



Ice Hockey Australia

(Trading name of the Australian Ice Hockey Federation)

ABN 77 106 538 293

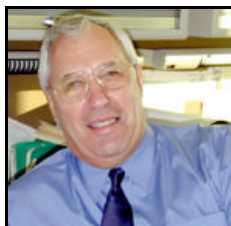
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From the President



Newsletter – January 2004

The completion of yet another successful season in 2003 has seen Ice Hockey Australia gain strength on progressing to become a widely recognized major-minor sport in Australia. During the preceding months a number of historic milestones were achieved. Overall, they are a product of the incorporated strategies involved in taking our sport to the highest level possible.

Anyone who is involved in a totally volunteer sport will be keenly aware these successes are the results of many hours of work, dedication and commitment from the many men and women who silently and without trepidation, work energetically and tenaciously behind the scenes to “make it all happen”. On behalf of all Ice Hockey Australia members, we express our gratitude to these individuals for their efforts and success. More of your kind will be needed as we grow.

And how about those Youth, Women Junior and Inline teams! Historic World Gold Medal performances in three of four world ice hockey divisions entered and a Bronze in the Inline division. What better way to cap off a banner year and immortalize your name in the history books forever more than to achieve a first ever World Gold and Bronze Medal performance in your respective division. Well done teams!

On behalf of all IHA members and ice hockey fans, our appreciation and congratulations to the players and officials of the 2003 National Youth, Junior, Women and Senior Men’s teams for their participation in the IIHF’s 2003 World Championships. As was the case with our National Women’s Team, the National Junior Team’s medal performance was aptly recognized during the last week in January when some of the team members and officials front all of Australia on Channel – 9’s evening television show “Current Affairs”.

Many members may be unaware of the IHA’s business management plan. The IHA plan incorporates a number of initiatives and strategies designed to support our common vision and goals for Ice Hockey Australia. Our vision on becoming a major-minor sport in Australia and sustaining this vision will be an ongoing process. The current plan deals with those initiatives and strategies that span the period from 2002 to 2006.

Like any successful business, a sound management plan is needed to guide and channel all of our individual efforts towards achieving the goals and objectives as periodically determined by the Board and Portfolio Directors. The plan also assists in visibly recording each adopted initiative or strategy, the status or progress of each of these and a score card value for each in terms of completion and effectiveness. It also assists in identifying any ‘soft spots’ or areas that may need extra focus. A copy of the IHA’s Business Management Plan can be obtained from your state association.

In total, currently there are ten core major strategies. Each have a number of initiatives designed to deliver an expected outcome. I would like to share some these with you in this newsletter.

Come & Try Promotions

As announced in my last newsletter, the IHA launched the Come & Try promotion campaign. The campaign followed on the heels of the IHA’s participation in the successful “Active Australia Day” 2002 program which is designed to encourage Australian youth to become active in sports. I urge all IHA member state associations to again take advantage of this tremendous program. The campaign can be accessed via the IHA website under “Development”.



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Marketing

A major strategy of the IHA Board is to grow the awareness of Australian ice hockey both in Australia and the world. The objective is to translate this awareness into funds and product through sponsorship from various Australian business partners, organizations and institutions. If we are to grow our sport, capital in addition to normal annual membership is required to fund the various programs at the state and national level. Some of these will be touched on later in this newsletter.

Impart ISE Pty Ltd through Directors David Turik and Rick Williams has pulled out all stops in meeting this marketing challenge. Thus far their efforts have resulted in:

- Trading name for Australian Ice Hockey Federation (AIHF) to Ice Hockey Australia (IHA) and new logo.
- New design of the Australian national team jersey.
- Adoption of the "Mighty Roos" name, logo and jersey for the Australian Senior Men's National Team.
- Signing Canadian Club, a subsidiary of Allied Domecq and distributor Swift & Moore, as a major sponsor for the Australian Ice Hockey League Play-off Series held in the Glaciarium, Baulkham Hills in September 2003.
- An extensive IHA Merchandising Program in partnership with PMA Solutions. The program was launched at the IIHF's June Congress to the IIHF Council and 63 member countries.
- National Senior Women's Team Gold Medal performance on the 'Footy Show' with 'Fatty' dressed as a goaltender and the players shooting on him. He is looking forward to doing it again in 2004.
- Accor Hotel Group Accommodation Partnership which is to commence in 2004.
- Canadian Consulate Luncheon and Auction planned for 10 March 2004.
- Coordinated and obtained agreement from NHL to link the IHA website with NHL.com Website. This initiative commenced in January and has already attracted over 2200 visits per day to our website. This is crucially instrumental when meeting with potential sponsors.
- Design and inclusion of "Banner Advertising" on the IHA's Website. This advertising medium is already serving the Ibis Hotel Chain, a division of the Accor Group, and Artgardens, the IHA's official design partner.

