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# Piz's Passion Remains for Scholastic Hockey

*Promotion of the high school inline game a priority for IHF president*

By Phillip Brents

Irvine's **Jay Piz** is passionate when it comes to discussing scholastic hockey in Orange County. Make that passionate with a capital P.

Piz is entering his second season as board president of the Interscholastic Hockey Federation, an organization founded in 1998 to organize high school roller hockey teams in Orange County into a collective base with an objective of seeking future status as an officially-sanctioned high school sport within the confines of the California Interscholastic Federation - the governing body for all high school sports in the state.

Ten years later, roller hockey remains off the CIF's list of approved sports, but that hasn't daunted community-minded individuals like Piz from promoting the game their children love.

And keep it rolling.

Serving approximately 700 student-athletes, the IHF has grown into a stunning example of what dedicated parents and community sponsors can accomplish despite not being adorned with the official CIF branding. Last season, 53 varsity and junior varsity teams representing 30 high schools participated in the IHF.

Supporters remain vocal, even when tough economic times threaten to undo much of the inroads that have been made over the last decade.

Following announcements last March that proposed budget cuts would kill roller hockey programs for El Toro, Laguna Hills, Mission Viejo and Trabuco Hills High Schools within the Saddleback Valley Unified School District, the IHF community joined hockey community supporters, including Anaheim Ducks CEO Michael Schulman, to present a petition to the school board to save the programs. The campaign proved to be a success.

"I'm proud to have worked with so many to accomplish so much," said Piz, a longtime youth sports advocate. "We continue to work with like-minded groups and individuals across the state and the country to further this sport at the scholastic level, and are likewise pleased for the growing support from the Anaheim Ducks in their ice and roller hockey community involvement."

Like most parents, Piz got involved in roller hockey through a child, in his case, his son **C.J.**, a recent graduate of Northwood High School. The younger Piz began playing hockey at age 3 in the cul-de-sac near his home with older boys and by age 4 had his first pair of micro-blades and began playing in a recreational league at the then-Irvine Hockey Club.

The elder Piz became increasingly involved as his son continued to play, even though he had never skated a game in his life.

"When he and his mates began skating faster backwards than I ever would forward, I gave up coaching, deferring them to others more skilled, and I kept up with my specialty as manager," Jay Piz said.

C.J. Piz progressed through club hockey into the scholastic ranks and was selected to play on Northwood's varsity team as a freshman in 2005. As part of each team's obligation to the IHF (when fielding more than two teams), the elder Piz was asked to become a representative to the board.

It was love at first sight.

"It was then that I began my high school league volunteer stint and would soon thereafter discover the passion I had for it," he said.

Piz's first season with the board was an active, hands-on learning experience, he said.

"Aside from governing play, board members also served as game supervisors, taking turns attending each game for assurance sake and producing game reports," Piz said. "With a season of nearly 500 games, many a cold night was spent on my feet at the rink with hours on the computer afterwards sending in the stats and my reports."

Piz's second season was more active and he assumed the role of marketing and communications director - "a natural fit," Piz said, as it was also his livelihood.

"I produced the league's logo and began branding the league with new materials and updating forms," he said. "Increasingly passionate, I began researching the game, governing bodies and other scholastic leagues around the country trying to learn more and contribute to a better game for our 600-plus student-athletes."

"By my third season, I was maintaining the league's new Web site and helping to implement new practices and technologies for the league. Among the new measures that season was producing our first annual all-star event and collaborating with sponsors, including the Ducks."

Following the league's 2007-08 season, then IHF president Art Wells stepped down after his five-year tenure with the board and handed the reins over to Piz - a two-year minimum commitment that he proudly accepted.

The IHF stepped in with the help of the Western Inline Hockey Association to co-produce the 2008 State Cup tournament, an event that typically concludes scholastic play in the southland following the IHF playoffs. The

move kept a tradition alive after the tournament's former promoter had bowed out.

The 2008-09 season was Piz's first heading the league. Milestones included alignment of the league under AAU Scholastic governance, implementation of a mandatory coach certification and the Save SVUSB Roller Hockey campaign. The IHF held its second annual all-star event, with Piz as emcee, and also served as the scholastic host for the California State Cup tournament and the AAU West Coast National Scholastic Championships. The Marina Vikings captured both varsity tournament titles in a show of force for the IHF.

The 2009-10 season, which began on Oct. 5, will present another first for Piz - an active volunteer in the scholastic community, but not with his own son as a participant.

Piz remains as just passionate about scholastic hockey, perhaps even more so following the "graduation" gift from his son, a four-year varsity standout on defense for the Timberwolves.

"As kids grow up and move on to new levels, the spirit for the scholastic level must remain intact for the benefit of those student-athletes still in the game and those yet to come, and for the survival of the game itself," he said. ☺



*One of IHF board president Jay Piz's many labors of love is serving as emcee of the organization's all-star event.*

## Kids encouraged to 'Try Hockey for Free' on November 7

The California Amateur Hockey Association has joined forces with OneGoal, USA Hockey, the Anaheim Ducks, Los Angeles Kings, San Jose Sharks, Ontario Reign and Stockton Thunder to create an opportunity on Nov. 7 for families to come to a local rink and try hockey for free.

The free trial has been created specifically for children ages 4-9 who are interested in trying hockey for the first time. The goal is to get as many first-time players on the ice and later transition them to



each host site's full-time programs.

Those who have access to a set of equipment are encouraged to bring it. For those who don't have equipment, participants only need to bring the following: a helmet, pair of gloves (they don't need to be hockey gloves - mittens are fine), a parent (to complete the registration form), skates (if possible) and a smile.

For more information, including participating rinks and registration details, visit [USAHockey.com/CAHAHockey](http://USAHockey.com/CAHAHockey).