



Double Letter Team Formation Guidelines

Through the years, whether through misunderstanding or being misinformed, most everyone has their own idea on how the double letter tryouts are done and how the process goes. We often hear that the tryouts are a mysterious process. To get a better idea on what exactly the procedures are for the LMHF tryout process, the Board of Directors would like to explain how the process works.

This document contains an explanation as to what to expect over the next few weeks. This information is for your review, understanding and appreciation of the Tryout Process. *We hope all parents will read this material and then take a moment to discuss the process with the players.* We also hope this memo will help to put everyone on the same page, clear up some of the misunderstandings that may have circulated through the years and ultimately help reduce some of the anxiety that occurs at this time of the year.

Tryouts happen all across hockey in both house leagues and competitive leagues. At the house league level, the association and the coaches as a collective, use tryouts to identify strong players from weaker players in an attempt to create balanced teams. At the competitive level (or DL teams), tryouts are conducted specifically to evaluate whether a player has enough skill to play at a specific level.

Finally, if you are unsure about something or if you have any questions during this process that may not have been addressed in this document please contact the VP Double Letters and please visit our website from time to time (www.lmhf.qc.ca) for additional or updated information regarding the tryout schedule.

We all look forward to another season of great hockey from our players, coaches and the volunteers of Lakeshore Minor Hockey Federation.

The Administration

The Evaluations

This is the time of the year when we embark on the process, which will eventually lead to the forming of our Double Letter teams. Each year, the players in our program go through a 'Player Evaluation/Tryout' process. The purpose of holding Player Evaluations is to evaluate player's skills and abilities so as to ensure that our players are placed on teams in which every player is of similar skills and abilities as well as most easily develop and benefit at that level. The tryouts are a good opportunity for everyone to get some pre-season skill observations which can tell both us and the athlete where work may be needed.

A big concern during this time of the year is that the tryouts have different effects on different people. While some are just happy to get back on the ice, for others it can be quite the opposite because of undue pressure to make a DOUBLE LETTER TEAM. Players and parents can find the process intimidating and impersonal. It can be a traumatic and tense time for many players and parents alike (especially some who value the selection to the higher level teams as a prize, an ego boost or even a rise in social standing in their local hockey community if their child plays on the top team). It does not have to be nor should it be such an experience for anyone. Both parents and players have to remember that this is not a matter of life and death. Hockey is supposed to be a game for all of us to enjoy whether as a player, a spectator or a coach. Pressure and unrealistic expectations are the biggest problem that a player has to deal with during the tryout process. We must remember that the level a child plays at today is not necessarily an indication as to the level they might attain as an older player.

It is simply a matter of skill development. If they play at a level where they enjoy success and can try and improve on some new skills, they will learn much more in a shorter period of time than they would if placed at a level that is over their heads.

The Tension

If you ask any coach what the most stressful time of year is, most all will respond "tryouts". Stress - for player, parent, and coach - runs rampant and blood pressure exceeds the recommended norm. Of course a few 'butterflies' in the stomach are normal and healthy, who wouldn't be a little nervous. You may be surprised to know that even the coaches are just as nervous and get the same feeling of a few butterflies as the players. In essence, most players just want to survive the process and hopefully make the team their friends are on... most all parents want their son or daughter to make the team they feel they deserve to play on and ALL the coaches just want to leave the arena and not have their tires slashed!!! Finally, EVERY single administrator simply doesn't want their house burnt down!!! So let's all better understand the process, try to relax and above all, just have some fun!!!

Every year we hear stories how either the kids or parents are devastated if they don't make THE team. Not making THE team is not cause for devastation. Our newspapers, hospitals, neighboring communities are riddled with cases of real devastation. Simply put, there is nothing wrong with aspiring to play at a certain level and there is equally nothing wrong with not making it at that level. Remember that how we react in the face of this setback is what determines our future success. Everyone has the right to be disappointed, but we can't forget that disappointments are truly a part of life. As someone very smart and knowledgeable once said, "The size of your success is measured by the strength of your desire, the size of your dream and how you handle disappointment along the way." The more we shelter children

from every disappointment, the more difficult it will be to handle any future disappointments.

