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RFYHA Mite Coaching Information

Greetings Mite Hockey Coach!

RFYHA is grateful for your willingness to spend your time investing in young lives because without volunteer coaches, there would not be hockey in River Falls. Mites is the largest group of kids in our Association and likely the most critical for our Association’s long-term success. Your efforts do not go unnoticed and are appreciated.

**This document will serve as an outline for the general expectations of each Mite Coach.**

Being a Mite Coach - Expectations:

*All Mite coaches are subject to the Coach Code of Conduct as outlined in the RFYHA Policy Handbook, the Coaching Handbook and the Coaching contract.*

Coaching is key.  We need coaches that are willing to communicate with each other and put the kids ahead of themselves.

1. **Show up with a positive attitude**. A negative attitude is felt by the skaters and also felt by the other coaches and parents.

2. **Be prepared for practice** - review each drill station prior to practice to gain an understanding of the skills being taught / reinforced

3. **Encourage and coach the effort** – not the result

4. **Dress appropriately** – RF hockey or appropriate athletic jacket, athletic pants, HEC approved helmet (with chin strap, strapped), gloves, skates, and hockey stick.

5. **Register as a coach with RFYHA**, complete all required credentialing as described in the registration and adhere to USA Hockey Coaching Education Program

The respective level Head Coach is responsible for selecting the daily practice plan and /or assigning the responsibility to an Assistant Coach. Please communicate new drill ideas or enhancements to the practice plan to the respective Head Coach or Mites Coordinator prior to implementing.

When running drills, please try to keep the lines moving as quickly and safely as possible. The goal is for no skater to rest longer than 30 seconds between repetitions.

Any parent comments should be directed to the respective level Head Coach or Mite Coordinator.

Lastly, **please support your fellow coaches**. Each one of the RFYHA coaches is a volunteer that is trying to help teach the game of hockey and the related lessons that come with being involved in a team sport. When you see a fellow coach struggling, please look for way to pick them up as we are all on the same team.

Additional Information is available on the [Coaches corner of RFYHA website](https://riverfalls.pucksystems.com/coaching)

# Mites Program Leadership

## Mite Coordinator: ( and Coach and Player Development Committee (CPDC) Member ) :

### Coordinates and communicates to the coaches regarding on-ice strategy in cooperation with the Coaching and Player Development Committee (CPDC)

## Mite Team Manager:

### Coordinates and communicates to the coaches regarding on-ice strategy in cooperation with the CPDC

## Head Coaches are the On-Ice Leads:

### on-ice leads for each level; beginner, intermediate and advanced (Mites 1,2,3, respectively.

## Assistant Coaches

### Additional parent volunteers who are on most practices assisting with the execution of practice plans

The Mite program is operated in partnership with the RFYHA CPDC and oversight from the RFYHA Board of Directors.

# Mite Levels, Placement and Assessments:

* **Beginner** – The vast majority of these kids will be first year players; this is Mites 1.
* The focus of Beginner-level is to teach the kids how to skate, stop and make controlled turns. These skills are necessary for the safety of the skater, coaches and other skaters on the ice.
* There will be one informal assessment for Beginner-level conducted during the season as a part of the course of usual practice, which will take place in late December/early January. The purpose of the informal assessment is to determine if there are any kids that meet the predetermined criteria to move to the intermediate level mid-season.
* The majority of the Beginner/Mite 1 skaters will move to Intermediate/Mite 2 in the Fall of their second skating season unless otherwise requested by a parent or Head Coach at the Beginner level in alignment with the Mite Coordinator. We will see very young skaters start their second season in Beginner level as it can take them a little more time to grasp practice and skating concepts. Since there can be a mix of ages that span 3 years at Intermediate, we want to make sure each skater is in a position to have fun and feel safe on the ice.

Simplifying the skill assessment criteria to the core items that are being practiced at virtually every practice enables for an assessment to be conducted during the course of a regularly scheduled practice.  This will create more consistency, as assessments can be made by the coaches during the course of practice.

The assessments will be a designated practice day when it will look and feel the same for the kids (i.e., ‘regular course of practice’), but the coaches are actively assessing without pulling them over to the side and interrupting practice.

