

Summer 2014 NER Elite Ringette Update A-AA-AAA Pilot Program

On Tuesday, August 12th, 2014, all Northeast Region local association Presidents (VERA and Iroquois Falls were unable to attend), the NER Elite Development Co-ordinator (Laura Caldwell), the NER President (Susan Weiskopf), and the NER Coaching Co-ordinator (Bruce Graham) took part in a conference call regarding the AA program that will be piloted in the coming season(s).

The following information is a synopsis of the topics covered in the conference call and how the NER will proceed with the pilot project.

Review of the current/ongoing NER situation:

1. Our AAA team, despite excellent leadership and skilled players, consistently loses games, often by a large goal spread. This is largely due to the fact that the NER lacks a program to physically and mentally prepare the players (and parents) for the AAA level of play.
2. Historically the NER could not ice AA teams without negatively impacting our A programs, hence AA teams have not hit the ice in many, many years.
3. Laura and Susan took on the laborious challenge to create an opportunity for players to return to the AA level of play again without impacting the local A programs through extensive lobbying with the ORA Board and It's Standing Committees (namely G&T and Membership Services). The goal was to allow the NER to have an exception which would allow A/AA two team agreements, thus allowing AA teams to exist without affecting the A programs. This would be done by working within set parameters that complimented this goal. (set out below)

The Exception:

The ORA passed the exception for two-team agreements to exist between A and AA players in the NER; an extremely rare, one-time occurrence. Below are the details of the motion approved by the board that outlines the parameters of the exception:

Motion D1-14-15: "To approve a one year trial for the Northeast allowing two team player contracts between A and AA players, within the following parameters (see below), with a formal review to be

presented to the board by the Athlete Rep, Northeast Region Director, Membership Services Coordinator and G&T Coordinator at the conclusion of the 2014-2015 season”.

1. For the development of a more competitive team (AAA) Northeast Region,
2. The AA team(s) will be formed at the beginning of the season, all players on that teams will be registered with ORA, (List of players will be provided to the regional G&T Coordinator)
3. At the discretion of the Northeast AA coach, the Northeast AA team could be attending two to four AA tournaments
4. Regional G&T coordinator will make sure that there is no conflict between A and AA tournaments. (Player can only attend one tournament per weekend)
5. Northeast AA teams formed under two teams agreement (A/AA) will not attend AA Provincials (as per ORA By-law stating no player shall attend more than one provincial event per season, and, by prioritizing A teams, players will attend A provincials only)
6. This is to be in place at the beginning of the 2014-15 season

Next Steps/Progress:

1. The presidents all agreed the AA pilot project should go forward in keeping with the ORA parameters. In addition to those parameters, the NER will ensure that all players continue their existing commitments with house league and A teams and maintain open communication regarding scheduling via a player agreement or player contract. Players cannot play AA unless they are playing A, therefore, they cannot quit one to play the other. The same applies to house league; you must play house league to play A.
2. Based on the numbers at the recent summer NER AA-AAA training camps (Sudbury, North Bay, Timmins), it's predicted that U16/U19AA may become a combined team of athletes, and that **Luc Delarosbil**, who will be coaching the AAA team in 2015-16, will coach this level as part of his preparation of the athletes for the following AAA season. If numbers exceed our prediction at tryouts, the NER will actively seek to assign another coach to train the U16AA team, and Luc would remain U19AA.
3. Based on the numbers at the same summer AA-AAA training camps, we feel that we can ice at least one U14AA team. Currently, the NER has had interest shown from **Bruce Graham** to coach. Bruce, as Coaching Co-ordinator, and Chair of the AA-AAA Working Group, and the head coach of the Sault Ste. Marie U14A team this coming season, has formulated a plan to

co-ordinate coaching efforts among all NER U14A head coaches to take part on the bench in order to encourage participation of more players at this extremely important “feeder” level of play based on the level of existing trust that players and parents have in their home U14A coaches already. Note: It is at this age that the players gain the greatest amount of appreciation for the “pyramid” of elite play, thus helping retain more athletes in the sport of ringette, and encouraging more talented players to get more involved at higher levels of play. Lastly, the greatest gain at this level is that of development of skills, resulting in a greater range of skilled players who can be included on the teams formed in order to hone skills. Keep in mind that this is a higher competitive level of play that they are trying out for and therefore need to demonstrate a certain level of skill to be considered.

Things to note:

- It was acknowledged that playing on two teams can be financially difficult so fundraising and cost cutting measures were discussed to help mitigate this.
- A working group will be working in the background chaired by Bruce Graham and includes a member from each local association, as well as the Elite Development Co-ordinator (Laura Caldwell) which will focus on tracking what’s working and what’s not. The group’s sole purpose is to refine the program going forward.
- Providing a AA program will provide opportunities for girls who want a higher level of play and help develop our players as future leaders at all levels of play, as well as to grow our sport.
- The focus is on development for all teams, but especially at the younger age level. The focus is also, of course, to increase our AAA program strength by giving the athletes more exposure to a higher level of play between A and AAA, thus more thoroughly preparing them for AAA play. This in turn will see the team succeed more at all levels; mentally, physically, and of course, in competition (wins).
- It’s important that A coaches observe how athletes playing at the higher level directly benefit their A teams (in skills and leadership) and put forth their support to any player(s) who choose to play AA through encouragement and support to the player/parents.
- The NER supports the use of two-team agreements for A-AA players with cautious confidence; meaning that the NER is thankful for the ORA exception and confident that it is the region’s best chance of successfully icing AA teams without harming our A programs. The NER will proceed carefully, and the working group will be an integral part of creating a complete process going forward in seasons to come after observing the first complete A-AA-AAA cycle.