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# I. Creating a better Club

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## 1.a Starting a Club or a Regional Association

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Success in club development can be defined as reaching a situation where the new club matures into a stable organisation. There are many factors which contribute to the eventual success or failure of a club. Before starting your hockey club or association it is critical to evaluate the viability. In this chapter we focus on the factors that would either support or negate the start of a hockey club/association.

Developing a new Hockey club or association requires a systematic approach. Your objective should not only be to start a new club but to bring it to a state of maturity where it can make its own contribution to the growth and development of the sport. This process necessitates careful planning if the club/association is to achieve long-term success. Typically new clubs/associations are formed as the community grows, in the absence of the sport in the area, a need for new competition, or by the desire of passionate hockey lovers.

Before you begin developing a club it is important to ask a few questions in order to understand the community and key trends, and to determine whether it is feasible to create a new club:

- Does a hockey club/association already exist in the area?
- Is it active?
- Does it cater for all?
- Is there sufficient interest for a hockey club?
- Can this interest be sustained?
- Are there existing facilities in the area (for instance within a multi sports club)? Can they be accessed? At what cost?
- Are there resources to fund facilities (pitch, change room, clubhouse)?
- Will you have enough volunteers and / or professionals to assist with the formation and running of the club? [You will need to determine which volunteer /paid positions you will need 1<sup>st</sup> initially, 2<sup>nd</sup> as the club grows.]

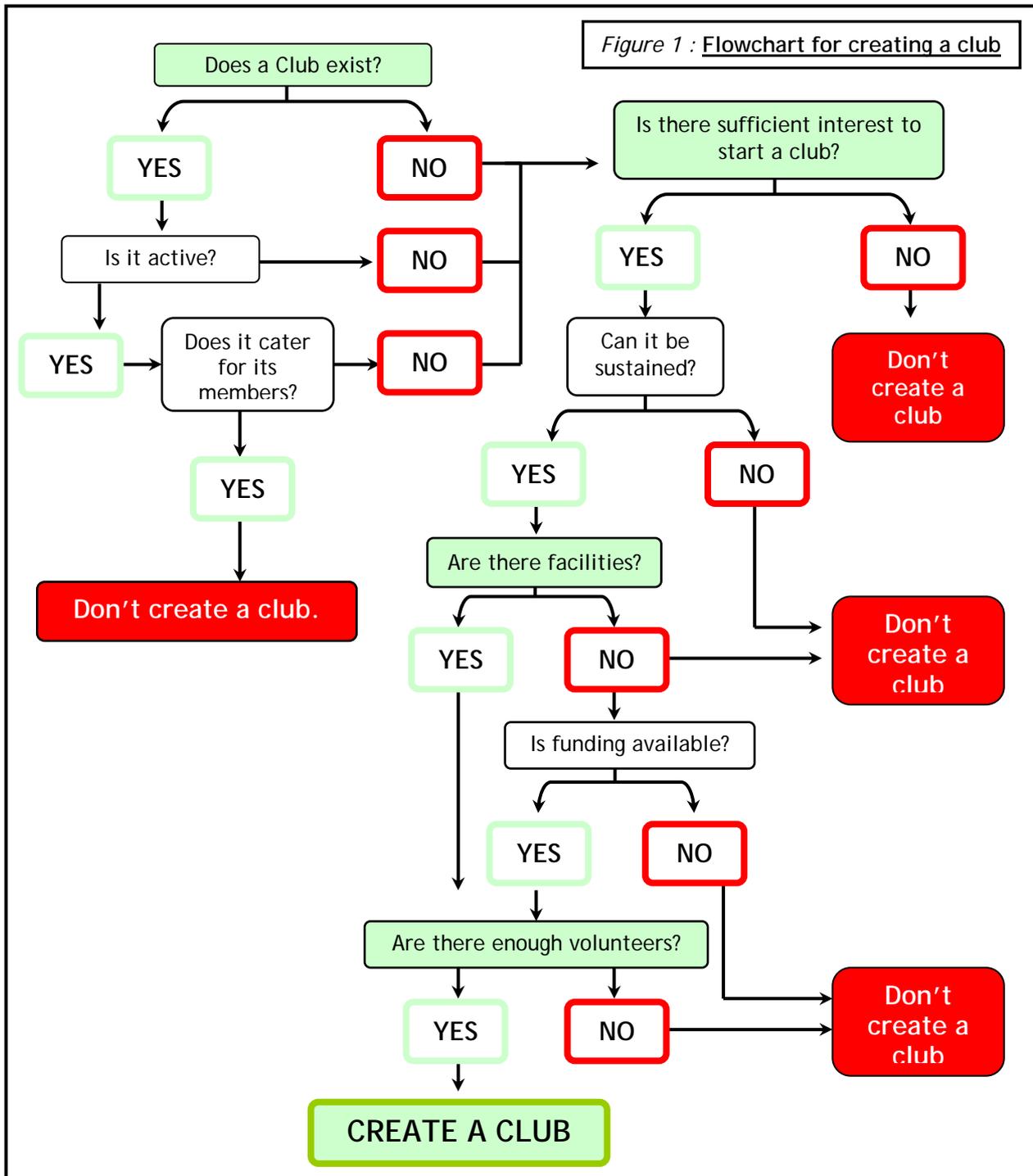
This process can be seen in the flowchart for creating a club (figure 1).

In addition these questions also need to be posed:

- Will location, access and transport be a problem? Parking? Is public transport available?
- What are the future plans of the local government?
- What are the demographics of the area? Is there population growth?
- Is there support from:
  - i. Local authorities & Community centres
  - ii. Governing sports bodies
  - iii. Schools
  - iv. Youth clubs
  - v. Sports centres

vi. Local agencies

The more you know about the area the better prepared you will be when talking to the local government, backers and potential sponsors. This is also a reality check to ensure that you have community involvement, as well as serving to create awareness, as these aspects are imperative for long-term feasibility. Bear in mind that much of the background information about the community can be obtained through government sources at little or no cost.



Once the information has been analysed it is time to make your decision. If the answers lead to the formation of a club, this gives rise to the *Initial Meeting*.

This is a meeting of all those interested in being a part of the club, whether it will be as members or taking on a more official role (e.g. committee member, fundraiser, coach etc). Advertise the meeting to potential members through local papers, community service and radio announcements, TV, Internet, bulletin boards, community centres, council notice boards, recreation centres etc. You may want to personally invite key members of the community or people with high profiles.

