

WYH PLACEMENT PROCESS - March, 2017

Key components of this process include:

- 3 on-ice placement sessions – with a mix of skills, small area games and scrimmages;
- 1 off-ice team finalization meeting;
- Input from on-ice placement team *combined with* input from current season coach – this combination of information concerning each player offers a more complete picture of a player's skills and abilities than simply the on-ice evaluation alone;
- 6-9 on-ice Evaluators on each Evaluation Team (ET), depending on the number of teams at the rising level and the level being evaluated. All members of the ET evaluate each player after the on-ice sessions. Individual evaluations are discussed as a group until consensus is reached for that session. This team approach ensures that no one Evaluator alone makes the determination of the team on which a player is placed, rather a group consensus is achieved; and
- monitoring of the process by the WYH President and ACE Coordinator to ensure that the process WYH has adopted is adhered to;
- despite an uncertain number of registrants from year-to-year, WYH does not “cut” players from the program and is committed to identify a team for all players who register for “travel” hockey.

Steps in the Process

The WYH Placement Process begins in late February, when the President and ACE Coordinator present a slate of “Placement Coordinators” (PC) to the Board of Directors for their review. The Placement Coordinators are to be independent evaluators (not having coached anyone on the ice in the previous season or be related to anyone on the ice). A PC is named for each Youth or Girls-Only age classification where Placement sessions are scheduled (i.e. where it is expected that more than one team may be placed at a given age group or where players may have to be elevated to an older age group in order to fill rosters with an appropriate number of players). Simultaneous with this process, the ACE Coordinator solicits applications from all who wish to be considered for coaching positions for the following season. Once the Placement process is complete, and team assignments are finalized, the ACE Coordinator and President will review the applicants for the Head Coaching positions and select the best candidates for each position, recognizing that some coaches may have applied or be qualified for more than one position. The final decisions on the candidates will be made **ONLY AFTER** all team assignments are finalized. Pursuant to that, the ACE Coordinator and President will then present a slate of proposed Head Coaches to the Board of Directors for approval at the next scheduled board meeting. It is important to note that the Placement process and Head Coach application/selection process are two separate exercises, despite the fact that they run concurrently.

The PC at each level prepares a plan for drills and “runs” the on-ice and off-ice sessions once Placements begin. With input from the President and the ACE Coordinator, the PC selects a team of 6-9 on-ice Evaluators. In most cases, the Evaluators are the current Head Coaches (or Assistant Coaches should the Head Coach be unavailable) within each age classification being placed and the current Head Coaches for the age classification one birth year below.

For example, the Evaluators for PeeWees typically includes all the current PeeWee Head Coaches and the current Squirt Head Coaches. While WYH would prefer to have all Head Coaches available for all the Placement sessions, we recognize that our volunteer coaches sometimes have family or work conflicts that prevent their attendance. In a case where a Head Coach is unavailable to participate in the Placement process, an Assistant Coach to that particular Head Coach for that team typically participates in the absence of the Head Coach. The PC also identifies several drill runners, who do not participate in the Evaluation process. If it becomes necessary to add additional Evaluators to round out an ET of 6-9, the PC has the authority to select suitable Evaluators. For instance, if there are only 2 Bantam and 2 PeeWee teams in the current season, the Bantam PC has the authority to add a fifth qualified Evaluator who is familiar with the Bantam age group. Similarly if the PC feels that additional input from a coach more familiar with the technical aspects of goaltending is warranted, coach(es) may be added to the ET for the purposes of reaching consensus on the placement of goalies.

Also, Whenever a female player participates in placements for a Youth Division team, WYH will make reasonable efforts to have two female evaluators (with appropriate USA Hockey in-force CEP certification and age specific module for the age category to be evaluated, as well as experience coaching players at the level they are evaluating) participate and vote in the placement process. In the event two such female evaluators are not available to participate and vote in the placement process, male evaluators who currently coach (or have previously coached) all female teams may take the place of the female evaluators and participate and vote in the placement process.

