



Central News

November 2021

Welcome to the first edition of *Central News* – a newsletter that aspires to include all our fabulous Central Region members, from players to officials, parents to hangers-on. It is a place for you, our in-line hockey community, to have a voice, and an opportunity to share relevant information, news, events, league updates, skills development opportunities, and anything else related to our sport. During the league season, it is envisaged that this newsletter will be a monthly publication, and will contain both regular and feature articles. Some of the items the newsletter will include are:

- 'Ask a Referee', where each month a common game rule or penalty is explained.
- Inline hockey-related news.
- Feature articles which inform our members on the 'how's and whys', behind decisions made over the course of the league season.
- Opinion pieces.
- Links to event notices and other IHNZ information.
- Upcoming games, skills development opportunities and regular points table updates during the league season.
- 'Hockey Talk' – a Question and Answer forum. You ask, we will do our best to answer!
- Player bios - so that we can all get to know our members better.
- Action shots, awesome plays, serious saves that you might wish to share with our hockey community.
- Birthdays, births and other celebrations.

Central Region Survey: results & implications

The Central Region Survey released in August had a great response, with nearly 100 players participating. Survey questions were designed to gauge what motivates players, satisfaction with the current league season and format, professionalism, skills opportunities, officials, etc., and ideas on how we might make it better for all. If you have not yet read the results of the survey, [Click here](#).

The survey results will be utilised to help inform the Central Region league format in 2022 and beyond.

While mostly positive, responses and comments from the survey highlighted a number of issues within our region including a need for greater communication, quality of officiating as well as abuse of officials, negative player attitude, perceived lack of equitability in the league schedule, lack of focus on skills development while promoting elitism, and a near absence of social interaction between clubs, that need to be addressed by the Central Region committee. Central News will tackle a number of these subjects also, starting in this issue with the rationale behind the league schedule in its current format. As the Central Region AGM is looming (December 4th 2021), the structure and role of the Central Region committee will also be discussed in this issue.



Organisation & role of the Central Region committee

The Central Region committee is a sub-committee of our governing body, IHNZ. As such we are governed by the laws, rules and constitution of IHNZ. The key role of a regional committee is to assist IHNZ in the delivery and development of inline hockey activities within our region. Currently, that means creating, coordinating, and implementing the current season's league schedule, coordinating Inter-Regional trials and training, and supporting player and official (e.g., referee) development where possible. Central Region does not organize coaches for club teams, set dates for IHNZ events including Inter-Regionals, or create the framework around age group or National Championship eligibility.

The Central Region committee consists of a voting delegate from each club, a Chairperson (who also carries the deciding vote when needed), Secretary, and Treasurer. The role of the Chairperson is to make sure that each meeting is conducted appropriately and according to the directives of IHNZ, and that matters arising are dealt with in an orderly and efficient manner. The Secretary prepares meeting agendas and records minutes, deals with inwards and outwards communication, and ensures the smooth functioning of the committee, while the Treasurer has general financial oversight of the Central account, budget, payments, and financial reporting.

Other members can be co-opted to generate the league schedule, to organize Inter Regional trials and training, and to keep on top of league statistics. Another important role is that of Disciplinary Chair, who oversees any disciplinary hearings that may need to be held during the league season. Currently, these co-opted members do not get a vote on the Central Region committee.

At the start of each season, clubs forward a list of teams that are to be entered into the league competition, and the schedule is created based

on the number of teams entered (see feature article later in this issue). The fee set for each team, paid to Central Region, covers the costs of referees. Rink hire costs are invoiced directly between clubs, and not processed by the Central Region Treasurer. During the year, the current Central Region committee will meet periodically to discuss matters that arise, to discuss draft documents released by IHNZ for comment, and disseminated information to clubs as needed.



Hunter Pert in action representing Central Region

Feature article: Creating a League Competition schedule

Disclaimer: This is a bit of a long article (lots to explain). A summary is included at the end if you just want to skip to that!

Producing a Central Region league schedule that encompasses up to 4 months of league games, includes 5 clubs spread between 2-3 venues, and comprises 25-30+ teams, is a massive undertaking. It requires good communication between all clubs, and it needs to factor in the many different variables that are in play over the league season. A number of responses from the Central Region Survey queried the number of games, the spread, and the number of times a team travelled or played another team. This article outlines the process of compiling a league schedule, and hopefully goes some way into providing an insight into the thinking behind it.

1. Forward planning

The first variable that dictates the Central Region league schedule is rink availability. Both main rinks (Hamilton and New Plymouth, and Waihi when available), provide information to the scheduler as to what weekends during the season their rink is available, as well as dates the rink already has prior bookings. Prior bookings include regular IHNZ sanctioned tournaments (e.g., Queens Birthday), and additional IHNZ or non-sanctioned events, and other rink users (e.g., Radio Control Car Club in Hamilton, rink hockey/artistic skating/roller derby in New Plymouth). There may also be particular dates that a team, or even a full club, may be unavailable to play. Physical times between which games can be played also needs to be factored in. Both Hamilton and New Plymouth often have limitations on how early games can start (generally 10 am for a travelling team), or when games need to conclude. Sundays are particularly limited timewise; generally last games start no later than 3 pm, allowing travelling players to arrive back home at a reasonable hour.