The meeting should take a well-structured format, such as:

- Welcome and explain briefly the reason for the meeting - to “establish a hockey club”, and be clear on the reason for the organisation and its goals
  - Record names, addresses, e-mail, phone and fax numbers and any special interests and skills of the people attending
  - Review the findings and issues arising from your research. This is an ideal opportunity to explain to those present why you want to start a hockey club
  - Give opportunity for questions and general discussion (Appoint a temporary secretary to take notes and Minutes.)
  - Invite input and re-evaluate whether to form a hockey club
  - Appoint a steering committee (chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer) to set up the club structure and manage further developments
  - Establish a date for a general meeting
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### *Steering Committee*

This committee must evaluate the following issues before the next club meeting:

- A constitution or charter to cover aims, objectives and rules under which the club will operate. It will be difficult for any club to run smoothly without this statement of unified purpose, which also protects club members and officers.<sup>i</sup> (*See appendix 1 for sample constitution*)
  - Design a database for member registration
  - Determine funding sources
  - Draft budgets and membership fees
  - Decide on the most effective way of attracting new members
  - Establish links with:
    - i. National and regional sporting bodies
    - ii. Sport and Recreation officers of the local authorities
    - iii. Community groups
  - Reconfirm and advertise the date for the first general meeting of the proposed new club.
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### *First General Meeting*

At least a month before the general meeting, the steering committee should circulate the proposed constitution and notice of the date, time and venue of the first general meeting. A suggested format of the meeting follows:

- welcome, roll call and apologies
  - explain what the club wants to offer and for whom
  - description of the steering committee's activities since the initial meeting
  - proposed constitution to be discussed and any suggested amendments
  - vote to adopt the constitution
  - examine structure of new committee
  - elect or appoint officers/directors in accordance with constitution
  - consider the duties that need to be completed before the next meeting
  - confirm membership fees
  - business arising
  - set next meeting date
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### *Fitting into the bigger picture*

Now that you have decided to form a new club, it is important to affiliate the club with both its National and Regional (state or provincial) hockey bodies.

There are many advantages associated with affiliation:

- giving your members the opportunity to participate with other hockey clubs at state and national levels
  - permitting your club and its members to engage in activities/services offered by these organisations
  - providing assistance in the development of coaches and officials
  - sharing in the knowledge, skills and experience of the parent organisation
  - providing a greater network of and access to resources
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### *Club Members*

Without its members a club cannot operate successfully. They are the backbone of the organisation, providing both human and financial resources. The membership may consist of senior, junior and affiliate members, as well as coaches, officials and the club committee/directors. Getting to know the membership has valuable outcomes. Each member may have a skill or interest that may assist the club. It is from this membership pool that committee positions can be filled. However it is important to fill the position with a person with the right skills rather than fit the position to the person.

Clubs usually operate under an open membership policy, whereby paying the membership fees allows one to be a club member. Membership fees are devised on the costs associated with running the club, facility hire, uniforms, levies associated with affiliation to national and state

organisations, equipment, coaches and officials. You may decide to offer different rates of membership for junior and senior members, social and competitive competition. Non-playing memberships may be made available for those who coach or officiate or simply wish to support the club.

It is important that the members are aware of what the membership entails and what their rights and obligations are. A club may produce a handbook outlining benefits and services offered by the club as well as a code of conduct (this is usually found in the constitution or policy and procedures manual). These codes of conduct can be specific for the player, coaches, officials and parents.

Members' rights generally include:

- Use of facilities
- Participation in leagues and other hockey activities
- Voting at meetings
- Eligibility for election to the club committee
- Opportunity for coaching and umpiring support
- Insurance coverage while participation in the game
- Notification of any changes to the game

In turn members are obliged to:

- Respect the rules of the club and adhere to club policies and procedures
- Respect fellow members, officials and opposition
- Pay a nominal fee for yearly membership

In order to become a member it is usually required that an application or membership form be completed. (See appendix 2). This form should include:

- Name
- Occupation
- Advice on membership fee/entry fee payable
- A list of office-holders and contact numbers
- Interest in assisting in club operations
- Address and telephone number (work and private)
- Age and date of birth
- A set of club rules
- Types of memberships
- Skills/assets that can be brought to the club

Once the form is returned, this information should be entered into a database where it is recorded by the club committee. This information may also be required by the state or national body together with membership levies.

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### *Termination of membership*

Termination of membership usually occurs in the event of breaches of conduct including when no payment of the annual fee occurs. A club reserves the right to terminate membership in the event of failure to comply with the club regulations.

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## *Summary*

Before enthusiastically starting a club it is wise to check on some factors in order to prevent disillusion and disappointment:

- Investigate if the hockey club you want to start is a viable proposition, there is nothing worse than putting a lot of energy into something that is not sustainable.
- Check on the area: the demographics, the current sport opportunities, the existing facilities, the wishes of the community and the support of the authorities.
- Form a steering committee to plan and execute the necessary steps towards a successful club.
- Involve the community in an initial and general meeting.
- Find out about the background of your members and invite them to help you run your club for many years to come!

## 1.b Club Planning

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“Planning is a process of setting objectives and deciding how to accomplish them”.<sup>ii</sup> It requires forward thinking and a goal-orientated approach, in order to create the future of your club. The planning process helps you to identify the tasks and the resources that you need to make a club run more effectively. It assists you in making the best use of available finances and establishing the roles and functions of the club and its members.

This chapter focuses on the planning process and how its benefits can be used by clubs to obtain their goals.

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### *Why an Action Plan?*

Planning also allows you to recognise the competitive advantage your club has in comparison to other hockey clubs. Whether they be at the national or club level, organisations need to plan their long term viability in order to grow. Planning identifies where a hockey club has come from, where it is currently at, where it wants to go and how it is going to get there. Aside from highlighting the main objectives of the club, this “action plan” can be used in committee management, marketing and sponsorship proposals and organisation of staff and volunteers as well as player development. Further reason to plan is to get members involved in the development of the club and to ensure that resources are used effectively.

Without planning, the elected Club Board can very easily overlook the club’s goals and future targets, focusing too closely on present and immediate issues. Such a short-term approach not only prevents anticipation of future problems, but also clouds creativity and further development, giving the club a disorganised last-minute approach.

Planning is often neglected for various reasons. There are people who are uncomfortable dealing with the future. It is often unclear whose role it is to create a plan. Decisions are made too quickly and impatiently. It is seen as an unnecessary process for clubs -something that the national or provincial bodies should undertake.

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### *Who should be involved?*

Planning is usually the responsibility of the Clubs Board (that was either appointed or elected at the General Meeting or subsequent AGM). A Planning Committee may also be formed. If this is the case, it should consist of Board Members as they are responsible for the structure and implementation of the plan. However the essence of the plan should have input from varied sources.