Moreover, prior to the commencement of Placements, all Head Coaches must submit to the President and ACE Coordinator a ranked list of all players on their team with the most effective player at the top of the list. These ranked lists will be kept private by the President and ACE Coordinator and will be reviewed by the President and ACE Coordinator in between on-ice Placement sessions and the Final Placement meeting, as necessary, and referred to in the event that consensus is difficult to achieve on a player's placement or when a player's current Head Coach is not present at one of the Placement meetings.

If they are not already part of the ET by virtue of being a Head Coach, the President and ACE Coordinator are not members of the ETs but they may also be on the ice, or in the bench area, during Placements to monitor the process. If they are not a member of the ET they do not have a vote in arriving at consensus on a player's placement, their sole role is to ensure that the integrity of the placement process is maintained during the discussions leading towards a consensus.

The PC designs the placement sessions based on the age bracket. For example, the Mite/U8 age level Evaluators will be primarily looking to assess skating skills where at the Bantam/U14 level the ETs seek to determine which players combine a variety of skills, "see the ice" and play the game most effectively. Through skill drills, small area games and "scrimmages" players are evaluated based on: skating (includes both technical ability and speed/quickness), shooting, puck handling, passing and "game sense". For PeeWees and Bantams, the ability to play the game with more than just incidental body contact is also factored into the evaluation. At each session, members of the ET are provided by the President/ACE Coordinator with a spreadsheet listing all players who are participating in Placements and Evaluators are required to evaluate all players who take to the ice. If the President and ACE Coordinator determine from the number of registrants that it is appropriate to place three teams at a given age level, each member of the ET will place all players into one of five buckets: "A", "A/B bubble", "B", "B/C bubble" & "C" denoting the players accordingly on their copy of the worksheet.

After each placement session, the PC will organize a meeting of the ET (typically in a private room at the rink), for the purpose of developing a consensus evaluation on each player. The PC keeps track on a master spreadsheet of the consensus which is reached. During the evaluation discussions, when a child, nephew or niece, of any coach is being discussed, that coach must leave the room while a consensus is reached on that player. The discussion to arrive at a consensus placement for each player is based on two key pieces of input: 1) the collective independent evaluations by each member of the ET for every player on the ice and 2) the input from any player's coach from the current or past seasons. The PC will poll the evaluators for their assessment on each player and a group consensus will be agreed upon. If a consensus cannot be readily reached, it is at this time that a current or past coach of a player is asked to offer insight into the performance of that child over a longer period of time and in the context of a team. (Every child who played the previous season for WYH will have at least one coach on the ET that is familiar with that player current season and/or has coached the child in the past.)

After each in-rink ET meeting the President/ACE Coordinator will collect and retain all the on-ice worksheets. Using the master spreadsheet created by the PC for each session, the President or ACE Coordinator prepares a new spreadsheet for each subsequent placement session that summarizes the current placement status arrived by consensus for each player. Over the course of the placement process, from session to session, players may move "up" or "down". Some players may move between several buckets (e.g., from "C" to "B/C bubble" to "B"). Generally (although this is not always true), the number of children placed in "bubble" groups can be expected to change from session to session, with the objective of the ET arriving at a consensus and settling on a team above or below the bubble bucket for each player.

Regarding the Placement sessions with time dedicated to scrimmaging, it should be noted that the PC may select specific players to oppose one another in order to determine how they perform relative

to one another, or compared to a returning "A" player. GIVEN THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS INVOLVED AT PLACEMENTS, EQUAL ICE TIME DURING THE SCRIMMAGES SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED FOR ALL PLAYERS. Since the scrimmage(s) present an opportunity to assess players in a competitive situation, the focus of the scrimmage sessions is likely to be on those players who

remain on the “bubble” between two teams, where a placement decision still needs to be made. Any player who is clearly a consensus A, B, C or D-level player (based on his/her performance in the prior placement sessions) may receive less ice-time during the scrimmage session(s) than those who are on a “bubble”. That said, WYH is committed to insuring that every player receives a fair and thorough review during the course of the 3 placement sessions.

