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Concerning our Hockey Michigan community operating within the Amateur Athletic Union

May 1st 2012

HOCKEY MICHIGAN
2011-2012

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SUMMER DECISIONS ON MITES

USA Hockey's summer meeting will occur June 6-9th 2012 in Colorado Springs and the summer meeting for Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) will occur July 12-15th 2012 in Sault Ste. Marie. Of course, many parents and coaches thought that USAH, MAHA and AAU had already set stage for the 2012-2013 season at Mites. Well, AAU has. However, the above dates are important to any Mites wishing to play full-ice hockey.

Here in Michigan, MAHA president Atkinson had created a pilot program, which suspended the Cross-Ice mandate for the spring season. This kept some Mite teams within MAHA, who may otherwise have headed to AAU for full-ice opportunities. MAHA also proposed a rule change for this coming fall, which would allow some Full-Ice hockey (as well as require some Cross-Ice or Half-Ice to be required through their affiliate leagues). Many associations, coaches and parents now believe that they will be permitted to play unrestricted Full-Ice during the fall.

MAHAs proposal can still be changed and, as with any proposed rule change, it can always fail to get enough votes. Potential outcomes for the summer include; a failure to adopt any new MAHA language (meaning no Mite travel and extremely limited Mite full-ice), adoption of the current proposal (meaning some Mite Travel and Mite Full-Ice being limited by the leagues), or some new MAHA language (that could be sprung by MAHA at their meeting).

Also on the table with USA Hockey is their Youth Council & Player Development Committee Legislative Proposal #2, which would state that '**The age appropriate standard playing surface at 8 & Under is cross-ice or half-ice.**' This is part of an effort at USAH to

reinstate their concept of a nation-wide Cross-Ice and/or Half-Ice mandate. Along this same line, USA Hockey president Ron DeGregorio issued his President's Report dated March 2012, which contained the following quotes.

'This June, the Board of USA Hockey will cast a vote on having small area games as a standard for mite hockey games. It will require all mite games in our traditional season to be played on small surfaces such as cross ice or half ice. ... Over the next several years, all USA Hockey mite hockey during the traditional season will be RWB hockey.'

Please note that the Mr DeGregorio's entire report is available on the Hockey Michigan website at: www.hockey-michigan.org/Documents.html

Unfortunately, last spring and summer associations, coaches and parents were left in limbo, while waiting to see what MAHA would enact for Mites. And of course, the efforts to create an AAU alternative within Michigan turned into a mad dash, following that summer meeting.

This year, it's fortunately that Hockey Michigan is already in place and hasn't been waiting to see what others may or may not do. AAU has expanded at Mites and will continue to do so.

MISINFORMATION 101

Since the 2011-2012 regular season has ended, there appears to be a concerted effort of misinformation about Mite Full-ice. Of course, the number one issue has been the MAHA proposal. A great many people have been in the forums stating that (1) MAHA has reversed the Cross-Ice mandate and therefore (2) Mites are returning to them.

Well, clearly the first premise is completely untrue. As stated in the previous article, MAHA has merely created a Spring pilot program to allow full-ice and then created a proposal, giving the appearance of a reversal for Fall. This does buy time for MAHA officials, who now get to avoid being harassed by associations, coaches and parents throughout the Spring and Summer. However, people shouldn't be surprised to see what is commonly known as a Bait & Switch when MAHA begins its Summer Meeting. Associations, teams, coaches and parents will find that any full-ice has been severely limited by MAHA. And if USAH adopts its language in June then MAHA may simply stick with Cross-Ice and point to USAH as being the reason.

As for the second premise (that teams are returning to MAHA), if that were the case then why has AAU Michigan added almost 200 additional players during this Spring and why has the AAU Director been so busy certifying rosters?

Last Summer and Fall, all of the misinformation centered upon several points. AAU teams will never be able to; buy ice-time, find referees, enter tournaments and they won't find anyone to play. Well, plenty of ice-time, referees, tournaments and teams probably played a bit too much. This Spring, Summer and Fall we are being told by others that AAU members were only interested in the Cross-Ice issue. MAHA has reversed itself (untrue) and therefore AAU members are happy to return to MAHA (also untrue).

AAU will sink or swim depending upon what our AAU Members think, not what others think!