Those attending the meeting should be a mix of:

- Board members
- Potential sponsors
- Volunteers, coaches and paid staff
- Parents of younger players
- Hockey players
- Facility operators (those who maintain the

- Umpires (pitch and the club rooms)

Try and involve as many people in this planning process as possible, as the more people who are consulted in the development of the plan, the more it will reflect an accurate direction for your club. After a brainstorming session and draft plan has been devised, it should be circulated to all your club members to make sure that it reflects their needs.

It is important to set time aside for planning to ensure that it receives the attention that is required. Make sure that enough time is allowed on the agenda to cater for the action plan. The action plan component should have enough time dedicated to it in order to develop the basic framework of the plan, (this will vary according to your club's needs and goals). This plan should be reviewed regularly as a benchmark of your progress and allow you to make any necessary adjustment to cope with changes in your club's environment.

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### *Developing your action plan*

Your action plan doesn't have to be a complicated one- but it should be able to answer the following questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be?
- How are we going to get there?

Firstly the club needs to develop a mission statement. This explains the purpose of the club and why it exists i.e. "to promote hockey in the area, while catering for the social and competitive needs of our members".

The vision statement tells us the direction of the club and what it is going to achieve i.e. "a greater awareness of hockey within the community through interactive programs, allowing for greater participation at all levels".

Your goals are designed to allow the club to achieve its vision. These objectives should be **SMART**:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Realistic for the designated
- Time period

Such a goal may be "to increase club membership by 20% in 2004" or "double the number of certificated umpires in the club by the end of the season".

The objectives tell us how you will achieve the goals, i.e. offer umpiring courses every month through the season. It is best to organise the objectives for each of the aspects that are important to the club. Most hockey clubs would list objectives under the following headings:

- Coaching and officiating
- Membership
- Competition
- Talent development
- Finance/sponsorship
- Volunteers/staff
- Facility improvements or expansions

It is important to look within the organisation and determine the **Strengths** and **Weaknesses**, and the **Opportunities** and **Threats** that they face currently and in the future (SWOT analysis). For example:

**Strengths:**

- Strong club spirit
- Dedicated committee members
- Excellent training facility

**and weaknesses:**

- Non-qualified coaches
- Lack of volunteers
- Poor turnout for training
- Weather dependent, i.e. can't play in snow

**Opportunities:**

- Strong growth in the club
- Training of coaches and officials

**and threats:**

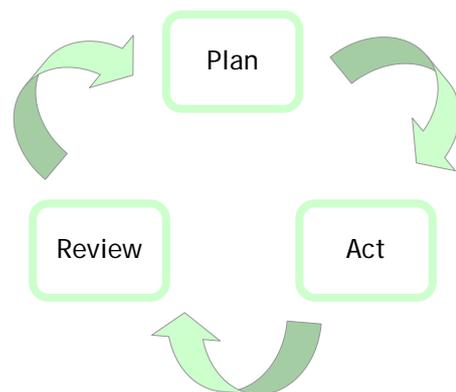
- Limited or decreasing funds
- Other sports competing for use of facilities

(The clubs objectives and strategies should tie in with the SWOT analysis)

**Action**

This part of the plan tells us the “who, what, where and when”. **Who** is responsible for carrying out the objectives? **What** needs to be done? **Where** will it be done and when the actions need to be completed.

The planning committee needs to put each target through the action planning process before you include it in your final plan. (See appendix 3 for action plan) It is essential that you monitor your club's progress using your plan. Too often the plan is created and then set aside or even forgotten. An action plan is an ongoing process that should be used as a working and living document for your hockey club's development.



This plan should be used as a guide for the development of the club over a 2-5 year time frame. In order for it to work

- Make sure that the members of the club understand and accept your plans
  - Promote the plan as this will make everybody more familiar with it and send it to the members
  - Most importantly implement the club plan and review it periodically.
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## *Summary*

**A**s you seek to develop your hockey club, remember that it must have a plan for its direction and future. All efforts should be focused on these aims and goals, including the structure of the club. It should not be seen as a rigid system but rather one that offers flexibility and caters for change. By involving members of your club and hockey community, you can also use your action plan to market the club to future members, sponsors and funding agencies. This helps the club monitor its progress and achieve its goals. Although planning is a time consuming process, it should be looked upon as an investment in your club's future.

## 1.c Recruiting Players, Staff & Volunteers

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In order to ensure long-term success within your club, it is crucial that there is a consistent intake of new members into your membership. Whether they be players, coaches or volunteers, it is important that your club is organised and has a positive working environment.

Your club is a place where people go for recreation and competition. Tension and disorganisation within the club can lead to dissatisfaction resulting in members seeking a happier club environment elsewhere. This chapter will explore ways to encourage and retain new members to your club.

Having successfully completed your clubs action plan you will be able to use it as a guide for recruiting players, staff and volunteers. Depending on what your targets are, you may be seeking to recruit coaches or more volunteers to help run events, or simply further develop and retain the members of your club.

Seeking to increase the club's membership can offer many benefits. It helps keep running costs down, offers a wider range of talent, increases the club's finances and its ability to raise funds, as well as providing a potentially greater volunteer or professional base through the players themselves and their family and friends.

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### *Recruiting hockey players*

If clubs are to attract players they need to have a well-developed structure in place and identify what influences people when joining a club.

#### **Why join your club?**

There are a variety of reasons why players may choose to join your club:

- location
- success of the club
- social aspects
- family involvement
- competitive reasons (which league they play in)
- size of the club
- facilities
- to improve skills
- peer pressure

These reasons are dependent upon the player and are likely to differ between juniors and senior players. If a club can focus on the aspects that appear to be important to its members it will be more successful in both recruiting and retaining members.

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### *Recruiting...where to begin?*

All members should be involved and aware of the clubs recruitment strategy. This should not be solely the responsibility of the President and his/her Board. Everyone working together to recruit

new members is more likely to be successful than just leaving the recruiting in the hands of a couple of Board members.

### 1. Identifying the target market

Before developing a strategy for recruiting members it is beneficial to determine where potential members are likely to come from.

- **Active players:** Players who are already actively playing hockey and are looking for a club to join. They may be new in the area or want to play in a more or less competitive league. Your club may have a junior section, or a more convenient practice time. The location of your club may be more practical than their current club (i.e. on the way home from work).

To recruit these players you may simply need to publicise the club by advertising on local/community notice boards, at the local gym, or in the local paper. Put a sign on a school fence. Ensure that your website is up to date and that you regularly send newsletters to current members. Importantly, ensure that membership details are readily available to new recruits.

