



HOCKEY CALGARY

INFORMATION BULLETIN

Date: June 20, 2023 #2301
To: Hockey Calgary Member Associations
From: Kevin Kobelka – Executive Director
CC: HC Board, HC Governors, Association Presidents

SUBJECT: GHC Structure Announcement 2023-24

Female hockey is the fast-growing demographic in Calgary. In 2018, with the support of Hockey Calgary, Girls Hockey Calgary Association (GHC) exited the Rocky Mountain Female Hockey League (RMFHL) and moved under the umbrella of Hockey Calgary with the goal of making female hockey more accessible here at home.

At that time, GHC had a little over 500 players. Based on this size, we adopted a modified competition model that saw some GHC teams compete in newly-created Hockey Calgary Female Divisions and some GHC teams compete in existing Hockey Calgary Co-ed Divisions. We have operated in this fashion for the last five years, steadily increasing the quantity and size of our female divisions as GHC's numbers grew to over 1100.

Hockey Calgary and GHC work closely to evaluate this competition structure year after year, to create the best possible environment for players to thrive. Female hockey in Calgary has now reached the size to support a true female league across all age categories. Hockey Calgary is proud to support GHC in this achievement, and pleased to now offer Hockey Calgary Female Divisions at all age categories and in the city.

We look forward to seeing the female game continue to grow and believe that this progression will strengthen an already strong female program here in Calgary. For more information, please visit girlshockeycalgary.com

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Kobelka'.

Kevin Kobelka
Executive Director



GIRLS HOCKEY CALGARY ASSOCIATION (GHC)

Great Plains Recreational Facility

5749 76 Ave SE

Calgary, Alberta T2C4S9

Updates for 2023-24 Season

June 13, 2023

All Girls Hockey Calgary teams will play under the female stream for the 2023-24 season.

The Why

Our Growth and GHC's Future

GHC moved our teams from the Rocky Mountain Female Hockey League (RMFHL) to Hockey Calgary with a vision to bring the female game back to Calgary. We left RMFHL's all-female league to increase our visibility, increase our access to ice, improve travel time and scheduling consistency, and most importantly, to build a foundation for female hockey here at home.

There was no established female stream in Hockey Calgary at that time. As a steppingstone, GHC teams competed in newly-created female divisions in Hockey Calgary's Community Stream and in co-ed divisions against co-ed/male teams. Our competition structure evolved year to year based on registration numbers, GHC team performance, and the pathways of GHC players. As we grew from around 500 players to more than 1100, Hockey Calgary and GHC have proudly expanded our female divisions year after year.

You have all had a part in this journey. By supporting your daughter in a female-focused association, you have helped develop the appropriate supports that accommodate her needs, personality, and goals. Thank you

for being your daughter's cheerleader and advocate. It is only through passion and dedication that positive changes are made.

We have now reached the point where what we set out to build — a first-rate home for female hockey in Calgary — is available before us. **A successful Female Competition Model is the next step in our duty to our athletes and the greater female hockey community.** GHC has been a leader among female hockey associations and advocates in Alberta and Western Canada, and paving this new path for others to pursue is the right move.

The future is bright for female hockey players in Calgary. This particular progression of our program (and our mindset) will be a challenge for us all, but one that we believe will ultimately empower our players to get the best possible experience in their sport and beyond.

Benefits of All-Female Competition Model

Female vs. Male competition provides the best environment to support our player's physical, mental, and emotional development.

There are fundamental differences between male and female athletes, not just as individuals but in how we learn and play the game. Have you watched the National Women's Team vs. the National Men's Team? What differences do you see? We acknowledge these differences throughout all ages and level of sport, which is why hockey leaders passionately advocate for all-female hockey environments. Part of this work includes critically thinking about the competition model in which our female athletes currently compete.

Below are some insights into the potential physical, mental, and emotional advantages of girls playing hockey exclusively against female opponents,

drawing upon reputable Canadian sources.