Let's continue to work with our players and kids and prepare them for everything life is undoubtedly going to throw at them...not just hockey. *We encourage you to use these guidelines as a starting point to discuss the tryouts with your child.* It is imperative that all players understand they are subjected to the possibility of getting released from their desired level. If you're the parent of a youngster who is getting ready for a tryout, we believe that a parent plays an important role in preparing, supporting and encouraging a child with positive reinforcement. A key element to a successful hockey tryout is to have children be properly prepared physically and mentally before taking the ice in front of the people who are going to be evaluating them. Remember that players need to enjoy themselves during the tryout process. Parents play a key role in keeping expectations realistic and that is especially true for the younger players.

The Selection Committee

We view the tryouts as a very effective tool in the player 'placement' process. We also recognize that at the same time, it challenges the integrity of all involved, from the coaches to the administrators who are empowered to oversee a process that must be fair, all the time knowing that the process of selecting players is an art rather than a perfect science; it is a subjective exercise based to some degree, on the premise that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder" and therein lies one of the major problems and fundamental sources of frustration every year; disagreement over player selection. While not all will agree with the final selections, we can only make sure the process is fair and all players are given ample and equal opportunity to be evaluated and selected. Our selection committee is made up of the DL coaches from the various levels as well as LMHF executives and our Technical Staff. They have been chosen in large part, due to their previous coaching background and experience in evaluating players and forming teams. For the most part they are volunteers who are giving their time to our program and to our kids and should not be targets for criticism. All we ask and try to ensure is that our Evaluators are committed to doing their very best to evaluate the skills and ability level of each player. They do their best to try and form teams in which each child is of relatively equal skill and ability where the players can compete and enjoy their hockey experience. Everyone needs to keep in mind that a team is a combination of different types of players, all who will be able to make a contribution, as long as the right players are all "relatively equal in skill and ability."

Spring vs. Fall

Our tryouts are held in the fall as opposed to the spring, which is customary in many organizations. We feel this allows all players a chance to showcase their development over the course of the off-season. We do hold exit camps in the spring because it is at the end of our season and players are usually still in "hockey shape." Additionally other leagues and sports have not begun in full swing at that time, example Baseball, Soccer, etc. so no one will miss the opportunity to be evaluated because of another commitment from another sporting event. The data collected from the spring evaluations is used when compiling information of our fall tryout lists.

Initial Team/Group Assignment

LMHF accumulates year end evaluations from coaches as well as game observations by LMHF staff and information gathered from our exit camps every year. We assemble a depth chart based on past evaluations and performances as well as current evaluations. Group assignments are based on level played the previous year plus the evaluations from the spring evaluation camp and the previous year's evaluations (submitted by the coaches as well as evaluations done during the season by LMHF staff).

Structure

Over the years the components of our tryouts have indeed changed. We have gone from reporting/signing-up for team specific camps (i.e. - AA/BB/CC camps), to introducing position specific camps (i.e. Forwards/Defense) and we have evolved to where we are today, intra-squad games. Based on feedback from players, parents, coaches and our own self evaluation, we have evolved to the current format of using scrimmages as our initial screening and placement tool as it gives us a sound method for evaluating skills, hockey IQ, attitude and behavior during games. The intra-squad games allows the evaluators to see which players can integrate their skills with other players on the ice and make it easier to identify players with game understanding (hockey sense and "read-and-reacting" skills).

Six teams are formed at the Peewee and Bantam levels. The teams play six scrimmages. Because we recognize that August is such a highly trafficked time frame (competing with baseball, soccer, football, swimming, water polo, etc.) it is understood that it is not always possible for all the players to attend all the sessions so we schedule enough sessions to give everyone ample opportunity to attend.

The teams are split into two groups based on competing against players having similar skills so as to allow everyone to be more comfortable with the opposition (safety concerns are also a factor at the Bantam level where contact is part of the game). Teams A, B and C will play each other and teams D, E and F also play each other during the six scrimmages. Initial team assignment does not determine to which team camp a player will get an invitation. Following the scrimmages, players will be invited to team specific tryout camps. The invitations will be based on where the evaluation team feels players are best suited to compete for a position.