- **Inactive players:** These are players who may want an associate membership (non-playing membership); or perhaps they don't want to play every weekend; or work obligations do not permit regular team commitment; or they are players who used to play in their youth and they might want to take it up again. Hockey seems to have a high dropout rate after leaving high school and the presence of a club in the local community can allow people to participate as spectators, as social members or as players. It is not only youth who drop out of hockey. Adults starting a family may stop and resume when the children start playing.

In order to recruit these players you should give them the opportunity to come and watch the games by publishing the schedules within the local community or on your website. Host an open day, have a BBQ, a social function (i.e. trivia night for example), hold a junior festival or jamboree. Perhaps hold a registration day in conjunction with another event and have a mini game or a video of hockey to give the sport and your club more exposure. Post a "Members Wanted" or "New Members Welcome" sign to your website or local community notice boards stating that active and social members are welcome.

- **Non-players:** These are players who have no hockey experience but are interested in learning the sport.

The most effective way to get these players involved is through a "learn to play hockey" program. Community groups and schools are great resources through which you can tap into these potential members. Offer to run holiday programs/ camps or after school sessions through either the schools or local youth and community groups. Hosting exhibition games and providing players with mentor figures can entice new members to your club.

Teachers and youth leaders can assist with promoting both the game of hockey and your club. Thus it is valuable to have an enthusiastic contact within each local school to both encourage the athletes and to provide the club with a link for after school coaching sessions or developing a school team.

Posters and information sheets (for the potential player and his/her parents) are also helpful in recruiting new players, if the correct information is provided.

Running a junior section within your club allows you to develop your club at grass roots level, providing the club with a greater talent base and more stability.

Having identified the potential members, it is important that the club displays a positive atmosphere towards new recruits and makes them feel welcome in the club. Ensure that membership details and practice times are readily available to give to your new players. You may want to assign someone to look after a new junior recruit (buddy system) until they are more familiar with the club and its surroundings.

In order to attract new members it may be necessary to offer them an incentive for joining. Perhaps offer a beginner fee or provide a free camp for all beginners. Starter packs which include a stick, a ball, T-shirt and shin pads for a minimal price are great for junior players. In addition offer to lend equipment for the first 2-3 weeks while the player is learning the game and deciding whether to stay with it. The costs associated with starting a new sport can often deter new members. Check to see if there are any grants/scholarships for which players can apply for assistance in obtaining equipment. Often clubs can apply for such grants to help with the purchasing of goalie equipment or even new goals.

## 2. Membership retention

It is often too easy to focus solely on the recruitment of players without taking the time to think about how you will keep them there in the following years. Listed are some ideas that your club may consider in order to retain your members:

- Having a junior section within your club often breeds loyalty. This will not only give the club a recruiting pool, but also strengthen the club.
- A sound pathway which provides junior players with the opportunity to develop their skills and excel to an elite level, will not only give the club more structure, but will also assist in retaining players
- An outline of the club structure showing the number of teams and the divisions in which they compete shows a professional and well organised club
- Offer further development to promising players
- Provide good coaches for all teams
- Take the time to get to know new members
- Foster a positive atmosphere and commitment within the club

- Offer social functions on a regular basis
- Offer trips and tours both at the developmental and at the social level
- Provide open channels of communication
- Plan and coordinate effective meetings
- Provide coaching and umpiring development

While it may seem obvious to implement the ideas mentioned, it is very easy to fall into the trap of self-destruction. Therefore it is wise to avoid the following:

- Showing up late for meetings
- Inhibiting creativity and new ideas
- Not paying attention to group dynamics
- Not following through with plans
- Failing to give credit when it is due or failing to acknowledge other members
- Meeting too infrequently
- Not keeping members well informed about the happenings in the club or changes to the Rules of the Game

There are other challenges that may make it difficult for a club to retain members.

Finding ways to overcome these challenges will increase membership retention:

- Overcrowded practices or not enough practice time
- Lack of coaches
- Poor quality facilities
- Inflexible or inconvenient practice times
- Lack of transport for juniors
- Unaffordable membership fees
- Lack of funds within the club
- Difficulty in attracting junior players
- Lack of involvement by the club's committee members

If your club is focusing on junior recruitment, it is extremely beneficial to appoint someone to the role of Junior Coordinator. Such a person needs to be well organised and have the support of the club. The Junior Coordinator's role involves all junior development and identifying any actions to be taken. The co-ordinating of action plans (e.g. liaising with schools and community groups, organising the delivery of programs, supporting and recruiting coaches as well as players, involving the parents) can be both a time-consuming and daunting task. The Junior Coordinator can benefit from developing a "Junior Committee" to assist with administering these responsibilities.

An effective way to recruit juniors is to bring these young people and your club together by creating club-school links:

- Mini hockey games or exhibition games can be arranged at local carnivals or festivals. Have the equipment available for them to try and make sure that the games are safe and led by an enthusiastic coach
- Arrange to visit schools and run a few hockey sessions either during the class or after school. Club led activities are often welcomed by the schools - providing they are well organised. Identify a "hockey minded" person within the school to be the liaison between the school and the club
- Hold open days at your club, inviting local schools and community groups to participate
- Provide facilities or run a school competition at your club
- Invite teachers and parents to a club information session
- Offer free beginner coaching/rule courses to new parents and teachers wanting to get involved.

Parents play a big role in the recruiting and retention of juniors. Welcoming parents and providing them with up-to-date information regarding training times, club coaches and contacts, necessary equipment requirements, any club rules and fees, as well as dealing with the expectations of both parents and players, gives the club a professional and organised appearance, reassuring parents that it is a safe and fun environment for their children.

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### *Recruiting staff and volunteers*

As you continue to recruit new members or decide to expand your club, you will find that is also necessary to recruit additional personnel for the club to function efficiently. It is not uncommon to find that the majority of the work done in a club depends upon volunteers. A volunteer can be defined as someone who donates his or her time or expertise without receiving any remuneration. They can be found at the operational or management levels of your club. Such volunteers can be coaches, members of the Club Board or Sub-Committee (most clubs operate with a volunteer committee), parents who organise transport, team managers and people running the barbecues at festivals or that help with the coordination of an event. People tend to volunteer for many different reasons: being retired, wanting to give something back to the club, wanting to spend more time with their children, enjoying the sense of belonging, seeking more experience in a particular area or having simply just been asked!

Recruiting volunteers for your club is no different to recruiting paid staff in any other organisation. Just because you are not paying volunteers - it doesn't mean that they should be treated with any less respect or that the recruiting process should be any different. You should have a clear system organised for volunteers.