Physical Benefits:

- **Enhanced Skill Development:** Studies have shown that playing against opponents of similar skills and physical attributes contributes to enhanced skill development. When female teams compete against other female teams, they refine their hockey skills and tactics more effectively. Canadian studies by Hockey Canada (www.hockeycanada.ca) have emphasized that playing against equally matched opponents fosters technical proficiency, speed, agility, and overall physical fitness.
- **Reduced Risk of Injury:** Female athletes have different physiological characteristics and injury patterns than males. Research by the Canadian Injury Data Program (www.cihi.ca) indicates that playing against males may expose girls to a higher risk of musculoskeletal injuries due to differences in size, strength, and body composition.

Mental Benefits:

- **Increased Confidence:** Playing against all-female teams enables girls to build confidence and self-esteem. Research by the Canadian Women's Hockey League (www.cwhl.ca) suggests that girls who play against peers have greater opportunities to showcase their skills and leadership abilities. This fosters a positive psychological environment, encouraging girls to push their limits and develop a strong sense of self-belief.
- **Improved Motivation and Goal Setting:** Competing against female opponents motivates girls to set, pursue and achieve goals and benchmarks. A study conducted by the Canadian Centre for Mental Health and Sport (www.ccmhs-ccsms.ca) highlights that girls who play against female teams tend to experience higher motivation levels and engagement in the sport. They can better identify and pursue personal objectives, leading to enhanced long-term commitment and performance.

Emotional Benefits:

- **Sense of Belonging and Camaraderie:** Participating in all-female hockey teams nurtures a sense of belonging and fosters positive social relationships. Canadian research by the University of Ottawa's School of Human Kinetics (www.uottawa.ca) has indicated that girls who play against female teams often report stronger team cohesion, friendships, and social support. This supportive environment contributes to improved emotional well-being and overall enjoyment of the game.
- **Gender-Specific Empowerment:** Playing against female teams provides girls with empowering role models and reinforces gender equity in sports. Research conducted by the Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women in Sport and Physical Activity (www.caaws.ca) emphasizes that playing against female opponents contributes to positive gender identity development, breaking down stereotypes, and promoting gender equality within the sport and society.

Girls benefit physically, mentally, and emotionally when playing hockey against all-female teams. Gender-specific competition allows for skill development, reduced risk of injury, increased confidence, improved motivation, and a sense of belonging. Additionally, it fosters empowerment and challenges gender stereotypes. So, what does GHC look like with this beneficial game model?

GHC Proposed Structure for 2023/2024

U9, U11, and U13 would move to all-female competition model. (Charts below are based on the registration numbers for 2022/2023 and are subject to change.)

U9 – Move to Female A/B.

U11 – Move to Female A/B/C.

U13 – Move to Female AA/A/B, with the implementation of U13AA this aligns U13 age group with our successful U15 and U18 models.

Chart of the Models for 2023/2024

Potential All Female Model 2023-24 (11 Teams)	
U9 Red	U9 Female A (Tier 1)
U9 White	
U9 Black	
U9 Silver	
U9 B Blaze	U9 Female B (Tier 2)
U9 B Flash	
U9 B Heat	
U9 B Ignite	
U9 B Scorch	
U9 B Spark	
U9 B Flames	
<p>*Subject to change depending on registration numbers. If more than 13 teams, model will move to three (3) tiers.</p>	

Potential All Female Model 2023-24 (13 Teams)	
U11 A Red	U11 Female A (Tier 1)
U11 A White	
U11 A Black	
U11 A Silver	
U11 B Blue	U11 Female B (Tier 2)
U11 B Teal	
U11 B Green	
U11 B Orange	
U11 C Blaze	U11 Female C (Tier 3)
U11 C Flash	
U11 C Heat	
U11 C Ignite	
U11 C Scorch	
<p>*Subject to change based on registration numbers. If more than 13 teams, tiers will expand to accommodate more teams.</p>	

Potential All Female Model 2023-24 (13 Teams)	
U13 AA Red U13 AA White U13 AA Black	U13 AA (Elite)
U13 A Blue U13 A Teal U13 A Green U13 A Orange U13 A Purple	U13 Female A (Tier 1)
U13 B Flash U13 B Heat U13 B Ignite U13 B Scorch U13 B Flames	U13 Female B (Tier 2)
<p>* Subject to change based on registration numbers.</p>	

FAQ's

How will GHC address the “skill gap” on teams?

There will always be a skill gap on teams, in every sport and at every level. However, we do recognize that different starting points in skill, especially in the “higher” and “lower” tiers, can be a challenge for coaches and players.

