



News Release **Bantam and Midget Hockey Program Changes**
Date **19-Apr-16**
For Release **2 PM MDT**

Edmonton, AB

At their April 13, 2016 General Meeting Hockey Edmonton voted on a motion which will have an immediate, positive impacts on hockey in the Bantam and Midget divisions of play.

Effective in the 2016-17 hockey season, Hockey Edmonton and its Clubs and Districts will offer body checking in the Divisions of Bantam and Midget in categories of play that participate in Provincial Championships – specifically AAA, AA, A, and B.

Bantam and Midget Tiers 1 and 2 will now be referenced as A and B respectively and compete in Hockey Alberta Provincial Championships in these categories.

All remaining categories of play in Edmonton Federation Hockey League Bantam and Midget divisions will be referenced as Community Hockey programs and renumbered accordingly (e.g. 1, 2, ...).

All Community Hockey programs will be non body checking categories of play.

Mark Doram, President, stated that: *“Our goal is to provide an environment - for athletes of all ability - in which they can develop their skills, compete and foster a love for the game that lasts for life.”*

In Community Hockey body contact in all divisions (e.g. Novice to Midget) and categories (e.g. 1, 2...) of play is within the rules as defined by Hockey Canada.

Hockey Edmonton’s Recreational Hockey League will continue to offer non body checking programs of play for those looking for a less rigorous commitment than provided for by Community Hockey.

Hockey Edmonton REM 15AA teams while not participating in a Hockey Alberta Championship will continue to play within REMHL and remain a body checking category of play.

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About Hockey Edmonton

Since 1964, Hockey Edmonton has been the governing body for all minor hockey in the city of Edmonton. Hockey Edmonton has 26 member organizations representing nearly 9,000 athletes, an additional 2,800 coaches, managers, and trainers and thousands of association and team volunteers.

Annually Hockey Edmonton hosts major events including Quikcard Edmonton Minor Hockey Week, the Hockey Edmonton Timbits Jamboree, the ENMAX Hockey Edmonton Championships, and several Hockey Alberta Provincial Championships. Additionally, Hockey Edmonton member associations host a number of annual tournaments of various sizes.

For more information please visit www.hockeyedmonton.ca or contact:

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Non Body Checking Hockey

Recommendation:

Effective in the 2016-17 hockey season, Hockey Edmonton and its Clubs, Districts and Operating Areas will offer body checking in the Divisions of Bantam and Midget in categories of play that participate in Provincial Championships – specifically AAA, AA, A, and B.

Bantam and Midget Tiers 1 and 2 will now be referenced as A and B respectively.

All remaining categories of play in EFHL Bantam and Midget hockey will be referenced as Community Hockey programs and renumbered accordingly.

All Community Hockey programs will be **non body checking** categories of play.

Note: body contact in all divisions and categories of play is within the rules as defined by Hockey Canada.

Hockey Edmonton's Recreational Hockey League will continue to offer non body checking programs of play for those looking for a less rigorous commitment than provided for by Community Hockey.

Hockey Edmonton REM 15AA teams while not participating in a Hockey Alberta Championship will continue to play within REMHL and remain a body checking category of play.

Given the obligation our association has to provide our athletes with a fun, positive athletic experience in a safe environment, it is both timely and appropriate for Hockey Edmonton to take a leadership stance in the game with respect to player safety in non-elite streams of play.

In 2013 Hockey Canada along with Hockey Alberta chose to eliminate 'Body Checking' from all divisions of the Pee Wee age category (11 & 12 year olds).

Other recommendations communicated included:

- Create an overall player safety strategy focusing on the reduction of serious injuries in

the game at all levels

- Review and improve the Checking Skills program for all coaches
- **Review the removal of 'Body Checking' from Bantam and Midget non-elite streams**

Through 2013-2015, in the ongoing efforts to ensure player safety and keep players in the game longer, Hockey Edmonton, Edmonton Federation Hockey Council, and Hockey Edmonton Districts and Operating Areas reviewed removal of 'Body Checking' in Bantam and Midget Hockey with a decision to offer non body checking play as outlined below:

The Hockey Edmonton Federation Hockey League is preparing to provide the opportunity for participants to play in a non-body checking Bantam program next year. The number of games and practices as well as cost will be identical to what is offered in the body checking Bantam program.

Player interest, as demonstrated by their registration declarations, will drive our final program decisions. If the program(s) that Federation offers are not what the registrant is prepared to accept, then the registrant will be contacted to offer them other options available which could include registering in the Hockey Edmonton Recreational Hockey League. If there is no program that is acceptable to the registrant then the registration fees will be refunded (with no penalty).