#### 1. Job descriptions

You should prepare Job descriptions that outline the roles and responsibilities of the positions you are hoping to fill (*see appendices*). Some volunteers are limited by time and may prefer to help at certain events rather than volunteer for long-term positions. Some volunteers might want to share

the responsibility with somebody else. Having a job description will allow each individual to assess whether he or she can commit to the task before they become involved. This helps eliminate the problem of volunteers relinquishing their position mid-year or in the middle of an event, if they find that the requirements are too time demanding or difficult. They need to know what their commitment implies- not many people may be willing to take on an open-ended role.<sup>iii</sup>

*(See Appendix 4)*

## 2. Advertising

It is worth advertising such positions within the club and in newsletters. This also gives people the flexibility to choose a position that suits them or which they are familiar with rather than trying to fumble through something because they feel that is their only choice.

Give yourself plenty of time to recruit for positions and events. Don't leave it until the last minute. A structured recruiting plan will allow you to adjust for changes in your plan. If someone is vacating a long-term position, have them recruit for the position or have someone groomed to fill the vacancy- i.e. Vice-President/Secretary replaces the President.

## 3. Recruit new blood

Too often clubs ask the same people to volunteer. This leads to too few people doing all the work, resulting in burnout. A club can be faced with losing a good volunteer if too much is expected of them. Just because they get the job done and get it done well doesn't mean they are not overworked and are sacrificing other things to fulfil their commitment to the club. Look elsewhere or ask the second person that comes to mind rather than the same people every time.

## 4. Parents

Parents often make great volunteers. They are often standing around waiting for their children and would be more than happy to help with cutting the oranges or organising post game functions or transport. They simply need to be asked. A coach may be too busy running practice sessions and requires an assistant coach or team manager to assist the coach with the other non-hockey duties.

## 5. Personal Contact

Personal contact with potential volunteers whether it be through friends, family or individuals involved in an organisation are among the most cited ways that volunteers first become involved in voluntary work.<sup>iv</sup> Some clubs may choose to appoint a volunteer Coordinator to determine where volunteers are needed, when they might be needed, prepare job descriptions and actively recruit and manage the volunteers.

When recruiting volunteers it is important to emphasis the rewards for the volunteers rather than the needs of the organisation. They need to feel valued. It is a give and take process for both the club and the volunteer. Once they are recruited, ensure that they are welcomed into the club and have a good understanding of the club, its needs and their role. Be available to assist them with the

orientation of the club and to answer any questions they may have in the initial stages of their term.

In order to develop better clubs and club structures, most people accept that there is a need for more expertise to be made available. However for club development and strategy to be successful, the club needs to recognise the essential contribution that volunteers make to the club. The development of your hockey club, with newly recruited expertise may well be hindered rather than enhanced if the value of the volunteer is not recognised. Any professional support that might be proposed needs to bring added value to clubs, where professional officers complement rather than duplicate or take over the roles that are best filled by volunteers.<sup>v</sup>

Paid and volunteer staff work well together in many scenarios. Be sure that their job descriptions are clear to avoid overlap and miscommunication. Paid staff and volunteers should aim to work together and offer support where it may be needed.

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### *Recruiting coaches and umpires*

Traditionally, recruiting coaches and umpires has been a difficult task for clubs. Most clubs look to ex-players or PE teachers with an interest in hockey to fill these roles.

It is more common to find parents coaching at the junior level, as their children are involved or they wish to stay involved now that they are no longer playing. Although their coaching experience or knowledge of the game may be limited, they are often amongst the most committed volunteers.

Too often young players are overlooked as potential coaches or umpires. Exposing young people to coaching and umpiring will give them confidence to pursue it through to a higher level. There are many coaching and umpiring courses that have been tailored for juniors. This is an excellent opportunity to train them alongside more experienced and qualified coaches and umpires. The more people you recruit at a young age, the more resources and skills the club will have to call on in the coming years.

It is often easier to recruit staff when payment is involved. Some clubs are in a better financial position than others are, and can offer paid positions. Offering a small honorarium may be enough of an incentive for some people to volunteer their services. Likewise, offering to waive their club fees in return for coaching junior teams or volunteering to be the team umpire for the season has many merits. Another avenue a club may pursue is to reimburse costs of upgrading coaching or umpiring levels if a member offers his or her services for the season.

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### *Retaining staff and volunteers*

It is essential to encourage and motivate your volunteers and provide them with support if you hope to continue to use their time, skills and expertise within the club.

One way to encourage coaches and officials is to offer education and training.

Coaching is a profession just like any other and if coaches can see a clear pathway that will allow them to achieve higher levels or move into a more elite area it will help secure their tenure and loyalty to the club. Not only does this strengthen the club, but it also ensures that there is suitably trained personnel within the club.

Education and training programs that can be made available to them are:

- Leadership courses
- Umpiring and coaching courses
- Coaching and umpiring update/refresher courses
- Mentor training opportunities
- Information packages explaining particular roles and responsibilities

Communicate with your volunteers and staff to ensure that their needs are being met and that they have the resources they require to complete their tasks efficiently and effectively. Lack of resources can lead to dissatisfaction and disappointment. Matching the skills of the volunteers to the tasks expected of them and providing an environment which encourages them to do their best increases volunteer motivation and in turn increases retention. It is important that the club President and his/her Board and Sub-Committee members make themselves approachable and available to all volunteers. This can prevent communication breakdowns, helps to identify and deal with problems early on as well as ensuring that the club is on the right track and adhering to its development plan. Knowing when it is time to turnover volunteers is just as valuable as recruiting them. If a volunteer is not fulfilling his/her obligation or struggling with a role, the Club Board or the volunteer Coordinator needs to act promptly to either assist or remove the volunteer from the designated post.

Recognising and rewarding your volunteers goes a long way. It takes no time to thank them for their tireless efforts after hosting an event, or pointing out the work they do to the rest of the membership. Too often the "behind the scenes" work is taken for granted. Putting your volunteers in the limelight every now and then not only raises the profile of volunteering, but also acknowledges their input. Thank-you cards, flowers or a small gift can make the difference between retaining and losing volunteers.

