

Summer 2017

As summer winds down and the school buses start up, it can only mean one thing...the start of the Western Hockey season is rapidly approaching! Your Board has been hard at work focusing on the 2017-18 season! We, like you, have a child (or children) in the program and work on a volunteer basis. We know it is important to get information out to you on a regular basis and do so as timely as possible, understand that in many cases we are waiting for league info or confirmation on things prior to releasing to the members. Essentially communication, support and volunteerism will make our organization the best it can be for our kids. We all have a part and a responsibility to do so. Please do your part and step up to assist in this process.

Currently ALL teams are at or nearing our self induced capacity of 15 skaters and 2 goalies. This is wonderful news for the health of the organization as we will begin the season up in excess of 20 young athletes over last season! We continue to get additional inquires and players searching for teams or moving back into the area. Any player coming in late is evaluated prior to any team placement. As you know, we have moved to paid head coaches at the three upper levels as we look to move more towards the increased competition concept in the coming years. We are all but phasing out the "Parent" head coach whenever possible although we will always look for parent assistants! In the event that we are unable to find a suitable coach we will defer to a parent head coach until that can be achieved. In recent years it has proved challenging making this a reality and this season is no different. Unfortunately we have recently said goodbye to Tim Hanlon and Josh Branchflower as they look to better their career opportunities off the ice. We certainly will miss them and support them as they transition into their new roles. Additionally Billy Cahill is in limbo so we are waiting to see if he can contribute in any fashion this season. Our website will be updated again with updated bios of all coaches so you can easily access background on your child's coach as well as contact info.

We want to continue to promote Western value moving forward in hopes of keeping our own home grown talent here and will strive to make that happen thru many different channels on the ice as well as off the ice. Currently our "graduates" make up 75% of the local HS rosters (NFI, BBD, and Newtown - all of whom have won or competed for State Championships in the last 12 years) We will continue to work with Pro Crease and at times with IPH again this year and are looking to perhaps will re-introduce some voluntary dry land training to incorporate into our program. Practices will take on more of a station based ADM approach at times focusing on fundamentals so we can develop the kids appropriately. Coaching director Bob Stearns (Joel Barlow Head Coach and Wesco) will be present at many of our practices to formulate drills and a program that will start at the Mite level and continue thru the Bantam level adding different elements as the kids progress. Doug Ballard will be running all the Mite on ice practices utilizing the USA Hockey ADM format! We continue to work with the rink to add more of a Western flavor to the building so we can truly call it home.

We need you to help us get there as well. Aside from our normal schedulers, team managers, clock operators and coaching assistants, WE NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR SUB COMMITTEES! We are still looking to form committees for Fundraising and Sponsorships, Marketing and Advertising, Equipment and Western Wear, Banquet and Events, Scholarship, and Hospitality. As discussed prior, we will be looking for

tradesmen and handymen (and women) for a possible work weekend to assist in some locker room enhancements, Please email Isabel (president@jrcolonialhockey.net) or Kristen (Secretary@jrcolonial.net) to communicate your desire to help and specify at what area! We also want and need your constructive feedback to continue and will work to make that happen. Please expect us to continue to solicit thru simple e-communications like this, survey monkey, Western newsletters and organizational events.

We want to reinforce that our governing bodies are USA Hockey and the CHC (CT Hockey Conference) and much of what we do is framed by them and mandated to membership. Both our registrar and CHC Rep work closely with these two organizations. Last season the CHC introduced a homegrown rating system, although not perfect the intent is to level the competitive balance of youth hockey here in Connecticut. Adjustments have been made and the outcome will be determined as time goes on. One major rule change to let everyone know about. When a team is killing a penalty, in the spirit of development, the shorthanded team can no longer ice the puck as if they do, a faceoff will ensue as if the teams were at even strength! The idea is to get the kids to have confidence to carry the puck out beyond the blue line. We do subscribe to and are working towards becoming a recognized USA Hockey ADM (American Development Model) Organization. We believe in the concept of the small area games and station training when and where applicable. We have become an official NYR Youth Hockey Affiliate Organization and are awaiting the final contract. We will share more on this when we can. We also want to stress that is important to have a respectful and strong relationship with DIA as once again they are offering us free ice and the support of their coaches for training camp week.