Once rink availability and time restrictions are received by the scheduler, a calendar for the season is then generated, displaying the distribution of available weekend/times across the playing season plus any limitations to play. At the same time, clubs are asked to provide a list of teams that are to be entered into the league competition for the current year, so that the correct number of competition games can be calculated. While some forward planning (blocking out on the calendar) can be done, the schedule cannot be completed until all team entries are received from clubs. Typically, teams are not confirmed across all clubs until sometime in March. It takes 2-3 weeks to prepare the first draft, and possibly several weeks after that to finalise it.

2. Game scheduling

Once the number of games has been calculated based on the teams entered (in any one league season, 150-200+ games are

scheduled), the scheduler then has to try to fit these games into the available rink time. In compiling the draw, it is envisaged that all teams will get the same number of games. In reality, this is not always possible, depending on the number of teams in a division. For example, in a 4-team division, each team plays the standard 2 home and 2 away, for a total of 12 games. For a division with 5 teams, 16 games would be played. However, for a 5-team division, sometimes there is physically not enough room in the schedule (because of rink availability and the number of games that need to be played overall) for 2 home and 2 away games to be played. Thus a 5-team division may only play 3 games against each other team (12 games total). Regardless of the number of teams in a division, *all teams in each division will have the same number of competition games as every other team in that division.*

The larger clubs (particularly the Hamilton Devils, but also New Plymouth Ravens) often have more than one team in some or all age grades. If two teams are entered in a grade from one club, it may seem, if you are from another club, that you are always playing that club! Rest assured, you may play that club more often, but you still have the same number of games against each team, no more or less than any other team in that grade.

The scheduler will aim to try to spread the games for each team out over the length of the league season. However, as a result of other events throughout the season (tournaments, Inter-Regionals trials and training, other IHNZ events), this is not always achievable for all teams across all grades. For example, travel has to be carefully managed around the Queen's Birthday weekend Junior and Senior tournaments, Inter-Regionals trials and training, and even events such as the NZ Secondary School Champs, and any IHNZ training camps. The scheduler needs to think about who will be travelling, or likely to travel, and thus try to minimize or eliminate travel for these players/teams on either side of these events (ideally trying to avoid travelling two

weekends in a row). This automatically bookends these events, and thus potentially limits who might play in the preceding and subsequent weekends. In the 2021 season, the June-July cluster of tournaments, Inter-Regional trials and training weekends, and the Inter Regional event itself, resulted in a less than ideal spread between games for some teams. For the 2021 season, the impact of the Inter-Regionals competition moving to July was not initially fully realized, and thus not ideally mitigated. Changes to the league schedule will be made for 2022 to moderate the impact of Inter Regionals.

In order to fit in all games that need to be played during the league season, both Saturdays and Sundays need to be utilised. Many inline hockey players, particularly in the younger age groups, also play main-stream sporting codes (rugby, football, netball, field hockey). Just as these codes do not factor-in inline hockey into their competition season, for various reasons (e.g., rink restrictions on Sundays, number of games that need to be fit in) the scheduler is unable to play all these younger grades on Sunday. Ideally, the scheduler will endeavor to mix Saturday and Sunday play for all grades where possible.

3. Games per day

All teams in the league competition will travel at least once to play away games against opposition teams. Complicating the amount of travel however is the fact that the Mount Mustangs, Piako Pirates, and Waihi Miners clubs all designate the Hamilton Devils rink as their home rink, as no suitable venue is available in their hometown (with the exception of 10U/12U Waihi Miners grades when existing). Thus, all these teams have to travel just to play, regardless of whether the game is a 'Home' or 'Away' game. For the New Plymouth Ravens, this means that all their away games are in Hamilton, and with the greater number of clubs in the Waikato/Bay of Plenty region, they have to travel more often to play their 'Away' games against the different

clubs. In order to reduce the number of times a team travels (whether from New Plymouth, Mt Maunganui or Waihi), the scheduler will try to ensure that 3 games are played on each travelling day (2 against one team, one against another), so that instead of e.g., travelling 3 days to play 3 different teams, the travelling teams only have to travel 2 days to play 3 different teams.

4. Non-competition games

2021 introduced a number of non-competition games into the schedule. This was done so that divisions that only had one team entered (18U, Premier, Junior Women) would get adequate game time, and Senior Women (2 teams) would get more varied competition. None of the non-competition games were attached to points that went towards Nationals qualifying, thus all of these teams (with the exception of Senior Women) had to apply for dispensation to play Nationals. It was important to schedule games for these teams – these players pay fees just as any other player does, and we want to see our region continue to grow and excel. These young and/or premier players are just as important as every other age group in our region. Sufficient game time can only help to encourage these players to stay in our sport. However, it was made clear to all clubs at the beginning of the season that all non-competition games were also non-compulsory; any team unable (or unwilling) to play a non-competition game could default or reschedule that game *without penalty*.