There are a number of other projects on the table. Because of required confidentiality I cannot disclose these at this time. Watch for future newsletters as these evolve and are announced.

Australian Ice Hockey League

The Australian Ice Hockey League (AIHL) had an unbelievable 2003 season. As previously mentioned, the season was capped off with a final series play-off weekend at the Glaciarium in Sydney. The series had the top four teams (West Sydney Ice Dogs, Newcastle Northstars, Sydney Bears and Adelaide Avalanche), competing in front of sell-out crowds for overall supremacy as the 2003 League Champions. Congratulations to the 2003 League Champion Newcastle Northstars for their stellar performance.

Plans are well underway for an even better 2004 season. In addition to the current six teams (Adelaide Avalanche, Canberra Knights, Newcastle Northstars, Melbourne Ice, Sydney Bears, West Sydney Ice Dogs), Brisbane and Erina are seeking entry into the league. See the IHA/AIHL website for more exciting news.

Officiating and Coaching Programs

Congratulations to Frankie Palmer, IHA 'Official of the Year' for 2003. Although Frankie has only started officiating a few years ago, she is quickly gaining recognition in joining the officiating elite. Similarly, congratulations to Allan Wishevan on his nomination and assignment to officiate at the IIHF World U18 Championship Division III in Sofia, Bulgaria from 06 - 14 March 2004. For more officiating and coaching news and programs see the IHA website.



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Risk Management

The IHA Board is endeavoring to further reduce the risk of injury in our sport, especially in the area of concussion and teeth. Since the IHA's adoption of 'Zero Tolerance' there has been a significant decrease in head injuries. The adoption of mouth guards for players born in 1980 or later has added significantly to this achievement.

In 2003, the IHA implemented an Injury Recording & Analysis System for all national championship divisions to assist with further reducing the risk of injury. The system is now being extended to the AIHL and state associations.

These initiatives have allowed the IHA membership to maintain current insurance rates which a number of sports do not have the liberty to enjoy.

Development

The IHA's Development Program targets both the national and state levels and is vital to developing player, coach and officiating skills. In 2003, the IHA was invited to send coaches, on-ice-officials and a number of bantam age players to the IIHF's Development Camp in Vierumaki, Finland. This was Australia's second participation after attending a similar camp where eight players, a coach and an on-ice-official were sent to Nagano, Japan.

Invitations have once again been extended to the IHA to attend the first IIHF Women's Hockey Development Camp in 2004 again in Vierumaki, Finland. Australia has been granted positions for four players, one coach and one on-ice-official. A selection program is under development for selection and will be circulated to member state associations shortly. This is exciting news for the IHA as there are a number of female players, coaches and on-ice-officials who will greatly benefit from this learning experience.

Late last year, we met with the Hunter Valley Sports Academy in Newcastle to discuss a pilot program to provide opportunity for regional players to combine studies and sport in a learning environment similar to what takes place in other Australian major sports. Although this is predominantly a regional program, similar programs are offered in every state. The Hunter Valley program will be used as a model which will then be extended to other regions.

Plans are also underway to establishing an annual one week development camp for selected male and female bantam aged players from across Australia. Selected state coaches and on-ice-officials will also be in attendance. If we are to sustain our progress in the world championships then there must be opportunity for bantam players, who have potential to being selected to the national youth team, to attend and participate in a learning environment designed for high level competition that may not be available at the state level. The instructors, format and venues are already in place. Further details are expected to be completed by March in preparation for selection to the camp at the end of the 2004 season. Watch the IHA website as more details unfold.

Finally ****

There are many challenges ahead for us this season. It is critical we remain focused in adding value where we can, and doing everything possible to improve our sport. There are a number of exciting programs and projects under review. I urge you to keep informed by visiting the IHA's website at every opportunity or approaching your state delegate. Any new ideas or suggestions for expanding what is already in place will be most welcome.

Have an enjoyable and safe 2004 ice hockey season.

Don Rurak
IHA President



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