



Hockey Talk

Q&A with the Blackhawks Director of Hockey Operations



Q: What do the Blackhawks look for in prospective coaches?

A: Every January, the Board goes through the process of selecting coaches for the next season. Some have asked how we go about doing this.

First, some background. The number of experienced coaches in Northern California hockey is outnumbered by the number of teams popping up throughout NorCal AAA, AA, A and B. So we approach the selection process knowing that the talent pool is spread thin. Second, the Blackhawks are a non-profit hockey club that exists to teach kids how to play hockey, teach kids how to be successful people, and to contribute to the community. We are able to offer our coaches a small stipend each season. Roughly, A/B coach receive a stipend of about \$400 per month, and AA coaches about \$700 per month. But as a non-profit, we're always at risk to losing coaches to a NorCal club that exists to turn profit and can offer their coaches much more money.

There is no correlation between on ice professional success and communicating the fundamentals of hockey to kids. Quick Pop Quiz – How many current NHL coaches actually played in the NHL? You might be surprised to know that even at the highest levels, NHL playing experience isn't necessary to be a successful coach. Only 14 out of 30 current NHL coaches actually played in the NHL. And of those 14 coaches with NHL playing experience, 4 of them – Capuano (6 games), Vigneault (42 games), Laviolette (12 games), and Cooper (5 games), COMBINE for a whopping total of 65 games played in the NHL. This is not to say that we won't hire a former NHL player as a coach - we have. But we asked him to coach not because of his NHL experience, but because he's an excellent coach with an eye for detail, highly effective communication skills, and the ability to teach outstanding hockey skills and habits to young players.

So who is in our pool of prospective coaches? Over the past 7 seasons, we've dropped from 12 teams to 8 teams. Of our current 8 head coaches, we have 4 with almost 30 years combined coaching for the Blackhawks. This is the "core" that we work from every season. And to this core, we try to add coaches who will be the next "core" group years down the road.

For qualities, we look primarily for the ability to teach and exercise influence. All the hockey knowledge and experience in the world won't do a 12 year hockey player much good if a coach can't translate it and teach it to a young player. We seek out coaches with experience or innate skills in leadership or education, and people with experience training or working with people in their occupational field. We also try to look for coaches who will embrace a culture of skating; coaches who will teach the fundamentals of skating with a passion, and coaches who'll teach their players how to love skating and how to treat their skating like a craft.

These are the two things – detailed teaching and skating culture – that are core Blackhawks characteristics that tend to separate us from the pack in an increasingly chaotic hockey world.

BNAA Valencia Champs!

By Stephanie Persi, BNAA Team Manager

Our Bantam AA team attended the 2015 Holiday Fest Tournament in Valencia. The team came together and played 4 hard fought games. We played OC Hockey Club AA1 for the first game and tied 2-2; Anaheim Wildcats AA for game 2 and won 3-2 with a winning goal scored by Cole Chimenti with 38 seconds left in the 3rd period; San Francisco Bantam A for game 3 with a strong 4-2 win. Our 2-0-1 record in pool play solidified a spot in the Championship Game where the boys were matched up again with OC Hockey Club AA1. The game was intense and close and remained a 0-0 game until just over 7 minutes left in the 3rd period. After leaving the ice injured during the end of the first period, Ryan Amirsehhi returned and scored to make the game 1-0. OC pulled their goalie with just over a minute left, the Blackhawks battled hard, short handed after a penalty, and won the Championship Game with a score of 2-0 after a short handed, empty net goal was scored by Vaughn Montoya!



Hawks in the Pacific Province

By Greg Fox, PWAA Team Manager

The PeeWee AA team traveled north of the border to British Columbia and participated in the PeeWee AAA & AA Christmas Challenge Tournament.

The fund-raiser tournament was hosted by the Cloverdale Colts PeeWee AAA team in December at the 4-sheet Langley Sportsplex. With the Canadian Dollar exchange rate being at a 15 year low against the US Dollar, the tournament entry fee, hotels, and food expenses were considerably less expensive than playing in the USA right now. Of course the real appeal for our team was the chance to play hockey against Canadian teams on Canadian ice. Many of our kids had never been north of the border so this was a lifetime experience.

All 5 games were one or two goal games. After losing our semifinal game against Burnaby in OT, Santa Clara ended up winning the Bronze Medal game against the Surrey Thunder. The Hawks were the only team to defeat the eventual tourney winner, North Delta.