* **Intermediate** – Intermediate is a level primarily for 2nd and 3rd year skaters who have accomplished the stated Advanced criteria during an informal assessment period, this is Mites 2.
* The focus of Intermediate is to encourage/develop skating skills while introducing them to pucks where they can learn passing and shooting fundamentals.
* There will be one informal assessment in November to assess for Advanced Level readiness and a second informal assessment in February to assess for Advanced Level readiness to begin at in the following Fall.
* **Advanced** – the Advanced level (Mites 3) is for players that have accomplished the stated Intermediate criteria. This level will be for some 3rd but mostly 4th and 5th year skaters.
  + The focus of Advanced is to continue to develop individual skating, passing, and shooting skills while also learning some basic game play concepts.
  + Assessments will take place at various times throughout the season to identify any skaters who achieve the Advanced criteria and Regardless of that achievement, each skater will stay in Advanced for the remainder of the season and advance to 10U as birth-year designates.
* Informal Assessments are conducted by coaches selected by the Mites Coordinator and conducted on designated days during the usual course of a regularly scheduled practice for the purposes of assessing progress toward level achievements.
* When skater(s) progress to the next level, the team manager will send the family an email telling them their child has moved and remind them of the new practice time. In coordination with the RFYHA Equipment Manager, the Mite Manager will have the new jersey available for the skater/parent to receive their new jersey at the rink and hand-in the old one.

Season Schedules:  
Team schedules will be posted on the RFYHA website: However, Wednesday evenings, Saturday mornings and Sunday evenings are the primary days and times for Mite practice. The schedule may vary slightly from week to week depending on rink events. The season starts in November and runs through February. Each level will have its own 45–60-minute practice and follows the age-appropriate USA Hockey ADM practice model <https://www.admkids.com/>

* Throughout the season, coaches may spend an additional small portion of their practices on scrimmages. However, the focus of the time on the ice will be developing skating and hockey skills.

# Practice Plans

Practice plans will be developed in coordination between the Mites Coordinator and Mites Head Coaches for implementation on the ice by the head coaches and assistant coaches.

RFYHA is committed to USA Hockey’s **American Development Model (ADM)** from USA Hockey. <https://www.admkids.com/> and [USA Hockey model](http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0045/0724/8U_ADM_Full_Guidebook.pdf#_ga=2.26246781.1923985896.1651013185-1414994466.1632677650). This philosophy of hockey emphasizes small ice area games, constant movement on the ice, variety of activities on the ice and maximizing skater involvement. Skater development is taken after USA Hockey’s **Long-Term Athlete Development**.

At the Mite level, an ideal number of coaches at any one particular practice is anywhere from 9-13. This is a huge need for human resource, but it adds stability and organization to each and every practice.

RFYHA must continue to follow the ADM model for every level of practice plans.  The model provides ample drills for the coaches to execute (regardless of the coach’s individual skill or background), rotating plans frequently will keep the kids (and coaches) engaged.

**Beginner** – Mite 1’s will focus on skating and have only 1 of the 5 or 6 zones involve pucks.  Most important items for the first-year kids is to learn how to fall, get-up and skate.  We need to make level 1 more about having fun than executing a drill.  Most of these kids are 4, 5 and 6 years old or pre-K / Kindergarten and 1st grade kids.

**Intermediate** – Mite 2’s will get pucks introduced in 4 out of 5 or 6 drills as the season progresses – continue to follow ADM as mentioned above.  Most of these kids are in 1st and 2nd grade.

**Advanced** – Mite 3’s – should be able to perform just about every drill with a puck by the end of the season.  This group will be filled with primarily our 2ndand 3rd grade kids.

Additionally, in level 3, skaters should begin to learn general breakout, forecheck, spacing, and puck support concepts.  This deviates slightly from the ADM model as the small drills don’t do a great job of teaching these skills.  Kids also need the opportunity to dress as goalies during practice.

# Games / Jamborees:

Each level will have the opportunity to participate in at least 2 Jamboree’s throughout the course of the season. Each Jamboree consists of 2 to 4 games against local teams with similar skill levels. The Mites Manager and Coordinator will work to select the Jamboree’s and do their best to place the RFYHA teams at competitive levels.