- **Coach Support:** This season we are hosting a coaching seminar for ALL coaches to help with understanding the key motivators of our athletes, give them strategies to build trust and the knowledge of what technical and tactical skills are needed to develop and challenge. (If you haven't sent us your Coach application, please do – this seminar will take place BEFORE the teams are formed!)

GHC Coaches are also provided with multiple coach resources that they can access throughout the season, such as Coach Them, GHC Skills Sequence Program, Hockey Canada Drill Hub, and the wealth of knowledge from our phenomenal veteran coaches. Teams are also each provided with development funds, to support further development on and off the ice throughout the season. All these resources, paired with the coaching summit, help to empower coaches to provide the best possible environment for players.

- **Development Opportunities:** We have been successful with the U13 breakfast skills club, spring camps, and Christmas skills program. We also received positive feedback for on-ice programs such as the U11 shooting clinic held by our director of development program Laura Dostaler. Laura is hard at work planning other ways to bring increased development opportunities to our community members.
- **Smaller Divisions:** We anticipate creating smaller divisions (4-5 teams) to minimize the skill gap in each tier.

- **Growth:** Continued growth in our association will allow us to add more tiers to some age groups, and/or more teams to some tiers, building out our competition variety while minimizing the skill gap.

My daughter likes the “challenge” of playing against boys. I worry that female divisions are less competitive or won’t motivate my daughter to compete.

This mindset is totally understandable, especially considering how our current competition model has higher-tiered female teams competing in co-ed divisions. An unfortunate and unintended side effect of this model was the underlying message that playing female teams is less competitive, less challenging, or less desirable than playing against “boys.” (It should go without saying that female sports are NOT less competitive, ask any ref in any league!)

Moving to an all-female competition model actually creates an environment that is intended to **better motivate and develop our athletes**, by ensuring they are properly supported and equitably represented. The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS) states that competing against other females better allows our athletes to focus on developing their skills without being overshadowed by physical or social discrepancies typically seen in male-focused environments. CAAWS points out that this can lead to improved technique, improved tactical understanding, and overall improved skill development for female athletes.

Will this change mean more travel for my family?

Our philosophy is to reduce as much windshield/travel time as possible, we start with the younger teams U7, U9, and U11, and do our best to accommodate those ages. The ice we are allocated from Hockey Calgary is city-wide and our schedulers work together to strategize ice allotment amongst our 60+ teams.

How will GHC manage North and South teams?

As always GHC at U7, U9 and U11 are North/South split with Glenmore Trail being the mid-way point. Each season we assess the player split between North and South within each division. In past years it has been fairly equal with players in the North and South.

Will this change the amount of ice time we get?

No. GHC has over 27 contracts with City and private rinks across Calgary, along with the ice allocated by Hockey Calgary. (Ice allocation from Hockey Calgary is based on size of association; a benefit of being the biggest association in the city.) We are in a great position to support our teams with practice and game ice, and in fact some GHC age groups get more ice than other Calgary Community associations.

Can we still play “boys” teams?

Yes! Teams can enter tournaments and play exhibition games based on Hockey Calgary guidelines and coach’s discretion. Hockey Calgary and GHC will help teams determine the appropriate cross-over tier within Hockey Calgary after team formation.

Will we be able to play other female teams to increase our competition variety?

As always, GHC teams can arrange exhibition games with Rocky Mountain Female Hockey League (RMFHL) teams, within Hockey Calgary guidelines. In the short-term, GHC will facilitate manager connections as best we can. In the long-term, we will continue to work with Hockey Calgary to explore more opportunities to take advantage of our proximity to RMFHL.

How does this align with Hockey Alberta's female stream on a provincial level?

Hockey Alberta and female associations across the province are dedicated to building the best possible pathways for female players in our province, whatever their hockey goals may be. Some exciting changes for us at the Provincial level include:

- GHC teams will now compete in all eligible female categories at Hockey Alberta Provincial Championships. (Previously, we did not have access to Hockey Alberta U13 Female A).
- GHC teams will now align with Hockey Alberta female regulations.

Can we get more variety in our jerseys and branding if we move to this new model?

Yes! Let's work together over the coming season to evolve the Inferno brand and create exciting and creative identities for our Calgary female teams.