

BHC Academy Team Guidance

Overview:

In the 2022/2023 season, Academy teams were introduced to both the Men's and Ladies sections to prepare junior players for the club's performance teams (First and Second Teams). This initiative aims to help Basingstoke Junior players advance to higher levels of adult hockey, reducing reliance on external players. It creates a pathway for developing performance-level players from the junior section, addressing the previous lack of support beyond the 5th team.

The club is dedicated to "hockey for all" and creating a sustainable pathway for junior players, continually enhancing support. This new approach is based on proven sports and hockey development methods.

When integrating juniors and adults in an academy or development team, the RARE principle (Right Athlete Right Environment) from England Hockey is used. This framework ensures players are placed in suitable environments for their development, recognizing that each player progresses differently. RARE aims to enhance the player experience and maximise their potential.

Coaching:

There will be a senior established coach allocated to developing the Academy Teams. Ideally the coach would have knowledge of or experienced National League/International playing standard.

The coaching will be aligned with the coaching of the Performance Teams so that the junior players able to progress into these teams will be ready for the required level. The primary objective of the coaching is to stretch the players and prepare them for the next steps in their hockey journey.

Academy Adult Players:

Adult players in the academy team will be selected for their ability to nurture junior talent while maintaining a high playing standard. Selection criteria include aptitude, attitude, skill, and talent, with a preference for those playing below their capability to support junior development. Experience working with and coaching juniors is also highly valued.

These adults will support, lead, and inspire juniors in higher competitive levels. Stability in the adult core is essential; ad-hoc availability needs from higher teams will be offered to 4th team players first to minimise disruption. Long-term requirements will be discussed at PCM (Playing Committee Meetings), but player desires and intentions should be made clear with captains and coaches to avoid disappointment.

Academy Junior Players:

Juniors are selected and invited to train or play with the Academy team when the captains and coaches believe they have the potential and should have the opportunity. This experience is expected to challenge players in several areas: physically, mentally, intensity and socially. The primary focus will be on their mental capacity to play at the required league level, ensuring they can cope and thrive in the environment. Junior players in the Academy must be committed to their personal development and able to take feedback and give constructive feedback to be able to build on their strengths and work hard on areas for focus and development.

Academy Selection Guidelines:

The team will incorporate junior players aged 13 to 18, with the expectation that players progress into the performance teams (First/Second Teams).

All selection and deselection discussions will be conducted by the Hockey Leadership Team and Coaching team during PCM meetings. Appropriate discussions will then be held with players and their parents/guardians regarding selection decisions. It is important to acknowledge that everyone develops at different rates, and the focus is on ensuring players are in the right team for their ability and potential at the right time.

Selection and deselection can be challenging and emotional for everyone involved. The intention is to ensure that all players have the best hockey experience possible suited to their capacity and potential. All decisions are being made with consideration of the whole team and all the players within it and not around individuals.

- Junior progression into the academy team should come via the junior players in the Ladies 5th (Development) Team, with exceptions discussed at PCM.
- Juniors selected for the academy teams should have the potential to progress into the performance teams within two cycles (seasons).
- Players who are not developing or showing the required levels of commitment and focus for the Academy team will be reviewed at PCM meetings.
- For junior players who turn 18 or have not progressed into a performance team by the end of their second cycle in the Academy, they will be reviewed in the pre-season and PCM and will then be subject to the standard club selection policy.
- Coaches and captains will proactively communicate with players and their parents/guardians following selection decisions to ensure alignment on the players' capacity and capability to play in the team, and when they are being considered for selection from the first and second teams.
- Overall selection will be based on potential, aptitude, attitude, fitness, skill, and talent.
- Adult selection is based on those able to play at or above the league standard and also support junior development on and off the pitch are essential. This includes all positions, including Goalkeepers.
- For Goalkeepers in the Academy, this position can be filled by either a junior or adult.

Academy Player Progression:

Juniors: When juniors are ready to be challenged, they will first be invited to “train up” with a higher squad. This allows assessment of how they handle the increased intensity, physicality, and pace of the game. Once they are established in training, the leadership team will discuss intentions and plans with the players and their parents/guardians. Training up is not a guarantee of promotion to a higher team but part of the process and this may happen at different points during the season.

Adults: Adults selected for the Academy team form a strong, stable unit to support the team's overall objectives. The aim is to maintain this core group and minimise disruption. While there may be occasions when adult members are asked to play at a higher level, this is expected to be the exception.

General Expectations:

There are general expectations for all players in the team to create a fun, competitive, supportive and fun environment for all to enjoy your hockey. The expectations are set for all Academy team members - adults, juniors and parents/guardians.

- **Commitment** - It is expected that players in this (and higher teams) will be committed to the team and maximising their availability where possible.
- **Team Player** - Being adaptable, reliable, positive, responsible and being there for your teammates. Win together and lose together!
- **Match Days**
 - **Arrive On Time** - Aim to be at the meet time so the best preparation for the game can be made.
 - **Teas** - Attending teas is part of the social side of hockey and where possible all players should be making efforts to attend teas (Parents/Guardians where possible should also be involved).
 - **Phones** - Minimising phone usage in changing rooms, pitch-side and at teas. Be present and part of the team.
 - **Positivity** - encouraging voice & support from the bench/sideline to support the game play.
 - **Subbing** - This is generally 7-10 minute rotations to enable higher intensity turns on the pitch. Complete in a quick and timely manner, acknowledge and switch as quickly as possible subject to game play.
- **Challenge & Ask** - If you are not sure about something please ask the team are here to help you grow hockey confidence.
- **Discipline & Respect** - It is expected that academy players show respect towards match officials, the opposition and each other.