AAU MICHIGAN - ICE HOCKEY ANNUAL MEETING

The AAU Michigan - Ice Hockey Committee will be hosting its Annual Meeting on Sunday **July 22nd 2012 at 11:00am** @ the **Westfield Activity Center** (the Westfield is located at 2700 Westfield in Trenton Michigan). Each AAU ice hockey club will be permitted to cast one vote on any given issues (only individuals who are listed as a Club Representative possess voting rights for that given club). However, all AAU members are welcome to attend.

Additional notices will be repeated and an agenda will be provided as we approach the date of the meeting. However, initially expect that topics will likely include (but not be limited to):

- a Report on the 2011-2012 season and plans for 2012-2013
- Divisional and team updates for the 2012-2013 season and plans for State Playoffs
- Votes affecting AAU Michigan - Ice Hockey; By-Laws, Rules & Regulations, etc.
- a Review of USA Hockey (USAH) and Michigan Amateur Hockey Association (MAHA) changes.

AAU EXPANSION @ JUNIORS

The Northeast Junior Hockey League (NJHL) is the newest junior league to affiliate with the AAU (please note that they may change their name). The league has already announced 6 east-coast teams, many from the now folded Independent Junior Hockey League (IJHL), which had previously operated within USA Hockey. The teams are the; Syracuse Stampede, Trenton Habs, Jr Mariners, Eastern Kodiaks, Cape Cod Islanders and New England Stars. The league can be found on their website at: www.thenjhl.com



There is also an interesting article at: www.thejuniorhockeynews.com covering the likely flight of a great many junior leagues to AAU. The article '**USA Hockey or AAU, the Debate Raging in Tier III Junior Hockey**' describes how USA Hockey has been attempting to limit the expansion of junior leagues. According to the article, this is the issue forcing junior leagues to choose AAU over USAH.



As has been reported within this newsletter during the past, the Western States Hockey League left USA Hockey in favor of the AAU for the 2011-2012 season and has already expanded the number of franchises.

According to The Junior Hockey News, several other junior leagues are voting on moves to AAU this summer.

As an editorial note, to help understand the flight of junior leagues from USAH, an interesting side-trip would be to study the proposals on the agenda for USA Hockey's annual meetings. On any given year, you'll find a vast number of proposals related to junior hockey. A classic case of micromanagement.

ARTIE NORIAN

This April our Michigan youth hockey community suffered the loss of a youth hockey innovator. On behalf of Hockey Michigan and AAU Michigan, we wish to offer our condolences to the Norian family and to the staff of the Ice Box Sports Center on the passing of our friend Artemis (Artie) Norian.

Those who knew Mrs Norian well will remember that she was clearly one of the hardest working youth hockey advocates within our state, certainly during the past 50 years.

During the early 1970s, Artie and her husband Jerry were on the cutting edge of hockey with their privately owned Ice Box. This was during a time when almost every other ice rink was publicly owned and operated. Few thought that a privately run rink could succeed. Forty years later and the Ice Box has grown into 3 rinks and private facilities have become far more common.

Today many are unaware that once there was no such thing as Spring Hockey here in Michigan. That is until Artie and Jerry created their first Spring League at the Ice Box. For decades theirs was the largest Spring League within our state, drawing teams from throughout the greater Detroit area. A trademark of Artie's management style was her ability to juggle such a massive schedule while working around the individual desires of so many coaches. All of this in a pre-computer era, using old-school paper ledgers.

Despite her innovative contributions to youth hockey, Mrs Norian was best known for her incessant working behind the scenes. Trying to assure that every team could thrive and more importantly that every player had a home within hockey. She made it a point to keep informed about every team coming through the doors of her Ice Box. If a team had been struggling to find a goal-tender or just one more player to fill their roster then she always knew about it. And a coach would find an unexpected phone call from Artie, informing him of a possible player looking for a team. Again, in an age predating emails and smart-phones.

Lastly, it may be difficult for those who are under the age of 50 to understand. However, it was extremely rare to find a woman managing such a facility at that time. Keep in mind that the Ice Box slightly predates passage of the Equal Rights Act (ERA). Simply enacting laws doesn't change society. People need to see examples over a period of time in order to change the way others view such things. From the 1970s on, countless young women (and young men for that matter) passed through the Ice Box doors and managed to see an important symbol of change.

We'll miss you Artie.



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The Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) is one of the largest, non-profit, volunteer, sports organizations in the United States. A multi-sport organization, the AAU is dedicated exclusively to the promotion and development of amateur sports and physical fitness programs.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PLAYER, TEAM OR ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP, CONTACT AAU OFFICES at 407-934-7200 OR VISIT
www.aauhockey.org**