

WYHA Travel Teams Level Recommendations

2023-2024 Season

BACKGROUND

Each year, the WYHA Director of Hockey Operations (DHO) performs an in depth review of the previous season's results and consults coaches from every team and level to determine how many teams WYHA will field at each level in the subsequent season, as well as having discussions surrounding the appropriate number of players on each team.

DESTINATION PLANNING

The process begins with Destination Planning, which requires the head coach from each team to project where he/she projects the players from his/her team to play in the subsequent season. The players are not ranked or even identified by name, and the information is used only as a guide for proper team formation in the following season. As an example, a PeeWee B2 coach might project 2 Bantam B2, 4 Bantam C, 5 PeeWee B1, and 4 PeeWee B2 players next year. This information is collected by the DHO from each coach and combined into an analysis that shows a rough estimate of how many total players WYHA can expect to have at each playing level next season.

COMPETITIVE REVIEW

The DHO also performs a competitive review of the previous season, which involves tabulating not just wins and losses, but also game scores to determine the number of competitive games (the final outcome was decided by 2 goals or fewer) for each team. Generally speaking, competitive games is a better indicator of proper team placement than wins and losses.

Here is an example of the Game Tracker competitive review report from a few years ago:

2018/19 Wayzata Youth Hockey Game Tracker Summary



		Total Practices	Total Games/ Scrimm	League	Tourney	Scrimmage	Practice to Game Ratio	Comments	GAMES W / L / T	Win %	Total Goals For	Total Goals Against	Goal Diff	Goals for per Game	Goals Against per Game	Quality Games	% of Gms within 2 goals		
Squirt	Squirt A Blue	63	37	16	20	1	1.70	3RD in D3 Squirt A Tourney	26	11	0	70.3%	161	105	56	4.35	2.84	19	51.4%
	Squirt B1 Blue	63	36	19	15	2	1.75		20	12	4	61.1%	86	73	13	2.39	2.03	15	41.7%
	Squirt B1 Gold	57	35	18	17	-	1.63		17	14	4	54.3%	93	79	14	2.66	2.26	24	68.6%
	Squirt B1 Navy	59	37	18	16	3	1.59	Lost to OMG in D3 Consol Final	20	12	5	60.8%	138	86	52	3.73	2.32	17	45.9%
	Squirt B2 Royal	61	32	19	13	-	1.91	D3 SQB2 TOURNEY CHAMPS (red brkt)	17	13	2	56.3%	107	99	8	3.34	3.09	15	46.9%
	Squirt B2 White	63	28	18	10	-	2.25	MISSING DULUTH TOURNEY SCORES	12	13	3	48.2%	65	55	10	2.32	1.96	16	57.1%
	Squirt B2 Yellow	61	28	18	10	-	2.18	MISSING ALBERT LEA TOURNEY SCORES	12	13	3	48.2%	76	88	-12	2.71	3.14	16	57.1%
	Squirt B2 Steel	63	23	18	5	-	2.74	MISSING SCORES FOR 2 TOURNAMENTS	10	11	2	47.8%	82	83	-1	3.57	3.61	17	73.9%
	Squirt C Blue	60	39	18	19	2	1.54		8	21	4	30.3%	72	144	-72	2.18	4.36	13	39.4%
	Squirt C Gold	57	36	19	17	-	1.58		15	15	6	50.0%	114	115	-1	3.17	3.19	18	50.0%
	Squirt C White	57	31	18	13	-	1.84	D3 SQC CONS CHAMPS (Brkt2)	12	15	4	45.2%	95	122	-27	3.06	3.94	16	51.6%
		LEVEL TOTAL	664	362	199	155	8	1.83		169	150	37	52.7%	1089	1049	40	3.06	2.95	186

Once the above data is collected, the DHO forms a recommendation and presents it to the VP of Travel and the WYHA Executive Committee.

2023-2024 TEAM AND LEVEL RECOMMENDATIONS

In many cases, the decision about teams and levels is relatively straightforward; WYHA has a lot of teams at every level and it is generally assumed that we'll field the same or similar numbers of teams at each level as the prior year(s). The detailed review of destination planning metrics helps the DHO determine the appropriate mix of teams and team sizes at each level.

We expect a similar situation heading into the 2023-24 season, with two exceptions that are described in more detail below.

Boys Squirt Discussion - Two Squirt A Teams

WYHA will field two Squirt A teams again in 2023-2024. Prior to 2022-2023, WYHA had fielded one Squirt A team and three Squirt B1 teams. In 2022-23 the Board recommended a change to two balanced Squirt A teams and two balanced Squirt B1 teams. The factors going into this decision included:

- More players get to play A-level hockey.
- Pushing more players up to a higher level of play leads to stronger skill development.
- With a deeper pool of A-level players at squirts, in future years we expect more competitive A and AA teams as the same players age up into PeeWees and Bantams.
- With the two A teams practicing together frequently, coaches can design combined practice plans that allow for more full-ice drills and concepts to be incorporated into practices than would have been possible in the past while sharing ice between A and B1 teams.
- Similarly, the two B1 teams can treat some or all of their practices as combined, full-ice practices and can likewise take some time to incorporate more full-ice concepts.
- Other large youth associations such as Osseo-Maple Grove and Edina successfully field two Squirt A teams every year.
- Recent changes within our mite program were designed to foster more skill development and a deeper player pool as those players age up into squirts. For example:
 - For the past several years, WYHA has had 4 "top" teams in the Advanced Mite age group, which allows more players an opportunity to play with and against more highly skilled players at an earlier age. These teams have been very competitive with the same age groups within other large youth

associations like Chaska-Chanhassen and Osseo-Maple Grove.