* All players will have equal playing time and lines will switch every minute or at the buzzer.
* Scores are usually not kept. Again -it's all about fun and at this age, with no score posted, most of the kids come off the ice happy, feeling confident about their skills and certain that their team won

# Top Ten Indicators of a Great Mite Coach

**Great Mite Coaches…**

1. **Realize that at this age full-ice hockey games are not the most helpful developmental tool.** *Small area games are most effective at any level for skill development. More so, however, at the Mite level, small area games help keep young skaters interested and moving constantly. Rotating these young skates through multiple small area stations, in a practice, accomplishes this goal.*
2. **Know that the most important developmental piece for a skater is simply movement their feet.** *Skills will come with time but the single most effective piece of development for these early ages is simply the movement of the feet. Many times, coaches try to teach skills before age appropriate readiness. Keep skaters moving on the ice and skills will come with proper instruction.*
3. **Know that coaching skill development comes with a critical eye.** *When skills are taught, however, at age appropriate readiness, knowing how to instruct a skater is important. Great Mite coaches do not believe that bad habits just naturally go away. If not corrected, bad habits actually get worse and lessen the height of a skater’s long-term potential. This is constant instruction, with the skater believing the coach cares more about them as a person than the skill being taught.*
4. **Develop an atmosphere of joy & fun on the ice**. *Remember these are 4-8 year old kids. Fun for them is different than fun for an adult. Look at what they like to play with at home and bring it into practice times. A fun atmosphere cultivates a passion for the skater to want to come back to the ice rink for the next practice. Success is hearing the skaters complain that practice is already over and cannot wait until the next one.*
5. **Believe that you can never have enough skaters chasing the puck.** *Again, this is emphasizing the importance, at this age, of skaters needing to simply move their feet. The number one deterrent is to have a coach or a parent instructing their young skater to stay in a certain position or in front of the net. Once you teach a skater to stay in a certain place, they will stop moving their feet and will begin standing around. They become more concerned, now, about being in the right spot rather than logging the needed skating movement at this early development stage.*
6. **Know to instruct skaters to never just slap at the puck with their stick.** *Slapping at the puck is a bad habit of not knowing how to stick-handle, pass or shoot. The constant emphasis on Puck Possession (doing one of three skills with the puck: skate with it, shoot it or pass it) helps greatly increase stick-handling. Skaters, at this age, need to overcome the false sense of failure felt when the puck is taken away when trying to work on Puck Possession. It is better for puck to be taken away then simply giving it away by just slapping at it. Make a move, make a pass, take a good shot and see what happens!*
7. **Know that scoring a goal is not the most important criteria for success.** *The goal is to come along families to develop kids who will grow up to love their families and invest in their communities. Hockey is a great place to learn life lessons. It is a great place to develop friendships and to have great memories of their youth.*
8. **Use positive language on the ice.** *Use the concept of 7 comments of affirmation to 1 comment of correction. The ice area and practice time is a great place to put it into practice. Kids love to hear affirmation from adults. It doesn’t make them soft but confident.*
9. **Interact well with parents.** *Parents love their kids and generally want the best for them. Invite them into the hockey experience and communicate effectively with them. Great communication between coaches and parents equals a healthy association.*
10. **Learn along the way.** *We want to create a learning community of coaches who desire to learn from one another. Many Mite coaches start with no idea what they are doing. Welcome to Mite coaching! Most coaches begin this way! From learning how to manage a drill with 4 year olds to teaching them how to do a V-stop, coaches, let us learn together and build a strong hockey association.*

# Additional Resources:

* [8U](https://www.admkids.com/page/show/1744402-8u)
* [ADM FUNdamentals 6U-8U:](https://cdn4.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0257-1961060/2_FUNdamentals_Stage_2018_JCE_cleankm.edited.pdf#_ga=2.59561198.2132419438.1635025257-993970170.1635025255)
* [8U ADM Specifics Parent Guidebook](https://cdn2.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0044/4560/USA120003_8U_ParentGuide_WEB.pdf)
* [8U Implementation Guide](https://cdn4.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0042/7989/USA120003_8U_ImplementationGuide-3.pdf)
* [8U\_ADM\_Full\_Guidebook.pdf](https://cdn2.sportngin.com/attachments/document/0042/7990/8U_ADM_Full_Guidebook.pdf)
* [Mite Level-Assessment Criteria](https://riverfalls.pucksystems.com/coaching)