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## *Summary*

- The most effective way to attract people to your club is to show them the benefits of joining the club.
- If you are focusing on a junior component, schools are a valuable place to recruit, as are youth and community clubs. Involvement in an after-school program or advertising in local newspapers and magazines (although costly in some instances) can reach out to a greater number of people. Once you have attracted players you need to retain them. This will mean catering for beginners through to experienced players, those who are there for recreation, those who are there for the social aspect as well as those who are looking to develop and enjoy a competitive league.
- Having a good club structure and a well thought out action plan will aid you in achieving this. Having the right personnel in the right roles is just as valuable.
- Attracting coaches and other volunteers is often difficult. Personal contact plays an important role in recruiting and shouldn't be overlooked when preparing your recruitment strategy. Ensure that you have enough people for the roles that need to be filled. Too often it is too few people doing too much work. If no preparations are made for the time when they decide to move on, this can result in the downfall of a club. Plan for success and succession.
- Maintaining volunteers helps the club to run smoothly and efficiently and saves on retraining costs. It is vital that you run your club as a business and operate accordingly - offering remuneration where you can and thanks and appreciation when finances are scarce.

## 1.d Partnerships - Linking Hockey Clubs with Schools and the Community

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Developing links with other groups, be they educational or community based, are advantageous to a hockey club. They create new recruiting possibilities, increase participation of players and volunteers and also strengthen the club's ties in the community. This chapter will highlight the issues and the benefits of creating a partnership with schools and the community.

The first steps should involve creating a plan to identify the parties with whom to form partnerships with. For example:

- local schools: elementary, high school and colleges/universities
- youth groups
- community centre

Once you have determined your target area, a detailed plan needs to be presented to each potential partner. Such plan needs to outline the proposed partnership detailing the benefits that are available to each group and how you propose to go about things once you begin. An introduction about your club and what you are planning to achieve should be presented, followed by your plan. A plan should include:

- duration of the proposed activity
- number of people involved
- time required by each of the partner groups
- equipment/facility needs and who is to provide them
- activities that will occur
- costs involved

Once the club has selected its target areas, it needs to identify:

- how many schools or groups it wants to involve
- age groups (a selected age range or is it offered to all the years at the school)?
- boys and/or girls?
- when to run the sessions - during the hockey season, a couple of months before the start of the season, in between seasons?
- how many coaches are available to run the sessions?
- whether to run a festival at the completion of the program?

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### *Presenting the proposal*

All this information needs to be compiled into a letter or flyer to be distributed to the prospective partners. You will need to include your contact details so that interested people can get in touch with you. Making contact with the prospective partners can be either by mail or in person. Sending

an initial letter on its own is not enough. It is imperative that it is followed up with a meeting to clarify the partnership and identify the roles that each partner will have.

Having a member of your club who is a teacher in one of your target schools or community groups can facilitate and promote this partnership. Not only can they assist with the presentation of your proposal and the coaching but they are also the link between the school/group and your club.

When creating a partnership it is important not to appear either too demanding or too simple. You don't want to turn a link away because you are not flexible, nor do you want to be putting in all the effort while the others take a free ride. The program/partnership that you offer has to carry worth - it has to be something that others want to be part of. Often potential partners like schools have a full programme and you need to convince the teacher/director that participating in your event is beneficial to the school. (*See appendices 5 & 6*)

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### *Schools & Community Clubs*

Schools are a great place to start when developing a partnership, as they have potential hockey players at their fingertips. Some schools have hockey programs as part of their school curriculum. They teach the basics in PE classes and offer it as a sport.

In this instance your proposal may include offering your facilities to the school for their scheduled classes or games, offering to coach or assist the school with coaching in their after-school programs or during PE classes. Through this exercise you are promoting your club and giving the students the opportunity to join your club for extra games or more specialised coaching. You may even suggest a reduced membership fee for anyone who joins your club or offer discounted equipment as incentive.

Some schools, youth groups or community clubs do not offer hockey as a part of their regular program. Some may have introductory hockey sessions throughout the year or during the holidays. In this instance you need to create a stronger link and perhaps spend more time introducing hockey and the benefits that it has to offer, both short and long-term.

Presenting a package whereby the club runs the hockey sessions may be simplest. You provide the coaches and the equipment and use the facilities provided by the schools or clubs (where possible) to run hockey sessions. In this scenario it is up to the club to take the initiative and approach the schools, offering a hockey program. This can simply be in the form of introducing hockey in the PE class or to the community/youth group and running a number of hockey sessions or offering to put together and coach a school or youth hockey team that may either play in the local league or in an after school competition, be it against other schools or as an intra-school competition.

Community groups may offer the opportunity to run hockey camps/clinics during the holidays. With such a partnership, the community club often provides the advertising and recruits the participants

and the club may only have to supply the coaches and the equipment. At the end of the sessions you may choose to run a festival inviting all the schools or groups to participate in it.

This can be a good way to showcase your club, by using your facilities and having other club members helping with umpiring, skills sessions or exhibition games or simply being there to promote the club. Creating a fun and positive atmosphere in your sessions is fundamental to maintaining your partnership with both the players and the chosen partners.

As the sessions develop they can be more technical or more game orientated. This is a good opportunity to gain more coaches, by offering coaching courses to the teachers or the group leaders and mentoring them. Alternatively, if you choose to run weekend or evening sessions this allows for parents or other potential players to be involved.

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### *Developing the links*

Establish a contact person or teacher - often you will find that there are many teachers and youth leaders playing hockey in your club. Incorporate them into your plan and they can be helpful in creating a link to the school or community. They are also significant to your success in attracting players to your club. In many countries the usual route that children follow is from school, to extracurricular club, to external club and this is most effective when teachers play or coach hockey, as they have an understanding of how the club structure works.

Developing the link with someone who has an interest in hockey is the most resourceful way of maintaining a strong partnership. Parents and peers who play in your club can encourage the partnership by communicating its success and assisting in the delivery of this plan.

If the schools or community centres in your surrounding area do not have any knowledge of or affinity with hockey, then it might be helpful to invite teachers or community centre leaders to join in a session of one of your recreational groups. They could also be invited to watch a high level game or practise session, or be provided with a video of a club event or tournament so that they get to know the game and the club.

Working together, schools/community clubs and your own club can promote the program. Hockey

- Clubs can:
- provide information flyers (*see appendix 7*)
  - organise tournaments
  - organise tournaments
  - provide facilities
  - provide expertise in coaching and umpiring
  - offer coaching courses for the teachers and updates on skills and rules
  - prepare certificates of participation for all those involved

Schools/community groups can:

- distribute information

- offer facilities
- provide direct contact through PE classes and assemblies
- link clubs to the wider community
- provide a contact person who can maintain the partnership

It is very important that information advertising the club, the training times and the costs associated is on hand to be distributed to the players.

There is no guarantee that what you hand out to the students will make it to the parents so you may also want to deliver the information at Parents' meetings or through the school newsletter or simply hand the information to parents when they collect their children after a coaching session. Although advertising through promotional material is helpful, first-hand experience and live demonstrations are also necessary in attracting potential players.