- In 2019-20, we moved from one 45-minute practice per week for our Mini Mite teams to two 60-minute practices per week. Prior to this switch, first-year players from other competing associations were getting more than double the amount of ice time and skill development compared to our Mini Mite players. While we are always open to exploring additional ways to aid in skill development at the youngest playing levels, it is our belief that this change alone will lead to WYHA players having better skill development by the time they reach Advanced Mites and squirts.

WYHA understands that there may be some concern about staying competitive with two Squirt A teams, and acknowledges that there may be some growing pains in the first year or two of this change. We are sensitive to this concern and understand that winning games can be a significant factor in the players' and families' overall experience at all age levels.

In 2022-23, Wayzata's Squirt A teams both experienced success, finishing 3rd and 4th in District 3 play and having strong results and positive experiences at several tournaments. Feedback from coaches and parents was overwhelmingly positive.

Girls 15U Discussion

There are some unique challenges at the girls 15U level, including:

- Some of the top 15U-eligible players opt to play for high school teams instead of staying at 15U. Further, high school tryouts occur weeks after 15U teams have already been formed, leading to difficulty in determining how many and which players will be available at each 15U playing level.
- Minnesota Hockey offers just two playing levels at 15U - A and B. With no B1/B2 distinction within 15U, it can become difficult to pair similarly-skilled players together when teams are formed.
- There are generally fewer girls players at 15U than the similar age group in youth classifications (i.e. bantams) at both Wayzata and at other youth associations, which can make determining the correct mix of players, and the appropriate number of players on each team, difficult.

Recognizing that the 15U level frequently presents unique challenges to players, parents, and coaches, in 2023-2024 WYHA formed a Girls Hockey Committee (GHC). The GHC is comprised of seven members including coaches from different girls hockey levels, the DHO, and the VP Travel. The GHC met for the first time in the summer of 2023 and discussed various issues related to the WYHA program, including:

- Discussion surrounding the timing of 15U tryouts.
 - As noted above, the timing of 15U tryouts and high school tryouts presents

some difficulties at this age group. In each of the past two seasons, unexpected circumstances created an imbalance in the number of players available to form teams at several 15U levels.

- There is a new Wayzata Varsity head coach in 2023-2024. WYHA and the GHC has had discussions with the new coach and we are confident that some of the problems that have plagued the 15U team selection in the past will not occur again this season.
- Therefore, 15U tryouts will take place as usual in late September, well before the start of the High School tryouts.
- Discussion surrounding the team makeup at the 15U level.
 - After receiving input from all members of the GHC, including coaches at both the 12U and 15U level, it was decided that the best team format for the 2023-2024 season would be a team structure of one 15U A team and two 15U B teams.
 - At the B level, there will be a tiered approach such that WYHA will have “B1” and “B2” teams which will both participate within the B classification for District play.
 - The B1 team will participate in some A-level tournaments and scrimmages where they will be challenged to compete against more skilled players.
 - The B1 team will participate in shared practices alternating with the A team as well as the other B team.
 - WYHA expects that the GHC will continue to provide invaluable guidance in making these types of decisions, and recognizes that the decision regarding the makeup of the 15U level will not always be the same from year-to-year. Factors going into these decisions will always include:
 - Review of prior year’s results for WYHA’s 12U and 15U teams at all levels.
 - First-hand experience and feedback regarding the relative strength of prior year players leaving the 15U program (i.e. aging into or making the Varsity or Junior Varsity teams) as well as the strength of the players moving up from 12U.
 - Knowledge of the makeup of other similarly-sized organizations in the Twin Cities.
 - Knowledge of state-wide trends within the 15u age group. For example, in some seasons there are smaller programs that opt to field an A team; in others those same programs might drop down and field only a B team.

Final Playing Level Recommendations

Listed below are the final travel team playing level recommendations for Board approval.

Note that changes may be necessary based on the actual number of players that register for the 2022-23 season.

2023-2024 Playing Level Recommendations - Travel Teams							
YOUTH TEAMS							
JG		BANTAMS		PEEWEEES		SQUIRTS	
A	1	AA	1	AA	1	A	2
B	2	A	1	A	1	B1	2
16	1	B1	2	B1	2	B2	3
		B2	2	B2	3	C	3
		C	2	C	3		
GIRLS TEAMS							
19U		15U		12U		10U	
TBD		A	1	A	1	A	1
		B	2	B1	1	B1	2
				B2	2	B2	2