The lack of organizational commitment to program structure resulted in a lack of registration and all players having to play in EFHL in body checking programs of play.

▪ What is the difference between body checking and body contact?

Body Contact: *Incidental contact of two opposing players in pursuit of the puck or position on the ice in the same direction. Body contact occurs as a result of movement by the offensive player.*

Body Checking: *A player's attempt at gaining the advantage on the opponent with the use of the body. Body checking results when two opposing players collide on the ice skating in opposite directions or when positioning and angling allow the checker to use the force of the body to gain the advantage.*

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▪ **Background**

Many hockey associations and governing bodies across Canada are currently reviewing the inclusion of body-checking in the Bantam and Midget levels of community hockey.

A number of associations across Canada have removed body checking from A, B, or house categories of play in Bantam and often Midget Hockey since this decision.

These hockey communities are typically making changes to either remove body-checking from the lower levels, offering an enhanced Recreational league that includes practices, or creating a separate non body-checking league for players who wish to play competitive hockey but prefer not to body-check.

In 2015-16 Hockey Calgary eliminated body checking from Bantam tiers and are scheduled to review this matter for Midget hockey in 2017-18.

Through the 2015-16 season Hockey Edmonton has received considerable feedback from those involved in the game with respect to body checking in community hockey in Bantam and Midget divisions of play.

While this rule is not being mandated by the governing bodies of Hockey Alberta & Hockey Canada, they are supportive, and Hockey Edmonton is aware of numerous other LMHA's within the province and across the country that are moving in this same direction.

▪ **Rationale**

- Evidence suggests the inclusion of body-checking is positively correlated with a higher rate of injuries (3.35-3.75 times more), more serious injuries (3.30 times the incidence of one-week or longer recovery time), more suspensions, and poor on-ice behavior.
- Body-checking is the predominant mechanism of injury among youth hockey players at all levels of competition where it is permitted, accounting for 45% to 86% of injuries.
- The player drop-out rate increases when body-checking becomes mandatory.
- Recreational Hockey League has capacity to grow but the limited program offering (1 game, no practices, exhibition or tournament games) is not what most participants looking for a non body checking hockey program are interested in.
- Players at what we currently refer to at EFHL Bantam

or Midget Tier 3 and below are less likely to play Elite Hockey in the subsequent seasons therefore reducing if not eliminating the need to develop this skill.

- Delaying body-checking until players reach Bantam does not result in a higher injury rate due to the delay, however, the evidence overwhelmingly shows a higher injury rate in body-checking hockey vs non body-checking hockey. Removing body-checking reduces injuries without an increased injury risk to players who body-check in a subsequent season.
- Players born in 2002 moved in to the Bantam Age category for the 2015-2016 season had never played hockey with 'Body Checking'. Feedback received suggests that this was not a favorable practice.
- Replication of this practice with players born in 2003 moving into Bantam Community Hockey is not seen as a good practice.

Additional Considerations:

Many associations and leagues across Alberta, Saskatchewan and B.C. have already removed body-checking from the lower levels of Bantam and Midget

- Quebec has now removed body-checking from the lower levels of Bantam and Midget
- Winnipeg has created a separate league for competitive hockey without body- checking
- Nova Scotia removed body-checking at B and C levels
- Airdrie removed body-checking from City Leagues
- Lethbridge operated a new 'Non-Contact' Bantam league in 2015-16
- The Greater Toronto Hockey League currently has no body-checking below the A level and beginning in 2015/16 will remove body-checking from the A level at Minor Bantam. As their 2002 born players move into Major Bantam and Midget those age groups will also become non body-checking at the A level. The result is that 2002 and later born players in the GTHL will only body-check at the AA and AAA levels, A level players and below will never participate in body-checking.

The current experiences suggests that players are able to easily adapt when the body-checking rules change from year-to-year. For example, 2001 born players have alternated between body-checking and non-body-checking 3 times over the last 3 seasons and were able to rapidly adapt to the rule change each season

▪ **Organization Outcomes**

We anticipate similar outcomes as Hockey Calgary has recently experienced with Bantam Community Hockey:

- penalties are down,

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- the animosity in the rink is down,
- the scrums at the end of plays are down,
- an increased focus on skating, shooting and passing
- improvement in pace of play has improved,
- the game is now safer for kids who aren't playing at elite levels.

▪ Why Now?

The time is right to deal with both divisions of play at once rather than in consecutive years.

It's not good for the organization or its members that we continue to visit non body checking discussions year after year.

