



Santa Clara Valley Hockey Association

# BLACKHAWKS

September, 2015  
[www.blackhawks.org](http://www.blackhawks.org)

## Skate-At-The-Lake

The 2015-16 Santa Clara Blackhawks season kicked off with a bang at the annual Skate-at-the-Lake training camp and retreat over Labor Day Weekend. All eight Blackhawks teams, from Mites to Midgets, participated in the Weekend. Itineraries included ice practices, dryland workouts, video review, classroom sessions, parent meetings, team building, and beach BBQs. Team activities spanned a spectrum of resources and locations throughout the South Lake Tahoe area. A number of teams took advantage of the facilities at CA Hockey Camp, founded by Blackhawks Midget 16AA Head Coach Jami James. The Bantam A team took a trip to the Discovery Ropes course in Heavenly Valley. The Bantam AA team held a workout in the Elevated Fitness gym. Team bonding activities included activities such as a team scavenger hunt on the beach involving Zombies (PWAA), volleyball and spikeball tournaments (BNA), and a game of kick the can on the basketball court (MITES). The Blackhawks tradition continues to be a great way to start the season!



Check out these pictures and others in the slide show at <http://www.blackhawks.org/news>

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# Hockey Talk

Q&A with the Blackhawks Director of Hockey Operations



Q: Should my player's coach be trying to win as many preseason games as possible to get the highest NorCal placement?

A: At the A/B level, preseason exists to allow coaches to sort through a bunch of things with their team. Coaches work on things such as seeing how skills worked on at practice are executed in a game situation, or how players perform positionally, or which kids work well together and complement one another on the ice. It's tempting as a coach to put the team's VERY best foot forward and try to win as many preseason games as possible to secure the highest placement possible. But long term, our club approach to coaching preseason is not placement, but rather to focus on where our kids are skill-wise, and what types of game tactics we want to work on over the course of the season. We do this for several reasons:

1. It's important to get all kids playing in all situations in pre-season games. Just playing the best players in preseason to win more games may potentially result in a higher placement, but it won't help build a thorough, comprehensive long-term plan for the season – which is what is needed to maximize development of all the players on the roster.
2. Shortening the bench to win more preseason games is counter to our club philosophy – and our coaches know this well! Regardless of the possible gain of a higher placement, our coaches know that at A/B, ice time in games is distributed evenly among all players, provided that players are displaying good attitude and effort.
3. As a club, we typically get the benefit of the doubt with placement. If we have a team borderline A or B, typically we get the higher placement from NorCal based on our club history of successful, long-term development. I've been on past placement committees, and I've heard people from other clubs suggest that Blackhawk teams should be placed in the higher division because "It's a Blackhawks team, and they'll be fine". Meaning, we have a very long, very consistent history of teams that improve noticeably over the course of a season. So the assumption is often that the higher placement may be rough at first, but over the course of the season, our teams will get up to speed and be competing well by the end of the year.
4. And finally, we're about 10 full years past the idea that kids always need to compete against the "best of the best" to maximize their development. If you hear a parent railing on that a lower placement will mean that

## Hockey Talk, continued

the team will flounder and be dragged down into the morass of the unwashed masses, you might want to let that parent know that times have changed since the glory days of "The Great Santini". The first age at which USA Hockey's Long-Term Athlete Development stages mention the word "compete" is at age 16! At the A/B level, practice is what really matters – that's where the real growth comes from. If your child is playing 16AAA in the Midwest, then the competition matters a lot. If they're playing A/B in NorCal, the competition matters a way lot less than the way your child practices on a weekly basis.

## Companies Match Your Volunteer Efforts



Volunteer grants are corporate giving programs created to encourage volunteerism in communities where employees live and work. Through these programs, companies provide monetary grants to organizations where employees volunteer regularly. Since SCVHA is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit, the activities of coaches, assistant coaches, team managers, and other volunteers may qualify for these volunteer grants. Grants are "free money" that the club could use to run clinics, grow the scholarship program, or offset other costs of the club and teams. Many companies - especially Bay Area tech companies - offer these programs. So far, we have volunteers from Google, Verizon, and VMWare who have been through the process and could lead to an extra \$4,000 this year! Please take a look at your employer's benefits program to see if they offer a volunteer grant program. More information is available in the Resources->For Volunteers section at the new [blackhawks.org](http://blackhawks.org) website (remember to login!). Please contact our SCVHA Board Secretary, Robert Boucher ([robert@webmstr.com](mailto:robert@webmstr.com)), if you have any questions.

## One Timers



- As the season ramps up, now is the time to get involved with your team! Learn how to [run the clock](#) or [fill out a score sheet](#). Want something a little less intimidating? Approach your team manager and volunteer to be a [penalty box monitor](#)...
- Pledge to [support good sportsmanship](#) and help the Blackhawks earn a \$2,500 grant! Visit [http://www.blackhawks.org/news\\_article/show/545120?referrer\\_id=1848674 ...](http://www.blackhawks.org/news_article/show/545120?referrer_id=1848674...)
- Preseason game schedules are posted at <http://www.norcalyouthhockey.com/Schedules.html>  
Let's Go Blackhawks!

