

## PROPOSAL FOR TRIALLING A JUNIOR NATIONALS IN AUSTRALIA

Discussion from UHA AGM 5 December 2010

Prepared by Jane Gilligan 30 December 2010

### *What do we want to achieve from a junior nationals?*

Juniors are the future of our sport, and we are looking for better ways to support their development. The schools competition in New Zealand is a successful competition that brings large numbers of juniors together. Our goal is to build a competition using this as a model - it has scope for more players, less experienced players and also younger players. The Junior Nationals would aim to:

- Provide good competition for younger juniors (U15) who find it difficult to compete physically in an U19 category;
- Create an appropriate social environment for juniors at tournaments;
- Develop a tournament that can provide development opportunities for Australian coaches and referees (many of whom want to play at a National titles and cannot commit to other roles);
- Encourage club based competition with New Zealand juniors;
- Create a competition that is accessible to beginner teams and can include teams from schools in the future; and
- Provide high quality junior competition for players seeking selection in Australian Junior teams.

The UHA Committee is also aware of the need to develop up and coming players (U23) who may be on the verge of entering senior teams but are having difficulty getting selected and/or may have little disposable income. It is proposed that U23 players be encouraged to participate in 'senior' nationals as a 'colts' team in mens/womens categories (unless there are sufficient teams to form an U23 category). A colts team would include 80% of players who are U23. Entry fees will be waived for this category of team. Australian U23 National Teams will be selected at senior Nationals.

### *Why would we change what we are already doing?*

- Many state UWH federations have attempted to develop junior / schools hockey in their region. One of the challenges that they face is the lack of a competition in Australia for schools and inexperienced teams to compete in.
- A competition that focuses on juniors can better target their needs, including a low cost competition and a competition that is in school holidays.
- CMAS is changing the definition of 'a junior' to individuals who are juniors (U19). This means that junior teams will now include minors and adults. This can create social tensions at National tournaments, particularly chaperoning and managing alcohol consumption and appropriate behavior for junior teams. The Junior Nationals will not involve a presentation night that serves alcohol.
- Juniors are the future of our sport. We constantly need to look for better ways to encourage player development, mentoring and opportunities to build numbers;

- Junior / school teams have been attending New Zealand schools comps and found it rewarding. It would be good to create a junior competition that can attract international 'non-national' teams to Australia (this is a long term goal).

### **The Proposal**

The Junior Nationals would be formatted to maximize player numbers.

What would the teams look like?

- U19 and U15 divisions, mixed gender
- State teams (i.e. players will play for a team from their state as first preference)
- Can be local or schools teams
- Multiple state teams can be entered and compete for finals
- Large numbers of teams with varying skills and experience would lead to a grading process

What would the teams compete to win?

- National Champion Team for a division
- Where there is a grading process, teams in lower categories would compete for Winner, National Grade for a division.

How would it work?

- The competition would run for around three days with dates to suit school terms and sufficient time to select Australian teams (February?)
- A grading process would be run on day 1 if necessary
- The competition would be held in the cheapest location for Australian juniors. This would be Hobart or Melbourne (assuming sufficient organisers are available)
- The first tournament would be in Hobart in 2012
- Flight and accommodation equalization would be mandatory
- The competition will be not for profit
- Australian junior teams would be selected at the Junior Nationals
- It would be run at a different time to the NZ Schools Tournament to allow Australian junior players to travel to New Zealand if they chose.

What else would Junior Nationals do?

- Every four years Australia will organise a Trans Tasman tournament. Junior Nationals may be used to host this tri-game National competition with NZ. The logistics require consideration (as the team will need to be selected prior to the trans tasman).
- The Junior Nationals is a good opportunity for senior players to coach juniors and provide reffing support, developing non-player skills.

- The competition may be used to hold a training camp for the Australian elite and masters team. This will mean that a skilled player base is available to provide mentoring to junior players.

*Suggested questions for discussion in States:*

1. Do you agree that the proposal for a Junior Nationals is a good idea?
2. What dates would your state recommend it held?
3. How many teams to you think you could enter a team in U19 and U15 categories in 2012?
4. How do you think the grading process should work?
5. Are you happy with the proposal for travel equalization?
6. Do you agree it is a good idea to run the trans tasman in conjunction with this tournament?