

New Mite Program for USA Hockey and Illinois

This coming season some exciting modifications are taking place for our 8U-Mite hockey programs that will benefit children in this age group. USA Hockey affiliates are in the process of transitioning to a new curriculum for mite age players called Red, White & Blue Hockey, otherwise known as Mite Cross-Ice Hockey. Click [HERE](#) to download brochure. Red, White & Blue Hockey is a part of the American Development Model (ADM), which is a long-term athlete development program for all youth players from ages 4 - 20.

The ADM puts the development of the athlete above all else and provides optimal skill development at ages when those skills can be most effectively acquired. USA Hockey created the ADM through many years of studying the best practices of hockey development programs around the world, as well as general athlete development programs used by all sports. The ADM is fully endorsed by the National Hockey League and is a development model for players of ALL ability levels. The Red, White & Blue program builds a strong foundation of skills and the structure promotes an environment that is fun, yet challenging. Age-appropriate playing surfaces keep more players involved in the game and provides more opportunity for all players to develop their skills, handle the puck more, score more goals and have more fun.

This season, USA Hockey leagues across Illinois, such as NIHL and NWHL, will begin their full-ice mite seasons a bit later than previously. From September 1 through November 30, all mites will play cross-ice or half-ice hockey along with their normal station based practices. Up to 15 full-ice mite games will be allowed starting December 1, 2013 through the end of the season. The only exception to this will be Thanksgiving tournaments. Mite teams will be allowed to play in one Thanksgiving tournament prior to the December 1 full-ice league start date. As with last year, no 6U's will be allowed to play up on a full-ice team. Mite teams will be able to play one out of state tournament during the season.

We recognize there are still some that fear not playing 30-40 full-ice games at 8U hockey is hindering their child's development. That is the furthest thing from the truth. Research has shown that that cross-ice/half-ice games more than double the amount of time that players have the opportunity to test their skills under game conditions. Not only does this and other research support cross or half-ice play for kids at this age level, but so does the NHL, the top hockey league in the world. For instance, about 35% of the associations in Michigan have already been using the new ADM model for the past two seasons and are seeing great results in development and increased participation. Parents and coaches in these associations now recognize the advantages of the entire ADM concept, including cross-ice/half-ice hockey. They understand that hockey is a marathon not a sprint, and it is important that young players develop a love of the game while developing their skills.

We in Illinois are proud to be able to offer our young players these world-class programs that will make them better athletes and hockey players, all while allowing them to have more fun in the process.