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### *Successful links*

In most situations, you will find that all partners will benefit from the program; however this is not always the case. Sometimes the schools and the community clubs seem to benefit quite well for little effort, or you may find that one partner is not as willing to give as much as you do. Be prepared to accept that as the hockey club initiating the program, you will have to contribute the most energy.

The club may need to re-evaluate if reasons behind the partnership are no longer valid or if the expected goals are not being met. Is too much time being spent for little output and, would resources be best used elsewhere - at another school or area? In order to ensure that your partnerships are successful consider the following in your planning:

- That communication between all parties is strong and open, with the partners clear about their respective responsibilities. Each link is passing on information about events to the players and there is some form of recognition of achievements for the players in the way of certificates/awards or press releases.
- Continuity is important, especially with children who can see stability from participating in school hockey and then moving on to a club. It also breeds familiarity that increases confidence in their own abilities. Continuity is further enhanced by teachers and leaders promoting the club programs following PE sessions or clinics. This facilitates the transition from school to club.
- The number of participants required for success can vary, but it is important to remember that large numbers may make it difficult to run a program effectively, and therefore more coaches/supervisors would be required. Hockey is fortunate, in that it can be introduced as small games of 5 or 6 a-side if need be. Safety needs to come first in all instances.
- Knowledgeable coaches and participants help keep the program on track. When selecting people to be involved, ensure that they are enthusiastic and are able to create a fun and safe environment, while having a good understanding of the game and are able to communicate with all ability levels or groups. Schools and community clubs find it helpful to have a club member

assisting with the after school programs. These coaches are also effective in strengthening the link with the group and the club.

- Being prepared for the next stage is a large factor of success. Forward planning and presenting new ideas of how the program and partnership can be improved will enable your hockey club to maintain strong and productive partnerships. Planning sessions at reasonable times that do not clash with other activities will bring harmony to the program and ensure a positive partnership.

National, state and provincial hockey organisations, if existing, should be able to provide some assistance - be it coaching material, coaches, equipment or established links or pathways to make your challenge easier.

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## *Summary*

- In whatever environment your partnerships are formed it has a greater chance of success when creating links with others who share an interest in hockey. The potential for strong partnerships lies within the planning process and good communication between those involved.
- An enthusiastic coach is the ambassador for your club. His/her attitude will either strengthen the club through trusted links and a fun and positive experience or be the demise of this and further partnerships. Once established, these links can be used as a feeder system to create longevity for your club.

## 1.e Facilities

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Facilities are amongst the most important assets a club can have. Hockey can be played on a number of different surfaces, each having different advantages and disadvantages. The benefits of having a clubhouse, changing facilities and lights at your club will be discussed in this chapter alongside the different playing surfaces.

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### *Playing facility*

Having a field at the site of your club or access to a field is crucial to any club to enable practice and play. Many hockey clubs have started by accessing available turf time at a local hockey field or a patch of grass. In time as the club grew they have been able to acquire their own facilities or add to the site.

Whether a club rents time from a facility or builds their own, there are associated costs. A club that is starting out may find it more feasible to use another facility until it can raise the required funds to build its own surface. If a club chooses to build a pitch, time needs to be invested and thorough research carried out. The foundations, location and maintenance of a pitch are crucial to its lifespan. Depending on the type of surface that you choose to lay, other factors become pertinent. Watering and lighting costs also need to be considered.

So why build a facility? The convenience and flexibility of having your own new facility can outweigh the costs in many instances, as long as the club has done its homework. An onsite pitch makes the club more attractive to players, especially if the quality of the surface is high. From a club perspective, optimal training times can be arranged and travelling time and costs can be minimised. If your club has a junior section, it is more favourable to have an early timeslot that doesn't interfere with homework or bed time.

Costs can be offset by renting the facility to schools and other clubs (not just hockey) in the area. This may result in the field being used during the day when it would otherwise be vacant. It also gives the club the scope to host events and run camps and clinics during holiday time or in the off-season. The opportunity to run a summer league becomes more realistic when you have a facility to use. Careful planning and time management can ensure that your field has maximum utilisation. The addition of lights allows for further field utilisation.

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### *Different types of surfaces*

For many years hockey was played on grass but, over the years the change in surface has made a major impact on the game and the players. Each different playing surface lends itself to different skills.

The different types of surfaces that exist are as follows:

- Murram or clay: a flat surface made from compacted earth or sand
- Grass: a flat playing surface made from natural grass, which is cut very short.
- Unfilled surface: a playing surface made of synthetic yarn not supported by the addition of any other material.
- Filled surface: a playing surface comprised of a synthetic yarn supported or stabilised by the addition of filling material (such as sand).
- Wet (unfilled surface): a playing surface comprised of synthetic yarn not filled with any supporting material, yet requires the addition of water for the surface to perform at optimal level.
- Wet (filled surface): a playing surface comprised of synthetic yarn supported or stabilised by the addition of a filling material, which needs to be saturated with water for optimal performance.

Global International Hockey Federation (FIH) competitions require wet unfilled surfaces, while standard international and national competitions may use filled or wet filled surfaces. Starter pitches are more multi-purpose and can be filled or unfilled surfaces without the necessity of requiring water.

If seeking FIH approval for your surface, the scheme of product approvals will have an influence wherever and whenever the products are considered for installation, particularly if the club wishes to bid to host an international or global competition during the life of the pitch. Before giving approval, the standard of the pitch needs to be reviewed. The pitch may still be given approval if it does not meet *all* the standards, as the nature of the competition is also taken into account as well as the standard of the pitch offered.

The durability of the surface is one of the most important aspects of the pitch itself. The durability is affected by the standard of maintenance, the intensity of the usage the pitch receives and climatic and environmental conditions. The stability of the sub-base is a vital factor in the effectiveness and longevity of the pitch.

When purchasing a synthetic pitch consider the many aspects which may affect the performance of the pitch. These include:

- compaction of the surface pile and/or shock pad
- loss of pile due to absorption
- splitting of seams and/or joints
- colour change due to weathering (including UV radiation)
- disintegration of the surface and shock pad

It is generally recognised that a major advantage of synthetic turf over natural grass is the greatly reduced maintenance required. However, a reduction of maintenance does not mean zero maintenance. It is extremely important to realise that the pitch must be sufficiently maintained to keep it in top condition.

When installing a pitch the dimensions should comply with those given in the latest edition of the rulebook with all markings included. White lines are essential for use on global pitches, white or yellow lines for other pitches, while starter pitches may use any contrasting colour.

