

Hockey Zones

Tucker Hockey's Official Newsletter - Reinforcing Hockey's Positives to ALL ages!

Are You Ready?



It happens every season. The Calgary midget hockey system is heavily scouted and young players are chasing the dream...the

dream of someday playing in the NHL. The road to the NHL travels through Junior A Hockey. The question brought forth – Are you ready?

Midget players age 16 and 17 years of age receive many invitations to attend rookie Junior A hockey camps held in April and May each year. Parents pay the clubs anywhere from \$100 to \$150 to allow their son the opportunity to showcase his skills. Many of the camps invite 100 to 120 prospects. Often this is a good revenue stream for the Junior A clubs. Parents and their son have many choices – it's not uncommon for players to attend upwards of 5 rookie camps. It's important for the player to be prepared for each camp (expect a gruelling schedule, play with intensity, look like you want it and do your best to control the nerves, fears and deal with the uncertainty of the situation). Realistically look at the opportunities available from each

team. It's better to attend 2 or 3 camps (quality) vs. 4 or 5 camps (quantity). If the player has a good showing, he may get invited back to participate in the late August main camp with upwards of 35 to 60 players which will include the returning Junior A veterans as well.

Players and their parents often chase the dream of playing Junior A hockey either Western Hockey League (Tier 1) or Alberta Junior Hockey League (Tier 2) at the early age of 16 or 17 years old by skipping a year or two of midget eligibility to get on the fast track of advancing one's hockey career. But a caution to parents and players who receive promises from scouts and coaches about being highly regarded and the opportunity to play on their Junior A team for the upcoming season. Many 16 year olds will go and tryout for a team. It will be for many their first time away from home. They may have limited interpersonal / social skills, and few life skills such as budgeting monies, purchasing personal items and making life decisions. Players may experience homesickness and the juggling of highly competitive hockey with education can seem overwhelming. The rookie

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**Look Inside for
More Great Sports Tips**

**Slow Down You're Doing Fine,
You Can't Be Everything
You Want to Be
Before Your Time**

~ Billy Joel

Are You Ready? (Cont'd from Cover)

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players are hanging out with older and more mature young men (18 – 20 years old) and peer pressure may lead them down the path they won't normally follow. By moving away from home they are giving up familiar support groups such as family and high school friends. Promises are made to them about making the team, the player's individual role on the team, the amount of playing time and position played. Players are exposed to physical, mental and emotional stresses and strains unaccustomed to in their bantam or midget days in Calgary.

Yes, there's the odd player who is ready to play Junior A hockey at the early age of 16 years old. Chris Philips, of the Ottawa Senators played Junior A (Tier 2) hockey with the Fort McMurray Oil Barons at the ripe old age of 16, but he was living at home. The Alberta Junior Hockey League allows up to 2 roster spots per team. Alberta resident players can go play in the Manitoba, Saskatchewan or B.C. junior A hockey leagues after

they have exhausted their 3 year's of midget eligibility.

Several summers ago I taught a 16 year old midget player a few elite power skating sessions prior to him competing in one of the Western Hockey League (Tier 1) main August camps. The player was one of the last cuts from the camp. He returned to Calgary and tried out for Midget AAA in his city quadrant. He got cut! Then tried out for Midget AA hockey in his quadrant and again got cut! Finally, he ended up playing Midget Division 1 community hockey. At this level of hockey, he experienced lower quality training, coaching and competition and this hindered his development and the ability to advance his hockey career.

What happened? Well the player was so beat up physically, mentally and emotionally from tryouts, first the WHL, then Midget AAA, and later Midget AA. The player's self confidence and esteem regressed to an

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Next Issue Fall 2012 Features

- Kids Hockey Advancement Society Golf Tournament
- 2013 World Junior Tournament Schedule
- Calgary Flames 2012-2013 TV Schedule
- Meet the Instructor - Jeff Pickell
- Tucker Hockey Christmas Programs

Welcome to Hockey Zones

The official newsletter of Tucker Hockey. The Spring/Summer 2012 issue consists of fresh hockey education and teaching articles, an expression of hockey philosophies and viewpoints, addresses various hockey issues for public discussion, provides features on hockey people at the "Calgary grass roots rink level", features upcoming Tucker Hockey Adult and Minor Hockey programs, and provides hockey quotes, stories and prize contests. In summary, it will create good hockey ... "Food for Thought!"

Enjoy your hockey - the World's Greatest Sport! - and I hope you enjoy our Tucker Hockey Newsletter!

- Past issues available at www.tuckerhockey.com -

Are You Ready? (Cont'd from 3)

all time low! So parents, who decide to let their son tryout for a junior team away from home at the early age of 16 years old, should consider the pros and cons of such a major hockey career move. What is best for your son's overall growth and development? Is your son ready?

Here are a few pros and cons to consider when making such a big decision whether to stay in Calgary and play midget quadrant hockey versus going away from home to play Junior A hockey.

Pros of Staying and Playing in Calgary:

- Love and support of family
- Social network of friends and former teammates
- Local Schooling
- Play quadrant hockey in Calgary and be a first line player (lots of ice time, a leadership role and enhance self confidence) or go to Junior A team and potentially be a 4th line player or on the taxi squad. Note: In the Western Hockey League there's a 16 year old rule – the player must play a minimum of 42 games or he can't be on the roster.
- The Calgary midget system is vigorously scouted each season
- The experience of playing in the most prestigious Midget tournament in the world – the Macs Midget Tournament Dec 26 – Jan 1 in Calgary
- A player will get many Junior A offers if he's good enough, there's no rush to take the first one at such an early age

Cons of Going Away to Play:

- Not being mentally or emotionally mature enough to handle being away from home
- Temptations of a new social circle – booze, drugs, girls, and even unwanted predators
- Financial burden of attending the tryout camps – fees, hotels, meals and transportation
- No guaranteed investment in your success by the Junior A team – as of yet, just promises?
- Possibility of being traded – and therefore no choice or say in your hockey future
- The promises made by a coach or a general manager could change if they are fired and replaced by a new coaching regime or management team
- Junior A hockey is a faster and more physical game, with bigger and stronger players – injuries and concussions can be more common as a result

Yes, some players have made the jump from midget hockey to the AJHL (Tier 2) and even WHL (Tier 1) at the early age of 16 without any major problems. However, there are a fewer success stories and far more failures instead. Parents and their sons should be careful when chasing the dream to play hockey at a higher level. Is this a good fit at this point in their hockey career? Unless the player is a true blue chip / can't miss prospect, the idea of playing Junior A may not be the better option. Staying in Calgary to enhance one's player growth and development may very well be the better choice. It's important for the parents and their son to sit down, have a good heart to heart chat, weigh the pros and cons – consciously think things through and ask “maybe we should wait another year or two?” Self manage the situation and hockey futures and ask – “Are you ready?”

