

OPPORTUNITIES IN HOCKEY AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Presented by Al Bloomer (Rocky Mountain District Coach-in-Chief, USA Hockey Junior Council, President/CEO Billings Bulls Hockey Club) on January 25, 2003 in Arapaho, CO.

The focus of this presentation is to provide information regarding various options available to the hockey player that has completed his/her high school education. Typically the high school graduate is 18 years old.

I have been involved in hockey as a player, coach or administrator for over 50 years. During the last 15 years I have been directly involved with the Junior age player. When it comes to choosing options for their hockey future, I am continually troubled by how poorly prepared and ill-informed high school players and their parents are. There is a lot of bad information and misinformation about hockey opportunities. Answers can be found if you know where to look. The challenge is to be realistic about your hockey abilities and pro-active when planning your hockey future. We all have dreams and expectations - but we need to make informed decisions.

Some typical questions:

- What are my hockey opportunities after high school?
- How can I determine what is best for me?
- What are some determining factors?
- What are my chances?
- How can I find out where I fit?
- How and where can I get noticed?
- How important are academics?
- What role does my current coach play?
- Should I actively pursue opportunities or should I wait until opportunity knocks?

The numbers (2001-2002):

Total USA Players:	Female	42,292	
	Male	327,485	
	<u>Adult</u>	<u>72,948</u>	
	Total	442,725	Rocky Mountain 34,393 (7.8%)

Age Classification:		Midget/High School (Under 18)	
	Male	49,252	Rocky Mountain ±3,500
	Female	5,026	± 340

		Juniors (18-19)	
	Male	6,407	Rocky Mountain ± 500
	Female	764	± 50

		Adults (over 18) ACHA	
	Male	67,877	Rocky Mountain ± 4,700
	Female	5,071	± 350

These are USA players only. 2001-02 Canadian player registration was 532,435 and European registration was estimated at 250,000.

Develop options and make informed choices:

- Advancing your hockey career is a numbers game.
- Put yourself in the game and keep yourself there.
- Make choices that will better prepare you for the future.
- Realistic self-evaluation and the “parent factor”.

Academic preparation:

- The better the student, the more options
- Teams/schools equate academic performance to discipline, commitment and effort
- Teams/schools will not recruit players that cannot compete academically.
- It is not over until it is over.

Can private prep school, post graduate school and/or junior hockey be an option?

- Academic rehabilitation - reinforcement - improvement
 - Enroll for Junior and Senior years (repeat if necessary)
 - Take college level courses
 - Post graduate - transcript improvement
 - Academic maturity
- Develop and improve hockey skills - play at a higher level
- Prepare the complete athlete
 - Strength and conditioning
 - Nutrition
 - Mind

PRIVATE PREP SCHOOL - BOARDING AND DAY SCHOOL OPTIONS

Sources of information:

- High School guidance counselors/teachers
- “Prep School Hockey Guide” by Thomas Keegan
- www.prephockey.org
- www.boardingschoolguide.com
- Canadian boarding schools www.dundum.com

Choosing the right prep school for you

- Location - most are in the East (New England)
 - Boys’ schools ± 75
 - Girls’ schools ± 56
 - Post graduate programs ± 48

Western and mid-western schools

- Banff Hockey Academy - Alberta
- Athol Murray College - Wilcox, Sask.
- College Mathieu - Gravelbourg, Sask.

Culver Academies - Culver, IN
Shattuck St. Mary's - Faribault, MN
Gilmore Academy - Gates Mills, OH
Univ. School of Milwaukee - WI

Prep schools are a high priority for Eastern college recruiters (ECAC/Hockey East/MAAC)

Criteria for selecting a school:

Academic admission criteria - curriculum
Costs - annual tuition alone can run \$25,000-35,000
Level of hockey - number of teams - schedule
Player alumni - track record of success
Geography - culture
School visit is essential
"Broken leg" rule

THE JUNIOR HOCKEY OPTION

The USA Junior hockey program is available to citizen athletes who are 20 years old and under as of December 31st of the current season of competition. The principal purpose of the Junior development program is to prepare the athlete for career advancement into collegiate hockey.

Goals:

Skill development
Quality coaching
Educational advancement
Recruiting exposure - college
Protect amateur status

Sources of information:

www.usahockey.com
www.tjhn.com
USA Hockey Annual Guide

Certified US Junior Hockey Leagues:

Tier 1 Juniors - 253 players in USHL (11 teams in KS, IL, IO, WI, NE, SD
www.ushl.com)

Tier 2 Junior A - 460 players

AUHL - 10 teams in MT, ND, AK, TX, MS and BC, Canada www.auhl.com
NAHL - 10 teams in MI, TX, MO, IL, OH and PA www.nahl.com

Tier 2 Junior B - 1380 players

CSHL - 11 teams
EJBHL - 12 teams
IJHL - 8 teams
METJHL - 9 teams
MJHL - 7 teams
NORPAC - 6 teams
WSHL - 7 teams
Tier 2 Junior C - 483 players
EJHL - 12 teams
CHL - 9 teams

There are over 2,500 US born players in domestic Junior hockey - 3 to 5% (1 out of 25) of available player pool. Junior A = 1/78 Junior B = 1/40 Junior C = 1/20

USA Hockey has established specific criteria for each level of Domestic Junior classification. They are monitored and enforced by the USA Hockey Junior Council. Refer to the USA Hockey Annual Guide.

How does an 18 year old get a Junior hockey opportunity?

