



Cyclones FAQs

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Q: I'm new to hockey, especially travel hockey. Can you explain the different levels of play and the various leagues?

Jr. Cyclones 8U-15U (RINK PROGRAM)

- The Jr. Cyclones House program is for the relatively new hockey player with limited or no experience. This program is run through the Fox Valley Ice Arena and their staff. While it is coordinated with the Cyclones Amateur Hockey Association from a developmental perspective, they are two separate programs with separate registration protocols and programming. Most sports have a developmental protocol and hockey is no different. Very rarely does a player with no experience come to a travel tryout and make a team, so Jr. Cyclones House offers an opportunity to develop the skills necessary to move on to travel hockey. Jr. Cyclones offers teams for players at 8U through 15U.
- This program is designed for the novice player who is new to both skating and the game of hockey. The program is intended to help the new player develop the basic skills to play and compete in organized and structured hockey environments. Jr. Cyclones House sessions are traditionally two skates per week, with one day of station based skill developmental training followed by a second day of in-house games intended to give the player the opportunity to take newly developed skills into a competitive atmosphere.
- The Jr. Cyclones House are a pure In-House program, which simply means as a player you never travel to another rink to play games, and will only compete against other teams within the Jr. Cyclones House program. Whereas the Cyclones are the Tier II travel option as outlined below.
- Occasionally, the Jr. Cyclones House will put together tournament "select" teams to play in local B division tournaments to further expose the players to that "next level" of hockey. Those decisions are made by the Jr. Cyclones House staff at FVIA, not by the Cyclones Amateur Hockey Association. Click here for details on the Jr. Cyclones program: http://fvia.us/jr_cyclones.php

8U/6U Jr. Cyclones Travel & Jr. Cyclones House (CLUB PROGRAM)

- The Jr. Cyclones Travel program is the youngest level offered through the Cyclones Amateur Hockey Association
- 8U/6U aged players have the opportunity to play full ice Mite level hockey through Jr. Cyclones Travel
- Jr. Cyclones Travel hockey is played through the American Athletic Union (AAU), in the Chicago United Hockey League (CUHL) and therefore does not follow the protocols of USA Hockey
- Jr. Cyclones Travel hockey will have tryouts for all players. Teams will be formed and placed in the appropriate CUHL division.
- All Jr. Cyclones Travel players are coached by the staff which is selected and supervised by the Cyclones Hockey Director



- Jr. Cyclones Travel Prep programming is available for those beginner hockey players not ready for a full ice hockey.
- 8U Teams playing in CUHL typically have three skates per week (two team practices along with one skills session) plus games on weekends.
- 8U/6U House and Travel Prep teams typically have two skates per week, plus games.

Northwest Hockey League (NWHL)

The Northwest Hockey League is sometimes called a "House" program, and that is a misnomer. The more accurate description of NWHL is *Travel B*. This is because as a NWHL player, you will travel to other rinks in the Chicago area to compete against other clubs.

This program is offered through the Cyclones Amateur Hockey Association. The Cyclones provide NWHL teams from 10U through 18U. Highlights to the NWHL program are:

- Less time commitment than Tier II travel - one practice & one skill session per week, and usually one game per weekend
- Less of a financial commitment than travel - NWHL is about 40% less expensive than travel
- Player Evaluations - no tryouts as the player is not competing for a specific team
- Roster sizes are limited and not all players who register for NWHL may make a team, league rules state it is a "first come, first served" league
- Rosters are selected based on registration date and skill evaluation
- Balanced rosters - Clubs are prohibited from loading up with one dominant team, rather an equal split of talent is enforced
- Balanced Ice Time (BIT) Policy - NWHL and the Cyclones strictly enforce the BIT policy so every player gets the chance to play the game and develop
- Blowout Rule - NWHL prohibits teams from running up the scores
- Limited out of area tournament travel - no more than one per season, selected by the Head Coach
- Typical league season consists of 18 league games (including 6 tiering round games)
- With tournaments, most NWHL teams will play 30+ games per season
- NWHL Championship Tournament for qualifying teams.