Blackhawks 1 vs. Semiahmoo Ravens 2
Blackhawks 2 vs. Cloverdale Colts 1
Blackhawks 2 vs. North Delta Sundevils 0
Blackhawks 3 vs. Burnaby Bulldogs 4 (OT)
Blackhawks 3 vs. Surrey Thunder 2

The Canadian players and families were friendly and happy to be able to play against competition from outside their local area. The team also chartered a bus (beer and wine for the adults) into downtown Vancouver where we shopped and dined under the holiday lights and cheer.

One thing we learned is just how huge youth hockey is in Canada. The local "Travel" teams from Vancouver metro area play in a league called the Pacific Coast Amateur Hockey Association. The population of the area is roughly 3 million people and there are 73 PeeWee travel teams! These teams are separated into 8 "Flights" with each flight having between 8-12 teams. (The teams we played in the tournament were mostly in the 2nd and 3rd flights). In addition there are 121 PeeWee House level teams in the Vancouver Metro Area!



Compare that to the Bay Area which has a population of 7 million and there are 19 PeeWee travel teams and maybe another 15 house level teams.

A few other Canada observations:

- The referees were great. And very young!
- The parents were polite and even-tempered...without the rowdy/foul language contingent sometimes observed in California.
- There is an abundance of ice...often rinks would sit empty in the middle of the day on a weekend...a rare sight in California.
- Every restaurant and bar has hockey, hockey, and hockey on the three channels 24-7. Awesome!

Dr. Ron's Dining Digs

When on the road, here are some dining options to celebrate that Blackhawk road victory.



In **Dublin**, try Golden Sand Harbor. A wide variety of dim sum. Very tasty, expect a wait on the weekends. 7745 Amador Valley Blvd, Dublin, 94568.



In **San Francisco**, Little Skillet. Gourmet chicken and waffles. 360 Ritch St, San Francisco, 94107



In **Livermore near Tri-Valley Ice** try the newest Denica's Real Food Kitchen. Breakfast and lunch. Cardiologists do not recommend the cinnamon buns but we do. Located at 2259 Las Positas Road in Livermore.



In **Southern California**, California Fish Grill. Consistently good fish, grilled over rice. A tasty & healthy option for your growing hockey player. Various locations: Valencia, Lakewood, Irvine.

Puck luck and a safe 2016 to all the Blackhawk teams!!



One Timers



The **Bantam B's** played a couple of outdoor games at Raley's Field in Sacramento on Jan 1 (below) and had a good time experiencing an outdoor skate...



After winning the Silver Stick 2015 San Jose Regional in November, the **Bantam B's** headed to Pelham, Ontario, Canada to play in the Silver Stick Finals from Jan 7 through 10 where they enjoyed playing some of our northern neighbors and had some good fun traveling...

The **Squirts** participated in the Aubri Brown Club 3-on-3 Youth Jamboree (below) and also participated in the Holiday Jamboree with final record of 2-3...



The **PeeWee B** team is 10-1-0 in regular season games and leads the Norcal PW B division. During the MLK weekend the team played in the Arizona Cactus Cup. For the Presidents Day weekend the PWBs will be playing in the CA State Games in San Diego...

Our **PeeWee AA** team is tied for 1st place in the CAHA Peewee AA standings. The team headed to Phoenix for the Arizona Cactus Cup for MLK weekend...

The **Bantam AA's** are also in Phoenix for the Cactus Cup Tournament over MLK weekend and then will travel to Colorado Springs for President's Day in February...

On January 9, our **Mites** played in their second Norcal Jamboree! The Mites fielded 2 smaller teams, one comprised Of 2008/2009s, and another with 2007s...



The **Midget 16AA** team is currently 5th place in the CAHA with 4 games to go Feb 5/6/7 in Vacaville...

Members of the Blackhawks **Bantam B** team volunteered at the Special Olympics regional floor hockey tournament at the Alameda County Fairgrounds on December 12.



Blackhawks managed, scored and cheered during the individual skills completion...

Congratulations to the following **Blackhawks Tier players** for advancing to the **2016 CAHA Boys Select Camp!!**

Patrick Lee - D (1999)

Clayton Cosentino - F (2000)

Reese Tuazon - G (2000)

John Yao - D (2000)

Coming Soon...



SUMMERHAWKS 2016 SPRING HOCKEY

- 6-week Spring Program (mid-April – Memorial Day)
- Mite through Midget
- Skill Development & Strong Fundamentals
- Game Reading Ability
- Valuable Tournament Experience

Please visit www.blackhawks.org in the coming weeks for up to date information