- Talk to your midget or high school coach
- Participate in showcase events specific to the high school age player
 - District player Development Camps
 - National Camps and Festivals
 - Minnesota Elite High School Tournament
 - Chicago Showcase
 - District high school tournaments
 - Minnesota Hockey School - Brainerd, MN
 - Global Prospect Camps
 - Lakeland Super Camps
 - Attend tryout camps
 - Hockey Night in Boston

Before attending commercial camps, get a staff list and information on attending scouts.

Which Junior program is right for you?

- Talk with former players
- Meet with coach - where will you fit in?
- How many players have moved on to college?
- Evaluate the local schools
- Age of players on roster
- Geographic considerations

You are in control - do not get oversold!

There are Tier 1 and Tier 2 Junior programs in Canada. The Canadian based Tier 1 programs are for players heading to the pros and those players will lose their amateur status.

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY HOCKEY OPTIONS

This is a terrific option and the goal of most players. It is perhaps the single most important decision a player and his family will make - yet we spend very little time exploring and researching what may be best. There is a school with a hockey program out there for you - you just need to find it. As we have stated many times, the guiding principle to all your decisions should be academics. Three major considerations when choosing a college:

Academics - SAT scores range from 1300-900 (ACT 30-18)

Hockey - play or watch?

Social life - average age of college freshman is 20 years old; small school vs. large school

Information to help you decide where you can play in US:

Division 1 - 87 programs (25 women, 62 men) www.ncaa.org

Division 3 - 96 programs (31 women, 65 men) www.ncaa.org

NJCAA - 15 programs www.njcaa.org

ACHA - 250 club college hockey programs Division 1 and 3 schools

Making an informed decision - a touch of realism

Not all Division 1 schools offer scholarships - Ivy League

NCAA allows maximum of 18 scholarships per team. Not all teams are funded to maximum.

There can be 7-9 "walk on" players per team.

± 190 scholarships available each year. US born players receive approximately 45% (85). 1/500 eligible US players get scholarships. To play Division 1, are you one of the top 280 players in the country?

75% of US players on current Division 1 rosters are from Juniors; 60% of Division 3 players are from Juniors

States represented on Division 1 rosters: MA (25% of total players), MN (22%), MI (12.4%), NY (12.1%), IL (5.8%), RI (4.9%), CT (4.8%), AK (4%), WI (3.1%), ND (2%), CO (1.6%), MT, AZ and all others (2.3%)

Statistics by league: WCHA rosters = US players 70%; Canadian players 28.1%

CCHA rosters = US players 67%; Canadian players 28%

Hockey East = US players 67%; Canadian players 27%

It is not the end of your hockey career if you do not attend a Division 1 hockey school;. There are numerous opportunities to play college hockey in Division 3, Junior College and Club College programs.

Sources of information:

www.ncaa.org

"College Hockey Guide Book" by Thomas Keegan

www.hockeycenter.com

www.achahockey.org

ADULT AND SENIOR PROGRAMS

There are adult and senior programs all over the country. One can continue playing well into their 60s or 70s. There are men's programs as well as women's and coed programs. Contact the USA Hockey representative in your area.

Levels of play: Senior A - National Championship
 Checking
 Non-checking
 Adult Elite - National Championship

Sources of information: USA Hockey Annual Guide
 www.usahockey.com
 John Beadle at 517-699-9100

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY

We cannot talk about options without mentioning professional hockey. The National Hockey League is for the truly elite players but there are other options outside the NHL.

National Hockey League - NHL - 30 teams www.nhl.com
American Hockey League - AHL - 28 teams (primary feeder system to NHL) www.theahl.com
East Coast League - ECHL - 27 teams (secondary affiliate) www.echl.com

Minor leagues independent of the NHL:

 United Hockey League - 10 teams in Great Lakes area www.theuhl.com
 West Coast Hockey League - 7 teams www.wchl.com
 Atlantic Coast Hockey League - 6 teams in Southeast www.achl2.net

NHL general information:

105-120 US players in the NHL Approximately 5% of the NHL draft comes from colleges

NHL in 1970-71 = 14 teams/players 95.3% Canadian, 2.3% European and 2.1% US

NHL in 2001-02 = 30 teams/players 52.3% Canadian, 33.6% European and 14.1% US

HOW DO I GET NOTICED?

This is one of the most frequently asked questions in hockey. There is no simple answer. You must come to the realization that there are several alternatives and routes a hockey player can take in achieving his/her goal. The informed athlete has a better chance than the misinformed or uninformed one. Consider that there are well over 6,000 Midget, Junior and High school teams in North America. Scouts and recruiters cannot possibly cover all the teams and leagues. There are certain parts of the country where colleges and Juniors find their players. If you are not in a geographic 'hockey hot bed' your chances of exposure diminish. To improve your chances:

- Make yourself academically attractive. Programs are looking for the student athlete.
- Select and play for a coach that has a history of moving players to the next level.
- Look for teams/leagues that have a history of moving players to the next level.
- Participate in district and national camps.
- Participate in district and national tournaments.
- Investigate Chicago Showcase, Hockey Night in Boston
- Try out for top prospect camps
- Try out for district teams that play at elite tournaments.
- Attend summer camps that offer the best exposure.

PLAY YOUR BEST AT ALL TIMES - YOU NEVER KNOW WHO IS WATCHING.

CAN YOU PLAY UNDER PRESSURE?

NARROW THE GAP BETWEEN YOUR POTENTIAL AND YOUR PERFORMANCE.

GOOD LUCK!

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