It is one of those little secrets that can lead to a great hockey season for a team.