5. Ratification and release

Before the finalised league schedule is released, all clubs get an opportunity to scrutinize the draw and highlight any issues or inconsistencies. After the first draft is forwarded to clubs, it may take several iterations to get the schedule to the point where all clubs agree on a final version. At times, clubs have not been able to agree in a timely manner on the schedule, and this has delayed its release; occasionally, the first month is subsequently agreed on, allowing the

scheduler more time to work through the complicating issues and complete the rest of the seasons draw while still allowing the competition to begin. Once the schedule is finally ratified by the Central Region committee, it is then released to clubs to disseminate to their club members, ideally a minimum of 3 weeks before the first game is to be played.

6. 2022 & beyond

The 2021 Central Region survey responses demonstrate that there is a clear need for a change in direction in the way the Central Region league season is formatted. While there is still the requirement to have a qualifying competition for Nationals, it has been recognized that there is also the need to have an inclusive part to our league – one that focuses on fun and skills development, that is non-elitist, motivational, and promotes ‘narrowing the gap’ between the skilled and less skilled players (particularly for the Junior age groups). For the older (Senior) age groups, weekends that involve flexibility around team make-up, game format, and challenge combined with socializing are important. The Central Region committee looks forward to implementing a program over the next few years that helps our region run more smoothly, is more interesting, retains the challenge but embraces an element of fun, and is more equitable for all.

7. Summary

- The league schedule can only be compiled once all teams from all clubs have been entered into the competition.
- It may take several iterations to get all clubs to agree on the schedule, before being released to our members.
- There are many variables to factor in to the league draw, including rink availability, number of games to be played, and scheduled events.
- All teams in each division get the same number of games, and the same number of

home and away games, against each other team.

- While ideal, it is not always possible to have a good spread of games across the season for all teams because of the number of variables that need to be factored in.
- Non-competition games do not attract any penalty if not played.
- Non-competition games are important for divisions that have only one or two teams.
- The Regional survey results will help inform the league format for 2022 and beyond.



https://www.123rf.com/photo_41886725_a-cartoon-referee-with-a-scared-expression.html

The Roving Referee

The Roving Referee will be a regular series where Cam Rock (IHNZ Head Referee) will outline one inline hockey rule (or procedure) and provide a general interpretation of that rule.

He stepped on my stick, why am I getting a tripping penalty?

Let's start with the definition of tripping Rule 6.4.33 (a):

A minor penalty (...) shall be imposed on any player who shall place the player's stick, knee, foot, arm, hand or elbow in such a manner that shall cause the player's opponent to trip or fall.

The key piece to read is ***“who shall place the player's stick, knee ...”***

It is each player's responsibility for where they place their stick on the rink, so if the player puts it in front, or between the legs of a player

in forward motion, or behind a player skating backwards, they have done so in a manner “that shall cause the player’s opponent to trip or fall” and are subject to a tripping penalty regardless of whether the opponent stepped on the stick or not, as the stick shouldn’t have been there for them to step on.

Call: Tripping penalty.

Have a rules question or query? Email me at carock28@gmail.com to potentially have it included in the next newsletter. *Please note I will not comment on any specific games or referee’s judgement call but will only provide an interpretation of the rules.*

Hockey Talk

Like to know something about our region, committee, league season? Hockey Talk is an open forum for you, our members, to have positive discussion/feedback, or ask your question. Send your question to editor.centralregion@gmail.com.

Meet our players

Every month we would love to profile at least one of our members – whether a player, coach, manager or official, so that we can all get to know each other just a bit better. If you are interested in saying a little about yourself, please email a brief bio (no more than 200 words) to editor.centralregion@gmail.com.

Name: Daniel Middleton

Grade: 14U (2021)

Club: Hamilton Devils

Greatest moment: Playing for NZ in Hawaii

Daniel has been playing inline hockey since he was 6 years old, having become interested while watching Jeremy and Bryan Ashdown, members of the Hamilton Devils, play in their driveway one summer evening. He was pretty average for several years, before everything started to click, his skating and puck handling improved, and his passion and commitment for

the sport exploded. Daniel first represented Central Region in 2016, and has represented NZ in the 12U AAU team (2019) and 14U Oceania’s team (2020). Daniel plays everything anywhere – he never misses an opportunity to



catch up with his hockey mates at the rink, or to play a tournament, even if it means playing for another club where allowed. And when lockdown strikes, he practices almost every day on his home rink set up in the garage, and works hard on improving his overall fitness with run and strength training. Daniels goals for the future are to continue to improve and develop his skills while having the most fun that he can, playing the sport that he loves (and hopefully, to continue being good enough to represent NZ).

If anyone is interested in being the Editor of Central News for 2022, please email secretary.centralregion@gmail.com.

The last word

“To win the game is great. To play the game is greater. To love the game is greatest of all.”

– Bob O’Connor



MARK THE DATE IN YOUR CALENDAR

**CENTRAL REGION INLINE HOCKEY
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Saturday 4th December 2021 at 11 am
All members are welcome

Venue: via Zoom

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85145318910?
pwd=Smg1K0tKeThBYVdqWVFkdEMxd0lQdz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85145318910?pwd=Smg1K0tKeThBYVdqWVFkdEMxd0lQdz09)