

# The Amateur Hockey Association of Illinois 2013 Player Development Process

By Doug Becht

After these invited players are selected by the AHAI Player Development Committee, then this Committee must move on (at this same meeting) to choose the alternate players, by birth year, by position and assign them in a rank order of who gets presented with the opportunity to participate if an invited player can't attend.

The invited players to the AHAI 2013 Player Development / Identification Tryout Camp will compete over a three day period. This year AHAI made a change in the AHAI Player Development / Identification Tryout Camp. We added an additional ice session so we could make Friday night a "practice", while keeping the total of 3 games for all the players to compete in on Saturday and Sunday. The change to making Friday night a practice was a tremendous success as it was very well received by all the players, parents and the evaluators. The reason AHAI made this change, was to mirror what is done at the Central District Player Development Tryout Camp / Festival held in Fond du Lac, WI for the three oldest birth years. So we used the Central District practice plans at our camp. When I watched this being done in WI, it was so amazing to me to see how this practice, consisting of position specific, small area games and then some team progression drills, unveiled the different skill levels and limitations of these very elite players. Clearly, for the evaluators, some things are a lot more noticeable when viewing these players in a practice, then in just game conditions. Plus, it allows the players to show the evaluators what their work ethic is in a practice, verses what they look like when it comes to the game times on Saturday and Sunday.

For the 96, 97 and 98 birth year players from IL who are selected to advance to the Central District Player Development Festival, our hope is this will help them skate with more confidence during this Friday night practice in WI. Both the players and the evaluators can really learn and benefit a lot during this "practice" session.

At this year's AHAI Player Development / Identification Tryout Camp, I had invited over 40 unbiased, high quality evaluators to evaluate these players over the 3 days of this camp. Well over one half (½) of these evaluators had not coached at the birth year they were evaluating. Although I feel that all the evaluators we hand select for this process are of the highest quality and integrity, and will rank all these players in an unbiased manner regardless if they coached a player or not, it's always nice to also have a large number of high quality "independent evaluators" involved. These independent evaluator's were made up of ex-professional (NHL, AHL, OHL) players, high level College / Junior Coaches and current / former Scouts. They all have a very keen eye along with the undisputable experience to recognize and evaluate a player's skill and talent level. Not to my surprise - as in the past years, all the evaluator's player rankings were very consistent and similar in their assessments of the skill level of the players they selected to move on to the Central District Camps.

During this AHAI Player Development 3 day camp, each player was told that their past reputation and this season's stats were not taken into consideration during their evaluations at this "tryout" Camp. The evaluators are told that they are to candidly evaluate a player based on their performance, attitude, effort and conduct during this AHAI Player Development / Identification Tryout Camp. This, of course, is exactly how the players are evaluated and selected at the USA Hockey Central District and National Player Development Camps.

All the AHAI evaluators rank the players in each of the birth years they are evaluating as follows: Number 1 to 36 for forwards, 1 to 24 for defensemen and 1 to 8 for goaltenders. (With the #1 being the best ... and so on) Those evaluator rankings are plugged in, the totals are calculated and the top players emerge.

The AHAI allocation for the 1996, 1997 & 1998 birth years to advance to compete in the Central District Festival is 2 goaltenders, 7 defensemen and 11 forwards for each of these birth years. The Central District Tryout Camp Festival is held in Fond du Lac, WI on May 10th through the 12th. These players will compete against the very best players selected from

the 6 States (to include IL) that makes up the USA Hockey Central District. From this camp, players will be selected to attend the week long USA Hockey National Camps. The AHAI allocation for the 1999 birth year to advance is 4 goaltenders, 9 defensemen and 15 forwards. The players selected from the AHAI Player Development Camp, will attend the week long USA Hockey Central District Player Development Bantam Camp at Iowa State University in Ames, IA from June 16th through the 21st.

To the credit of the Head Coaches who are fully invested and participate in the whole process starting in January, and to all the Evaluators at the AHAI Player Development/Identification Tryout Camp, they have done an outstanding job. It is obvious that ONLY they are the ones who are charged with the very difficult task to make the hard decisions to select the right players to attend the AHAI and Central District Camps. It takes a lot of time, effort and dedication. I'm very proud of each and every one of them who have devoted themselves to make this process work so well.

Congratulations to all the elite players selected by the Head Coaches for participation in this year's Amateur Hockey Association of Illinois Player Development / Identification Tryout Camp. It is a privilege to be selected - not a right, so all these players should all stand very proud of this accomplishment.

We also wish the very best of luck to those players who were selected for the privilege to participate in the Central District Player Development Camps. We have no doubt that they will all represent the State of IL very well, both on and off the ice.