NWHL is broken down into color coded divisions to balance out play; Red (1st tier), White (2nd tier) & Blue (3rd tier) - sometimes a 4th division of Green or Yellow, but that is driven by the number of teams the clubs have at a given level.

Unfortunately, not every player who registers for NWHL will always make a team. During the player evaluations, the coaching staffs work as a team and will collectively rate a player on their overall skill (skating, passing, shooting) then evenly divide the players should there be more than one team at a particular level. If a player is not placed on a NWHL roster, they have the opportunity to go to the Jr. Cyclones program for further skill development.



Northern Illinois Hockey League (NIHL)

The Northern Illinois Hockey League is the largest travel league in the state of Illinois, and the clubs that field teams for this league are fielding true travel hockey teams. For this league, in the simplest terms, it is generally best players on the best teams. NIHL is also broken down into tiers for league play; Gold Elite, Gold, Silver & Bronze. The highlights of the NIHL program are:

- More time commitment - Two practices per week, one skills session per week and two games per weekend
- More travel commitment - In addition to the Chicago area, NIHL has teams in Central Illinois, Northwest Indiana & Southeastern Wisconsin
- Out of state tournament commitment - Each NIHL team will traditionally travel out of state once per season (Oct/Nov), and perhaps more
- Tryouts to determine roster/team placement - Best players on the best teams, however each coach is allowed the flexibility to build their team in the manner which they feel gives them the best opportunity to compete at the projected level for the upcoming season
- More financial commitment - In addition to the travel expenses associated with local and out of state travel, the season fees are significantly higher as the player is consuming more ice time than a NWHL player
- AHA Election Restriction - AHA regulations prohibit players from skating for more than 2 travel teams in their playing careers until they reach Midget hockey. Once an election is made to play at the NIHL level, there is only one election remaining. As a 10U, that could mean one remaining option for the next 5 years. This is a very strict rule and one parents/players should remember and not take lightly
- Elevated skill development and competition - Play at NIHL is very competitive and your player will begin to be exposed to some of the more advanced concepts in the game of hockey
- Game speed - The speed of the game increases significantly at each level and the players will begin to learn how to "think" the game through by reading and reacting to the play rather than simply relying on pure skill
- 16 League games played, not including a 6-8 games in a tiering round depending on level. With tournaments, NIHL teams often play ~35 games
- Participation in the NIHL Blackhawks Cup Championship Tournament for qualifying teams
- Participation in the Blackhawk Cup State Championship Tournament

From a planned travel perspective, each fall Chicago plays host to the Bauer World Invite International Tournament. Every rink in the region is used and there is no league play because there is no ice to be had. Many clubs, including the Cyclones, plan club-wide out of state tournaments during this time so teams do not miss an entire weekend of skating. Tournament selections range from Michigan, to Missouri to Indiana and most NIHL teams will participate. The Bauer World Invite is usually the last weekend in October or the first weekend in November, so families need to plan accordingly.



Central States Developmental Hockey League (CSDHL)

When it comes to Tier II hockey, CSDHL has established itself as a premier Tier II league. It is one of the best Tier II programs in the entire country and teams from this league compete regularly for the National Championship in their respective divisions. Unlike NWHL & NIHL, there are no divisions within CSDHL, only birth year designations (Major & Minor). CSDHL begins at 10U, and has teams through 18U. Highlights for the CSDHL program are:

- Increased financial commitment - Each player selected to a CSDHL team must pay an additional League Fee on top of their regular season fees. This payment is collected on October 15th through the credit card used during registration
- Increased time commitment - Games are a bit longer at the CSDHL level, but at 10U it is not a significant amount
- Increased travel commitment - CSDHL is made up of teams from IL, MO & IN (and at the 15U level and up, teams from MN, AZ, & CO), which means you could have 2 - 3 out of town trips in a season (similar to tournament travel) simply to play league games. This of course, results in a significant increase in your financial commitment (gas, hotel, meals, etc.)
- Elevated level of play and competition - Many players at CSDHL are at or near AAA caliber, some are in fact former AAA players. Game speed is significantly higher at this level and the player truly has to think the game and play a team game
- Tryout Process - Competition for the CSDHL rosters is incredibly competitive and only the best Tier II players in our program are selected for this team
- Registration - You do not register your player as a CSDHL player, only a Travel player. The tryout process determines the placement. However, as stated above if a player is selected to a CSDHL team, once the roster is submitted that player is financially obligated to the League fees for the season
- Levels - Each age bracket has two years of eligibility, therefore the younger level is referred to as the Minors while the older bracket is referred to as the Majors. However, a Minor aged player can be selected to play at the Major level if the player possesses the skills
- 24-28 League games played depending on the level, not including Showcases and Tournaments
- Participation in the CSDHL League Championship Tournament for qualifying teams
- Participation in the Blackhawk Cup State Championship Tournament

Obviously the two major factors for consideration of having a CSDHL player are time and money. It is a significant investment of both when your player makes a CSDHL team, but the competition and player development the league provides is the some of the best the Cyclones provides to its players.



Q: Can you describe the Age Levels?

In accordance with the newly adopted USA Hockey protocol, the Cyclones Amateur Hockey Association will no longer refer to age divisions by the former traditional names (Mite, Squirt, PeeWee, Bantam and Midget). Now all divisions will be referred to by the new protocol referencing age groups; 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14, 16U & 18U.

8U/6U – Current Birth Years 2011 – 2014

- Jr. Cyclones Travel play in the CUHL
- Jr. Cyclones Travel House and Travel Prep option for players not new to hockey, but not ready for a full season
- Full equipment required

10U – Current Birth Years 2009 – 2010

- The 10U age bracket is for the 9 - 10 year old player (No 8U Players Allowed)
- All games from this age forward are full ice
- Black Pucks
- No Checking
- Eligible to play in out of area tournaments
- Cyclones have 10U teams in NWHL and NIHL, and in some years CSDHL

12U – Current Birth Years 2007 – 2008

- More physical contact allowed, but still a no check age bracket
- Size differential in players begins to become evident
- Slap Shots allowed in games
- Cyclones have 12U teams in NWHL and NIHL, plus two CSDHL teams – one for birth year 2006 players (Major) and a team for 2007s (Minor)

14U – Current Birth Years 2005 – 2006

- INTRODUCTION OF BODY CHECKING
- ALL Bantam Players MUST attend a mandatory checking clinics prior to the season
- Player size differential due to growth spurts is obvious
- Cyclones have 14U teams in NWHL and NIHL, plus two CSDHL teams – one for birth year 2004 players (Major) and a team for 2005s (Minor)



15U, 16U & 18U – Current Birth Years 2001 – 2004

- Size and speed of the game is at the highest level due to maturity of the players
- Physicality of the game increases
- Highest level teams play in league with teams from outside the Midwest (see CSDHL)
- Cyclones have a 15U (2003), 16U (2002) and 18U (2000/2001) team playing in CSDHL and one 18U NWHL team

Q: Why does CSDHL cost more than NIHL, and NIHL cost more than NWHL?

- The cost difference between CSDHL and NIHL is primarily due to the longer ice slots required for league games, league fees, trainers and coach's salaries.
- The cost difference between NIHL and NWHL is primarily due to the # of practice slots that teams are allocated, in addition to coach's salaries. NWHL teams have one less practice slot per week, as compared to travel teams in CSDHL or NIHL.

Q: Other than the season fees, are there any other costs related to playing for the Cyclones?

Each family participating in Cyclones Hockey needs to be aware of the extra costs associated with youth hockey. In addition to the season fees, possibly league fees (CSDHL), and travel commitments/costs, there are extra costs each family should prepare for.