The players have become used to a non body checking environment through Peewee and then (currently) are exposed to body checking for Bantam and Midget hockey. As we hope to see a decrease in the number of serious injuries through hockey the removal of body checking from non-elite categories of play, this is a timely and appropriate decision.

Many players have moved to recreation hockey and have a desire to return to a competitive hockey stream without body checking.

We will see a number of players continue to play hockey up into adulthood and some who will return to a more the sport.

▪ Player Safety and Development

Skill development and player safety remain paramount considerations.

▪ References:

- <http://aapnews.aapublications.org/content/35/6/22.full.pdf+html>
- http://swzhockey.ca/page.php?page_id=73611
- <http://www.theblobandmail.com/sports/hockey/gthl-bans-body-checking-at-a-level-starting-next-season/article23351154/>
- <http://www.tnchl.com/facts.asp> <http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/content/117/2/e143.abstract>
- <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/06/110620122024.htm>
- <http://www.cjad.com/cjad-news/2015/03/11/update-hockey-quebec-expanding-body-checking-ban>
- <http://www.bchockey.net/Files/Executive%20Summary%20Pediatric%20Hockey%20Study%20-%20Oct%202010.pdf>
- <http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/hockey-nova-scotia-bans-bodychecking-for-some-peewee-midget-and-bantam-players>
- http://bramptonhockey.com/Articles/7647/OMHA_announces_Body_Checking_is_removed_from_all_Recreational_Hockey_including_Minor_Development/
- <http://www.cps.ca/documents/position/bodychecking-ice-hockey>
- <http://www.airdriecityview.com/article/20150409/ACV1101/304099958/-1/ACV>
- <http://www.openmedicine.ca/article/view/246/391>
- <http://lethbridgeherald.com/sports/local-sports/2015/05/13/lmha-introducing-no-hit-bantam-league/>

As with the implementation of non body checking rule change in Peewee, Bantam and Midget coaches will continue to be required to be certified in the checking skills program. Further they are to ensure that their seasonal player development plans reflect an appropriate emphasis on all aspects of the checking skills progression as outlined in the curriculum.

▪ Financial Implications

None

▪ At a Glance

Hockey Edmonton					
Division	Category - Current	Provincial Championship	League	New Category	Body Checking
Bantam	Bantam AAA	Bantam AAA	AMBHL		Y
	Bantam AA	Bantam AA	ERBHL		Y
	BANTAM 1A - BUTLER	Bantam A	EFHL	Bantam A	Y
	BANTAM 2A - FREDERICK	Bantam B	EFHL	Bantam B	Y
	BANTAM 3A - PRUDEN	N.A.	EFHL	Community 1	N
	BANTAM 4A - BARNES	N.A.	EFHL	Community 2	N
	BANTAM 5A - DERMOTT	N.A.	EFHL	Community 3	N
	BANTAM 6A - ROSS	N.A.	EFHL	Community 4	N
	BANTAM 6B - LEE	N.A.	EFHL	Community 5	N
	BANTAM 7A - FYSH	N.A.	EFHL	Community 6	N
	BANTAM 8A - ATKINSON	N.A.	EFHL	Community 7	N
	Midget Major (AAA)	Midget AAA	AMHL		Y
	Midget Minor (AAA)	Midget Minor AAA	AMMHL		Y
	Midget AA	Midget AA	NAMHL		Y
Midget	Midget 15 AA (REM)		REMHL		Y
	MIDGET 1A - BONNER	Midget A	EFHL	Midget A	Y
	MIDGET 2A - DAVIS	Midget B	EFHL	Midget B	Y
	MIDGET 3A - RUPTASH	N.A.	EFHL	Community 1	N
	MIDGET 4A - HOLT	N.A.	EFHL	Community 2	N
	MIDGET 5A - TURNER	N.A.	EFHL	Community 3	N
	MIDGET 6A - HETCHLER	N.A.	EFHL	Community 4	N
	MIDGET 7A - BIDEWELL	N.A.	EFHL	Community 5	N

**April 13, 2016 Hockey Edmonton Board Meeting:
Moved: Wiltse / Kruhlak to:**

'adopt the recommendations outlined in the agenda report.'

Status: Carried



Vision

Hockey Edmonton aims to foster, through the sport of hockey, development of active, healthy lifestyles.

Mission

To provide, through excellent integrated partnerships, strong leadership, and engaged member organizations, developmental programs and competitive opportunities that encourage and inspire holistic development of all members.

Strategic Positioning Statement

From entry to advanced levels of play; with Long Term Player Development (LTPD) as our cornerstone, Hockey Edmonton will be known for its' progressive and innovative approach to hockey – measured by response to stakeholder needs and provision of a diverse continuum of opportunity.