Finally, a week or so after the last on-ice session, an off-ice meeting is held to finalize the placements. The PCs and the ETs attend the final meeting organized by the President and ACE Coordinator and at least one member of the Conduct Committee is invited to attend as well. At the final meeting, each child is discussed and the teams are finalized. Most of the discussion in the final meeting focuses on the remaining “bubble” players. No decisions are final until a consensus reached. Given that WYH does not control how many players at a given age group register for Placements and/or decide whether or not to accept their team assignment after Placement results have been announced, team sizes can vary from year to year.

While WYH makes every effort to set full-ice/full-season team sizes at approximately thirteen players, (not including goal tenders) but given that players occasionally withdraw after teams have been configured and announced, sometimes the need arises to consolidate an age bracket, or move second year players to an older age bracket to best allocate the number of players who have accepted their roster spot by making the first payment for the following season on May 15th. Should the need to consolidate teams arise, the President and ACE Coordinator will utilize the rankings of the ET from Placements, the past season intra-team rankings and input from members of the ET in deciding which players will be moved to consolidate the age group that lacks a sufficient number of players for viable teams of approximately 13 players.

When it becomes necessary to consider consolidating teams within an age group, the President may also reach out to adjoining towns and our leagues to inquire whether or not there are any non-Winchester players who are interested in joining WYH to fill the roster of a team in need of players. This is the only instance where non-Winchester residents are invited to join WYH, and once a player has joined WYH that player is eligible to attend placements in each season thereafter so long as they continue to participate uninterrupted in the WYH program.

It is important to note that it has been WYH’s practice, (confirmed by several WYH board votes in recent years) that players returning for the second year of an age bracket cannot be moved down a level (e.g. B to C) unless they are on the lowest level team as a first year player and the bracket expands (i.e., has more teams) in the season in which the player would be a second-year player in the same age bracket. That is, if the PeeWee bracket grows from 3 teams (A, B and C) in one season to 4 teams (A, B, C1 and C2) in the next season, first year players from the PeeWee C team (the lowest level team that season) could possibly be placed on the next season’s PeeWee C2 team as a second year player, if that placement is warranted by the consensus of the ET. If the age bracket remains the same (or contracts in the number of teams) it is never possible for a second year player to be moved down a level.

After the placement results and teams for the next season have been announced, (usually by mid-April) the President is occasionally contacted by parents concerned about their child’s placement. It has been past practice when parents feel compelled to contact the WYH President about Placements that the President may share with the parent how that player was evaluated at each step in the placement process. However, these infrequent conversations between parents and the WYH President will NOT:

1. include a discussion of any other player except that parent’s child,
2. include a discussion of the recently concluded season’s coaching staff ranking of any players,
3. result in the a player's placement being changed.

The final step in the process of finalizing the travel team roster for the upcoming season is that new Head Coaches are proposed to the WYH Board by the President and ACE Coordinator. WYH is proud of our mantra, “*The coaches follow the kids.*” What this means is that Head Coaches for the

upcoming season are identified AFTER the players are placed on teams, NOT prior to players being placed. WYH Head Coaches are subsequently given the authority to choose their Assistant Coaches (with input from the ACE Coordinator, President and Conduct Committee) provided that the prospective Assistant Coaches are in good standing with WYH.

Since the final few players placed on most teams are generally discussed at length, their placements are not made haphazardly. WYH believes that it is very important when making these final placement decisions that in addition to a player's hockey skill we must have a good sense from the player's coach regarding that player's past performance, his/her commitment to the team, demeanor, attitude, coachability, etc.. It is the current opinion of the WYH Board that evaluators who consider a player's most recent season's performance, in conjunction with a consensus opinion by the on-ice ET, are best positioned to make placement decisions.