



**GIRLS YOUTH HOCKEY CO-OP GUIDELINES
ADDENDUM TO THE
RIVER FALLS HOCKEY POLICY HANDBOOK
AND THE
BLACKHAWK HOCKEY POLICY HANDBOOK**

Welcome to the River Falls/Blackhawk Youth Hockey Girls Program!

About 20 years ago, River Falls Youth Hockey Association (RFYHA) and Blackhawk Hockey Association (BHA) formed a valuable partnership for the development of girl hockey players within their organizations. Each association has their own set of policies and guidelines independent of the other; below outlines the components that apply specifically to the Blackcat girl's program and it's participants.

Origin of "Blackcats"

In honor of the partnership with the River Falls Wildcats and the Baldwin-Woodville Blackhawks, the co op leaders combined pieces of both to form the team name Blackcats.

Presiding Board of Directors

The Blackcats originated as a co-op between RFYHA and Blackhawk Youth Hockey with RFYHA as the lead of the co-op. Both associations have combined efforts to develop open lines of communication, including a Blackcats coaching committee comprised of individuals from both association boards, membership, and the Fusion coaches (High School level co-op).

Ice Assignments

Practice and game times will be split between the Wildcat Centre in River Falls and the United Civic Center in Baldwin. Typically, early season practices start in Baldwin due to Baldwin having their ice in earlier than River Falls. An exact or even split of ice time cannot be promised to any team and is not guaranteed. There are many criteria that come into play when scheduling ice and both association's ice schedulers will work together and put forth their best effort to evenly distribute those times while taking the other criteria and youth teams into consideration.

Both RFYHA and BHA will make their best attempt to maintain accuracy within their webpage calendars related to practice and game times, but it is highly recommended to consistently reference both calendars and bring forward any discrepancies to your respective managers and/or ice schedulers.

Game and Tournament Limits

Both associations have defined limits as it relates to the number of games and number of tournaments that each youth team can participate. If those limits differ between the two association's policies, the Blackcat program will be allowed to abide by the higher limit between the two.

Jerseys/Socks

Players will be responsible for the purchase of approved game socks and jerseys. Jersey numbers will be decided upon by birth year and the number will follow the player throughout their Blackcat career.

Move-Up Policy

In some cases, players may be eligible to participate at higher age level than actual birth date dictates. If a player is selected to play at a higher age bracket, that player will be required to pay the registration fees equal to the age level in which they play. There are two approved scenarios in which this occurs:

- Parent Request – If a parent feels that their player qualifies to play at a higher age bracket, they can make a request to their respective association Board of Directors no later than June 1st prior to the season. All requests will then be reviewed by the Blackcat Coaching Committee who will then make a recommendation to the respective Association's Board of Directors.
- Coaching Committee/Board Request – In certain circumstances, the Blackcat Coaching Committee will request that a player participate at a higher age bracket than they qualify for. In this case, after their respective Board of Directors approval, the player and parents will be asked and if in agreement will be moved to the recommended level and participate in try-outs at that level.

*For more detail about move-up policies, refer to your respective home association's member handbook. Also note, WAHA will also have to approve any move-ups.

League Memberships

Both RFYHA and BHA are members of the Wisconsin Amateur Hockey Association (WAHA), who are an affiliate of USA Hockey and adheres to its regulations. As members of WAHA, both RFYHA and BHA, and therefore the Blackcat's program, adheres to their program guidance and participates in WAHA regional playoff games and state tournaments.

In an effort to diversify opportunities for competition, both RFYHA and BHA are members of the Minnesota Hockey District 2 league (MN D2) and adhere to MN D2 governing rules for games played within that league schedule. MN D2 schedules a set number of games with other MN/WI teams that are league members. RFYHA and BHA teams do not participate in MN D2 year-end playoffs.

Note, players and spectators may notice variance in game criteria due to inconsistencies between WAHA regulations and MN D2 governing rules.

Team Determinations

In some circumstances, a specific level of the Blackcat's program may have enough players to comprise two full teams. In these cases, and to provide the players the most opportunity for skill development, two teams will be formed.

In some cases, based on various factors including WAHA rule and team classifications, teams will be made via skill-based tryouts. Both associations will make their best effort to notify parents of the path that will be taken at each level, but such decisions can be influenced by many things, including player registration counts and release of WAHA guidelines, which could be unpredictable from season to season.

At the U10 level if two teams are necessary, they will be formed as equal as possible in an unbiased tryout format. Players will be evaluated, and teams formed based on these rankings. It is understood that players at this age develop differently and can make drastic advancement in skill/abilities from the beginning of the season to mid and end of season thereby giving the teams the appearance of being out of equality. Also note that one or two players or the presence or absence of a “set” goalie on one team could also give the impression of one team being “better” than another at any given time throughout the season. All efforts are made to make the teams equitable at the beginning of the season, however once rosters are created and submitted, they are not able to be changed. The philosophy and reason for two equal teams is to create a sense of “oneness” within the Blackcat program. It is also important for the mental and physical development within each player to play with players of all abilities. The top players help the less experienced players develop more quickly and confidently while also giving them leadership roles. This philosophy has been in place for many years and has been one of the major contributing factors to the very successful high school program. The importance of learning the game and developing skills is the number one priority at this level and NOT wins/losses.

Should two teams be necessary at the U12 and U14 level; an unbiased tryout will be held, and teams formed based on ability (A and B team). Both teams will practice together and maintain a philosophy of “we are all one team – Blackcats”, as one day they will all be on the same team, The Fusion.

Volunteer Hours

It is important that members report all work hours to their home association. Be sure that you are reviewing the appropriate work hour opportunities through your home association’s webpage. Each association, BHA and RFYHA, has adopted their own policies related to work hours - how they are completed, what qualifies and how to report them - so please refer to your home association member handbook for the most accurate information.

It is also important to note that some extra duties will fall outside of the volunteer work hours but are expected to be fulfilled to maintain well-run and efficient teams. Such duties may include locker-room mom, Zamboni driver, gameday scoreboard official, announcer, penalty box worker, and other. Please get trained and help as much as you can!

Disciplinary Action

As with other policies, each association has their own guidelines related to disciplinary reporting and action. Please refer to your home association member handbook for details on policy and protocol. Remember that everyone is volunteering their time and efforts to make our Blackcat program the best it can be!

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