



INFORMATION BULLETIN 23-07

February 8, 2024

AA Hockey Committee Completes Review of U16 AA

Members of the AA Hockey Committee, along with Hockey Alberta staff, recently completed a six-month review of the U16 AA hockey model. The outcomes of the review are:

- awarding a U16 AA team to Cochrane;
- dividing the current Airdrie U16 AA Recruitment Area into two recruitment areas; and
- retracting the Peace River U16 AA Recruitment Area back into the Grande Prairie U16 AA Recruitment Area.

Review Process

In 2021-22 the South Central Alberta Hockey League (SCAHL) and Hockey Calgary were selected to host the initial U16 AA Pilot Project. In 2022-23 with the inclusion of the Rural & Edmonton Minor Hockey League (REMHL), the pilot was expanded province wide. Following the 2022-23 season, the pilot tag was removed, rendering U16 AA a permanent piece of the AA Hockey Model.

As part of this decision, the AA Hockey Committee was tasked with reviewing all elements of the model to ensure it was structured properly to uphold the principles of the AA Hockey Model. The committee examined the following criteria across each of the existing U16 AA recruitment areas:

- Category in which players registered in the season prior to playing at U16 AA.
- Category in which players registered in the season post their playing at U16 AA.
- Total number of U16 eligible players in each recruitment area (past, present and future projections).
- Number of players who tried out with each U16 AA recruitment area team.
- Competitive success of each U16 AA recruitment area team.

In this review, the value of the U16 AA category of play was reaffirmed as a true feeder to other elite levels of hockey. Over 70 per cent of U16 AA players had been previously playing U15 AA or AAA, and over 60 per cent of U16 AA players go on to play AA or AAA in the season after their U16 AA experience.

The structure created during the initial pilot was also viewed favourably. Hockey Alberta set the parameters when introducing the U16 AA level of play that each U16 AA Recruitment Area should contain approximately 100 U16 age players per U16 team. This season, the average number of first year U16 players per U16 AA recruitment area is 116.

Cochrane Expansion Decision

Considering the above criteria, the only U16 AA Recruitment Area that consistently fell outside the parameters and norms of the U16 AA model was the Airdrie/Cochrane U16 AA Recruitment Area. Currently:

1. That area is the sole U16 AA Recruitment Area with over 200 first year U18 players within it.
2. Both of the anticipated U16 AA Recruitment Areas for Airdrie and Cochrane project to have over 100 U16 age players for at least the next two seasons after 2023-24, falling within the parameters set by Hockey Alberta for hosting a U16 AA team.
3. Airdrie has proved capable of icing a competitive team at U16 AA, as well as at all other levels of AA Hockey. Cochrane has also fielded strong AA teams in recent years.
4. Among the associations that reported their U16 AA tryout numbers, Airdrie had the highest number of players attend U16 AA tryouts in the province.



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As such, the U16 AA model has been expanded, and Cochrane named a U16 AA Recruitment Area host, as they are for all other levels of AA hockey. The Cochrane U16 AA Recruitment Area contains the following Minor Hockey Associations:

- Cochrane
- Banff
- Canmore
- Cremona

The Airdrie U16 AA Recruitment Area contains the following Minor Hockey Associations:

- Airdrie
- Beiseker
- Crossfield
- Carstairs
- Didsbury

Peace River Retraction Decision

After being awarded expansion to host, but ultimately being unable to ice a U16 AA team in the 2023-24 season, the Peace River U16 AA Recruitment Area has been merged back into the Grande Prairie U16 AA Recruitment Area for the 2024-25 season. Hockey Alberta remains committed to supporting Peace River in their efforts to consistently ice a competitive U16 AA team; however more time is needed to build up a base of players willing and capable of playing U16 AA, given the geography of that region.

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