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### *Maintenance*

Pitch maintenance is deemed a very important factor in the short-term and long-term viability of a playing field. In the short-term, the enhanced playability of the pitch, minimising the risk of injury and added enjoyment are the major considerations. Over the longer term, a good maintenance regimen greatly increases the longevity of the pitch - a major economic consideration.

Grass pitches require a great deal of maintenance, as the surface needs to be as flat and even as possible. The grass should be kept very short to prevent slowing down the ball. This may require the grass being mowed twice a week to achieve the preferred length. Over usage of the field in wet conditions can result in the loss of grass, creating muddy patches and an uneven surface. Playability is significantly reduced in such instances. If possible practice sessions should be held adjacent to the field, or preferably another area used for circle practice. Line markings need to be visible for all games and touched up when necessary.

A very important aspect of maintenance for a water-filled pitch is ensuring that the pitch is properly watered during all times of activity (matches/practices). The pitch should not be allowed to dry out in patches or water allowed to form in pools. As well as short-term considerations such as playability, injury avoidance and enjoyment, improper watering has negative long-term implications with respect to pitch maintenance and longevity.

If not properly watered a wet synthetic pitch loses its cleansing properties, resulting in deposits of impurities, thus creating abrasion of the carpet. Furthermore, if it is played on when dry, much greater forces are in action, which have a very detrimental effect on the turf (fibres/joints/interface with sub-base/e-layer) causing wear and more rapid deterioration such as rippling, tearing or uneven stretching. This greatly decreases the longevity of the pitch, which is a major economic consideration.

A suitable watering system needs to be selected for wet surface pitches. The water should be distributed and drained evenly over the surfaces of the pitch to prevent drying or pooling of water. Water pressure should be strong enough to ensure that the pitch can be completely watered, without leaving dry patches. The performance of sand filled pitches is known to be optimised by the use of water.

Monitoring and inspection of synthetic pitches should be ongoing to aid early detection of algae on unfilled pitches or moss on filled pitches. Attention should be given to seam separation, rips & tears

in turf and observation of worn areas with immediate action taken to rectify these problems. The uses of conveniently located bins and boot cleaners further assists the maintenance of the pitch. Additional preventative measures that help to reduce the rate of deterioration involve keeping the pitch and its surrounding clean of debris and foreign material.

These include:

- Landscaping with non-leaf shedding trees and bushes
- Installation of concrete/tarmac paths
- Routing of player traffic to minimise tracking of impurities
- Set up of food and beverage facilities well off-pitch
- Control of access to minimise possibility of vehicles entering pitch area
- Use of practice/warm-up areas

The following regulations should be enforced:

- Clean boots before entering the pitch area
- No food/drinks (except water)
- No smoking
- No glass containers/bottles
- No chewing gum
- No sharp objects

One of the hazards of an unfilled pitch is the very fine soiling from worn fibres, airborne dust, smoke and chemical emissions, fine sand particles, and other organic impurities that initially appear on the surface and rapidly seep into the filling of the pile flooring. This hastens the wear and tear of the pitch and clogs the pores, affecting permeability and reducing drainage capacity. Over time, surface pooling will occur in certain areas during heavy rain and will linger longer than is desired after watering.

To prevent this, the impurities must be removed regularly. Special machinery has been specifically designed for this purpose (a sweeper-vacuum fitted with two contra-rotating brushes and broad wheels and deployed by experienced operators) and is available to carry out the required in-depth suction cleaning of the pitch raising the damaged fibres.

In the case of filled pitches, to keep the amount and distribution of the sand in optimum condition, regular sweeping with a triangle brush is highly recommended (once per week is considered appropriate for good maintenance). Do not use metal brushes.

The important things to remember are:

- take care in the design stages to facilitate simple and effective maintenance features.
- clearly post positive actions and prohibitions and closely monitor adherence to them.
- ensure that the pitch is properly watered before every match or practice activity.
- carry out simple maintenance regimens and routine inspections regularly
- attend to any problems urgently and take remedial action immediately
- refer to manufacturers for expertise required to ensure proper carrying out of maintenance
- adhere to the long-term maintenance program recommended by manufacturers

### *Lighting*

The addition of lighting can make a significant difference to your pitch in terms of both costs and utilisation. The added earning potential that becomes evident with the addition of lights has resulted in more clubs adding lighting to their facility. The pitch can then be used for up to 12 hours a day for hockey or other compatible activities. Lighting also benefits playing conditions when natural lighting becomes dim, allowing the spectators, players and officials to see more clearly.

There are many aspects to be considered when installing lights. The level of illumination, uniformity, glare, shadows, properties of the lamps and the design are among the many criteria that need to be calculated. Such recommendations can be found in the FIH's "Guide to Artificial Lighting of Hockey Pitches".

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### *Club House*

The obvious benefit associated with having a clubhouse at the pitch are that it provides changing facilities and amenities. Not to mention a club atmosphere, which fosters a sense of family belonging. Clubhouses provide a venue for meetings and social events, which can take place conveniently before or after a game or practice. It is the nucleus of the club and an environment for team bonding. Teams that have to travel to another venue for a post game celebration, often find that the level of commitment is lacking. Financially it provides revenue for the club.

If you don't have a clubhouse it is important to find a venue where you can meet to encourage camaraderie. It is after a game or practice that club members are able to relax and get to know their team and other club members. This also provides an ideal opportunity to get members involved in other activities within the club.

There is a lot to be said for a club that has a grass pitch and club house on-site, as opposed to a club having to travel great distance to use a new synthetic pitch:

- The club culture begins to wither as fewer members return to the clubhouse after a game or a training session
  - The club suffers financially as revenue generated from the clubhouse decreases and membership drops due to members having to travel extra distance
  - It also becomes inconvenient for those with children or family members who use the clubhouse facilities during games or practices
  - Spectator numbers decrease as players choose to return to the clubhouse after the game, rather than watching another one of the club's teams
  - Local supporters may choose the comforts of their home or the clubhouse over the extra travel or the lack of clubhouse facilities at the new synthetic pitch.
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## *Summary*

- Many factors need to be considered when building your own facilities and cost is often the determining factor.
  - If a club has the finance, it is important to thoroughly research the proposed site and the accessories that complement the pitch. Surface type, watering systems and lighting are costly to replace and require careful planning. It is generally recognised that a well-maintained pitch enjoys the advantages of optimal playing conditions, minimising potential for injury and maximising the longevity of the pitch.
  - The addition of a clubhouse further enhances the club, giving the members a location in which they can socialise and bond and form strong ties to the club. Club life suffers greatly if a new synthetic pitch is chosen for the club at a great distance from the clubhouse.
-