



BACK TO SCHOOL

Why reinvent the wheel?

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If you are associated with a high school inline league or team in any way, you can already attest to just how much importance student-athletes place onto skating with their peers and representing their school mascot, whether or not it's recognized officially. The successes of team-building and its transference from the rink to the locker room to the campus can only be measured in an interscholastic setting. Sharing the wins and losses, the highs and lows and the working together over a period of years, and as Varsity players help incoming freshmen grow to become the future Varsity team, high school hockey becomes a recurring legacy machine. And with every high school game played, there's some younger skater on the apron or in the stands saying to his or her self, "I can't wait to be old enough to skate for my high school!"

High school inline hockey is also about Sticktoitiveness – perhaps a lazy word for adherence or adhesive; it's meant to ensure that players stick to the sport. Sure, we can and do build clubs to travel and compete and even pull players from regions across the country to compete in a tournament setting. Their goal is about winning a tournament or series. In sharp contrast, high school hockey is homegrown and an upward path to the top of the pyramid we so often speak of. To all younger age groups and skill levels, and even dual-interest roller and ice players, they can look forward to high school hockey as a medium to play their chosen sport and for their school, just like so many mainstream sports athletes do.

Granted, it's not the same with every club, school, school district, state or even at every rink. Not every athletic director or principal or board member is a hockey fan. They all have other issues at hand, agendas and obstacles to overcome. And not all rink operators (facilities) offer a scholastic program for either middle school/junior high or high school club league play. Let's face it, dealing with schools and scholastic level hockey is high maintenance, and it can be a monumental effort to build a scholastic program from the ground up. Decisions, decisions, and even more decisions!

Fortunately, the scholastic roller hockey community is increasingly cooperative in helping the sport grow through sharing its common experiences and successes about just how to overcome the known obstacles and achieving goals. If I could offer any advice, the first would be to ask for help and do your homework first before rushing the net; instead of trying to blaze trails that others have already cleared. Ask how they did it! Get the facts and understand the objections ahead of time to be prepared just how to overcome them to attain your objectives. A simple strategy; don't repeat the mistakes made time and time again when there's a collective set of How-To experiences within the growing "high school" community across the county. Why reinvent the wheel?

As one example, I call on survey results from Southern California's IHF (Interscholastic Hockey Federation) League – 29 high school clubs and 56 teams (non co-op) in four skill divisions in their 2007-08 seasons – about high school roller hockey club structure and recognition programs. The clubs' survey response results include:

- 52% Organized as a school sports club
- 21% Operate as a nonprofit organization
- 21% Are recognized by their school district
- 31% Varsity players receive a letter for this sport
- 14% Players receive P.E. credit for this sport
- 62% Have yearbook recognition
- 14% Club pays for yearbook content
- 14% Club carries its own Insurance (separate from league and/or facility)
- 17% Club insured by Amateur Athletic Union (AAU)
- 10% Club insured by USA Hockey Inline League (USAHIL)
- 44% Club employs (fee or salary) its coach(s)

Considering that the IHF League (not in-house) may be considered as mature (founded in 1997 and commenced in 1998) by most standards, the results of others may vary widely.

The impact onto the sport and its longevity is inarguable: Scholastic roller hockey is an integral segment to the lifespan of our sport!

This segment, as are most, reliant on volunteerism to keep it alive and growing. What we do for others remains immortal!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A veteran marketing professional, writer, youth sports advocate and community activist, Jay Piz is passionate about scholastic roller hockey. He presently serves as board president of the Interscholastic Hockey Federation (IHF) in Southern California.

Article:

http://www.inlinehockeycentral.com/article.php?article_id=52865