- Each family will be required to purchase \$200 of raffle tickets. The families can either sell the tickets to family/friends or submit their stubs with their names in hopes of winning the cash payouts.
- Each family will also be expected to contribute to a team "Slush Fund". This amount varies by team and level, and is mandatory. The slush fund is used to pay for team related functions, parties, tournaments and so on. If a family refuses to participate, they are putting an unfair burden on the other families on the team as the remaining families now carry a larger financial burden. The Slush Fund is balanced, fair and your participation is expected. Teams set their slush amount early in a season, and ranges between \$250-500 are typical – but could be higher or lower.
- In addition to the aforementioned financial responsibilities, each family will be expected to participate as off-ice game officials for our home games and some tournament games. The duties of the off-ice official include tending a penalty box, filling out the score sheet during the game and operating the game clock. Keep in mind, when assuming these duties you are a temporary game official and the penalties for violating the USA Hockey Zero Tolerance Policy are significantly higher than that of a parent in the stands. It is strongly recommended that each parent reads and understands the Cyclones Rules & Regulations prior to the start of the season.



Q: What's the difference between "Tryouts" and "Evaluations"?

- Tryouts are held by teams participating in the CSDHL and NIHL travel leagues. Players participate in up to 4 tryout sessions at the beginning of the season. This occurs in mid-August for 15U-18U players and no earlier than Sep 1 for 10U/12U/14U players. At the conclusion of tryouts, the coaching staff chooses players based on skill level to fill their teams. It is possible that not all players will be selected for a team.
- Two evaluation sessions are held for the teams participating in the NWHL league. Evaluations are a no-cut process where players are evaluated based on their skill and then are placed on teams during a draft process, where each Cyclones team takes turns selecting players until their teams are full. While this is a no-cut process, space on teams is limited and players will be chosen for roster spots on a first-come, first-serve basis, based on their registration date.

Q: If my child missed tryouts/evals, can they still be placed on a team?

- All players are expected to participate in all tryouts or all evaluations for their respective registration. This means that if you registered for Travel, you are expected to attend ALL tryout sessions for your age level. If you registered for House, you are expected to attend ALL evaluation sessions for your age level.
- If, for some reason, you're unable to attend your appropriate sessions, it is best to discuss these situations with the Cyclones Hockey Director, Pete Rutili.

Q: Is there a tryout fee? Can I get a refund if my player does not make a team?

- There is a non-refundable tryout fee that all players are expected to pay prior to participating in the tryout/evaluation process. This tryout fee is applied to your account balance, and is included as part of the season fee. If a player tries out for a travel team and does not make a team, they are expected to participate in the evaluation process for NWHL.
- If there is not a team for a player to be placed on, the tryout fee will be refunded. All final decisions are made by the Cyclones Finance Committee.



Q: I've heard "Blackhawks NIHL Tournament" and "Blackhawks Cup", what are they and what's the difference?

- At the conclusion of the regular season, the NIHL league conducts their league playoffs at each age/metallic level. These playoffs are referred to as the Blackhawks NIHL Tournament (formerly the Wolves Cup)
- Along the same line, the CSDHL and NWHL leagues hold their own league playoff tournaments.
- In addition, AHAI holds the Illinois State Hockey Tournament, referred to as the Blackhawks Cup. AHAI offers several divisions for teams to play in, including Tier I, Tier II, and High School. The Cyclones travel teams (CSDHL and NIHL), all considered Tier II teams participate in this tournament, at either the AA, A, or B level, with a chance to be crowned the State Champs in their Age/Skill Division!!

We understand this is a lot of information to digest. Should you have any questions about any aspect of this outline, please do not hesitate to contact your team Manager, Level Coordinator, or any member of the Cyclones Board of Directors for clarification.

We look forward to having a successful season both on and off the ice. Go Cyclones!

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