

## **West Fargo Mite Hockey FAQ**

***Q: There are changes to the Mite program this year, can you explain?***

A: Yes, West Fargo is modifying it's Mite program to further develop young players. The main changes are on the games up to January 1 which will be played half ice. After January 1, games will be played on full ice. Attached to this FAQ is the document from USA Hockey that outlines the benefits of this program in greater detail.

***Q: What was the main consideration in this change at the Mite level?***

A: Player development and building stronger skills foundation. We are committed to having an environment that creates learning opportunities in a fun atmosphere.

***Q: Will our practices change?***

A: No. Our Mites have always practiced on shared ice. If there is any practice change, we would encourage more practices.

***Q: Is the only change the Games for November and December?***

A: No. Although the game format for the early season is a change, we also want to have more practice time for all Mite players. USA Hockey recommends 3 practices to every game. We are working to get closer to that ratio. We are also evaluating how to continue to challenge 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year Mites at a higher level.

***Q: My Mite has been looking forward to traveling, will the Mites still travel?***

A: Yes, the Mites will still travel. Mite teams will play teams from Valley City, Jamestown, Mayville, Wahpeton, Fargo and possibly other area teams.

***Q: Will we still have games up until January 1 or will there just be practices?***

A: Yes we will have games in the months of November and December. Most of the games that are traditionally scheduled in November are between West Fargo teams. We will also be able to play the Fargo Mite teams on half ice and reduce the out of town travel.

***Q: Did we make this change just because Fargo did?***

A: No. This change was made to make our young hockey players even more successful and build their skills foundation. Fargo evolved to this level for many of the same reasons West Fargo is embracing this evolution. Both Grand Forks and Moorhead provide similar programs for their Mite age players.

***Q: Did we make this change because the Fargo teams have won games by a large margin for the past few years?***

A: No, absolutely not. The Fargo teams we and other ND teams have faced are primarily 2<sup>nd</sup> year players. The Fargo teams only offer the travel option to players in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Mites. WFHA has had equal teams consisting of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year players and allowed all Mites to travel.

***Q: How will this new format help to develop players?***

A: This will help our young players work on small game tactics, encourage passing and teamwork. Other programs in our area have been doing this or are going to this style to build a strong foundation. USA Hockey stresses player development and fun. This format should put more players on the puck during these games.

***Q: How can half ice games be good for our players?***

A: Our Mites have varying skill levels. On full ice, the strongest players can get in open ice and take the puck all the way. With smaller ice, passing and teamwork will be required. This will develop all the players on the team.

***Q: Will there still be tournaments for Mites?***

A: Yes, the Mites will still travel to one tournament and host the West Fargo Mite tournament.

***Q: Why did the Board make this decision so quietly without input?***

A: The topic of a change to the Mite program has been on the Board agenda for the past 4 months. Many hockey resources were consulted, including USA Hockey representatives. The information was gathered to bring it to a vote at the August meeting.

***Q: Why was this change made after the fees were set and increased for the years?***

A: The cost to put a Mite team on the ice is \$13,500 per year or over \$900 per player. This cost is less than \$5 per hour. Our fee that we charge the players is \$215 and is supplemented by the raffle, donations and charitable gaming. This format will not reduce overall costs for the team as we work toward adding a few more practices. These costs will offset any cost reductions with any half ice games that are played in November and December

***Q: What are we doing to develop the older Mite 2<sup>nd</sup> year players?***

A: There are several ideas that we are considering for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year players and would welcome additional input.

1. Consider offering a travel team to all willing 2<sup>nd</sup> year players. This team would be in addition to the standard team and players on this team would be required to attend both team practices and games.

2. Consider offering a late season team to all willing 2<sup>nd</sup> year players to have additional practices and perhaps two additional tournaments. This team would start up in mid February and run through March.
3. Consider dividing 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year players into 3 on 3 groups to have additional small game and practice time with the players at their level

All of these are options to consider and discuss. WFHA does not have to take this step if there is not support for it from the players and parents.

***Q: Why would we consider separating older Mite 2<sup>nd</sup> year players for some part of the season?***

A: This may provide a hockey experience that is similar to summer hockey programs that generally play with a group of players at their birth year. In addition we encourage all players to explore summer team possibilities and as they get older the USA Hockey select hockey programs.

***Q: I still want more information, how do I get it?***

A: You can contact any Board member and attend any Board meeting. The contact information is listed at [www.westfargohockey.com](http://www.westfargohockey.com) . Meetings are normally held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of each month in the hockey office at 623 Main Ave Suite 203. Please contact a Board member a week prior to get on the agenda. This topic is on the agenda for discussion at 7:15 on Sunday September 16. After this meeting, we will go back to the regular meeting schedule during the season of Monday nights.