Here are the important dates you want to remember...

Last Skills Session... Tuesday August 29th - 5:30 mite/squirt and 6:40 PW/Bantam (walk-ins \$20pp)

Opening family Picnic...Saturday Sept 2nd 5-8pm at Hatters Park for those not travelling on the Holiday

Training camp Week...Tues Sept 5th Thru Fri Sept 8th - 5:30 mites / 5:40 squirts / 6:40 PW / 6:50 Selects & Bantam (Friday night session will be 8-9pm) - groups will rotate between the rinks daily, check the TV!

Official First Practice...Monday Sept 11th - all practices 1 hour in length

Weekly practices all groups: Monday Goalies w/ Procrease and skills/rotating team work @ 6:40

Mites @ 5:30 (tues and thurs)

Squirts @ 5:40 (tues) and 6:40 (thurs)

PW's @ 6:40 (tues) and 6:50 (thurs)

Selects/Bant @ 6:50 (tues) and 8:00 (thurs)

Golf Tournament...Oct 5th @ Mount Kisco CC - get your foursome today! Don't play golf then volunteer to help and/or solicit your corporation for a donation or gift for Western! Contact Joe Celeberti @ josephceleberti@gmail.com (practice schedule has been adjusted this week to accommodate all!

Tournaments - Our teams will be experiencing many different tournaments this season with each team travelling out of state at least once for an overnight and then locally in State to attend additional tournaments. Most tournaments will take place between mid October and early December in the interest of team bonding. Individual team Tournament information will be forthcoming from your managers shortly including Tournament name, venues and hotel room blocks set up as a courtesy should you wish to take advantage of a discounted hotel rate.

Coaches...We are still looking for a few Dad weekend bench coaches for the Mite Minor & Major level...please email Joe as above if you have interest as he will be the HC of the Mite Majors! Anyone wishing to assist on the bench or on ice at any level will need to contact us first and complete screening, Safesport, and USAH training to be able to coach or assist with Western. No exceptions! For open positions below we have cast a wide net and interviewed a number of potential candidates. Until the right fit arrives please have faith and understanding that those parents who are filling in on a temporary basis are qualified and up to date with all certifications needed.

Mite Minor - open (See above - as always need new parents to step up and man the bench)

Mite Major - HC Joe Celeberti

Squirt Minor - open but will be occupied by Parent HC combo Meade, Cheneski, Bennett, Garvey and Kendall to begin

Squirt Major - HC Tom Klinger

PW Minor - HC Mike Campbell

PW Major - open but will be occupied by Parent HC Jeff McCabe to begin

PW Select HC Nick Garafolo

Bantam - open but several candidates in final interview stage and should be in place shortly

As always, we said a lot in a short space and hope that you work with us to enhance the Western way! In the end, rumors and innuendo serve no purpose except to cause disruption. Honesty, transparency and communication are the key to running a successful program. Please have the confidence to bring anything you hear and see or any question you have to The Board as we do want to put the kids interests before all others! As a fellow CHC Member Organization said it so well, "With the start of the 2017-2018 season underway, the WCYHA BOD would like to wish everyone a safe and fun experience. The season can seem like a long stretch at times and over the course of the next several months, there will be occasions when emotions can run high.

If there comes a time during the season where you need to voice a concern, please remember that all inquiries must start and end with the coaching staff. The coach will initiate communication with the appropriate person on the BOD, to begin working on a resolution.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and remember:

This is the time **in the kids lives** to have fun and enjoy the experience.

Please do not be the parent this sign was made for! We thank you for your continued loyalty and look forward to your questions and concerns."

Warmest Regards,

The Western Board of Directors