## Cross-Ice: The Advantages of Cross-Ice Practicing and Playing

The USA Hockey Cross-Ice program is based on a model of practicing and playing hockey across the ice surface as compared to practicing and playing lengthwise along the full length of the ice surface. This cross-ice practicing and playing model has been used in many of the leading hockey nations in the world for a number of years and has stood the test of time. It has been shown that children who begin their hockey training in this environment have an outstanding hockey experience.

Parents may ask the question why should my child play cross-ice, what will this bring? I want my child playing like the professionals do, full-ice, because I want my child to experience "real hockey."

To help address these questions, let's think about a child trying to skate with a puck while performing a drill from one end of the rink to the other, how long will this take? How much energy will this require? Will the player's decision-making skills be enhanced more in the close action of the smaller cross-ice surface or in the wide-open area of the full-ice surface? In which situation will the child be more involved in the action?

A study of hockey games played on the full-ice surface by George Kingston in 1976 found the following:

In a sixty-minute running time hockey game between 6-8 year old children, the average player had possession of the puck for 20.7 seconds. Top National Hockey League and international professional players were also timed and no player exceeded 85 seconds of puck possession time. In a sixty-minute children's game the actual playing time of the game was 20 minutes and 38 seconds. Taking this into consideration, the individual player is only on the ice every third or fourth shift depending on how many players are on the team, resulting in even less ice time. An average of less than 0.5 shots per game for youth players and only 1.5 shots per game for junior and professional players.

The study concluded that:

- For young players in the "full-ice game model" of development, the youngest players would require 180 games and the older youth players would require 80 games to enjoy 60 minutes of actual puck possession time to execute their stick handling, passing, pass receiving and shooting skills.
- Professional and international players would require 60 games to ensure 60 minutes of puck control skill development.

Many players never touched the puck in the game, especially in youth hockey.

USA Hockey firmly believes that by giving children the opportunity to participate in the Cross-Ice hockey program, which supports cross-ice practicing and playing, that their enjoyment of hockey as well as their hockey skills will be greatly enhanced.

### Cross-Ice Program

To help you further understand the benefits of the cross-ice practicing and playing model, some of the advantages are listed below.

#### *PRACTICING*

- The children have more energy with which they can improve their skills when they are skating 85 feet across the ice surface

as opposed to the 200 feet length of the ice surface.

- Group sizes become smaller which means learning and teaching will become more effective.
- The close feeling of belonging to a team will motivate a child to participate with even greater enthusiasm.
- Drills designed according to the varying skill level of players within the group are easier to organize.
- More puck contact, resulting in improved puck control skills.
- More repetition/frequency in drills in one ice session.
- Decision-making skills are enhanced, as more decisions must be made more frequently at a higher tempo.

#### *ACTUAL GAME*

- Playing on a smaller rink results in increased puck possession time for each player.
- Individual technical skills develop more quickly.
- More frequent line changes in the game means more ice time for each player.
- Line changes are made quickly since the players are directly beside the playing surface.
- Each player's activity increases greatly.
- Scoring skills are enhanced since the players have more shooting opportunities.
- The goalkeeper's reading of the game and reaction to changing game situations become more effective.
- More repetition for goalkeepers.
- The game is full of continuously changing situations.
- The speed in playing situations increase, which will require quicker mental and physical reactions by the players.
- Due to increased tempo, all of the team members take part in solving the playing situations, which leads to a sharing of responsibilities between players.
- The feeling of being an important part of the action increases because of the small size of the rink.
- Hockey sense, or understanding the principles of the game, is being developed at a young age.
- There are no unnecessary breaks in the game (i.e. off-sides, icing).

#### *GENERAL ORGANIZATION*

- More efficient use of ice time and space.
- The size of the rink is in proportion with the size of the players.
- USA Hockey recommends that teams play with two or three units of four or five players and one goalkeeper, which results in each player having more ice time.
- More ice time for practicing and playing is made available to more teams within a single association.
- Many teams can practice together by sharing the ice surface.

#### *GENERAL SPIRIT OF PARTICIPATION AND FUN*

- More children get a chance to play ice hockey.
- More children will experience a feeling of success when playing hockey.
- The same exciting and fun environment as in a "real" game is created.
- More and less gifted children will benefit from close/tight action on the ice.
- Children are excited and motivated to continue playing hockey.

- Hockey will be more appealing and rewarding to a wider range of children and their parents.

Click here to [print this page](#) or press CTRL-P

Supported browser are Internet Explorer and Netscape 6. To print background colors with Explorer 5 or higher, please go in your internet options, click on the advanced tab and check the background colors option.