Registration

Players will be required to prepay for the six sessions as well as all subsequent phases of the tryouts. Despite the mention above of the understanding of prospective conflicts, this new administrative process facilitates the work load of the Lakeshore volunteers and adds a required discipline to the process as well as making the cost factor equitable to all participants.

The Process

The goal of the Evaluations is to select 1 AA team, 1 or 2 balanced BB teams and 1 or 2 balanced CC teams, comprised of players of similar skills.

Step 1

There will be Intra-Squad Scrimmages (Aug 9 - Aug 22)

Step 2

Once the scrimmages are over, the entire selection committee meets to review all their scores and notes. Based on the evaluations and team requirements, players will be invited to TEAM CAMPS (AA, BB, CC).

Team camps consist of 12 to 15 forwards, 8 to 10 defensemen and 3 to 4 goalies (depending on the number of players trying out and the number of teams at the different levels). The AA/BB/ and CC coaches are all involved with the evaluations and team camp invitations.

The process continues at the team level where the players are then evaluated on game play as well as team practices. The TEAM CAMPS will consist of evaluations during drills, inter-squad games and exhibition games. There will be no one re-assigned until after the team camp's fourth session. Players will receive invitations to the team specific camps and will be required to pre-register. All players are guaranteed the first four scheduled sessions. Player movement will commence after the fourth session regardless of the players' attendance.

We will be holding our AA Jamboree once again this year. This will encompass a series of exhibition games during Labour Day week-end against other zones and regions. For those in the AA camp, every effort should be made to attend these games. We will finalize the AA teams immediately after the jamboree.

Forming the BB/CC teams, a list of Forwards, Defensemen and Goalies will be established for each level from the players not invited to the AA camp. The teams will be formed from these players. Each team then either plays exhibition games or practices to allow coaches to further evaluate their teams. The coaches may add or delete players from the tentatively selected teams, for both the exhibition games and practices. Final selection of the teams is done after the exhibition game or practice schedule. Where we have more than 1 team at a given level (this year at Peewee BB/Bantam CC/Midget BB/Midget CC, once all releases have been made), the teams will play against each other to gain a better balance. PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOUR CHILD FULLY UNDERSTANDS THAT SPOTS ON ANY OF THE TEAMS ARE NOT GUARANTEED UNTIL TEAMS ARE FINALIZED. Players must play on the team he or she is evaluated on or assigned to and player movement from team to team may occur during the balancing process.

Those players that are not selected will be advised and asked to join the Single Letter Evaluations. This will be done via email so please ensure that the registration desk has an accurate email address.

The Evaluations

So by now, you are probably asking yourself, "Self, what is it that these people are looking for in a hockey player?" Well, our coaches and evaluators will be looking at a multitude of things. They will evaluate not only a player's skill set, but a player's mind set as well. The evaluations will be based on many factors including the behavior of each player, both on and off the ice. While skills are important and are usually one of the first criteria, having the sense of what is happening on the ice is just as important. Regardless of how much ability, skill or finesse a player possesses for a sport, the success or quality of his or her performance will, in the final analysis, probably depend on his or her personality, motivation and attitude. Fifty percent of the season involves practices. If a player is ignoring the coach or cannot understand the drills during tryouts, chances are they are going to act the same way during the regular season. A player who does not listen and refuses to accept changes or adjustments to their method of execution will probably cause problems during future practices.

It is also important for players to have a good understanding of what they'll be facing when they get on the ice. Coaches evaluate a player's hockey sense and skill set in a game situation but they are also looking at the player that gives maximum effort consistently and who plays a strong team game. There are no points for standing around waiting for the puck to come to you during this process. It is not difficult to pick out the players that let their team mates do all the work and they stand around looking to put the puck in the net... or the player that only works in the offensive zone.

Prospective players will be evaluated not only on the basic skills (skating, passing, shooting, stick-handling, etc.), but just as importantly, on how well they function as part of a team. Their attitude and behavior both on the bench and on the ice are also factored into the evaluation.

Remember that teamwork is essential in hockey. It takes seconds for a player to ruin a team's chemistry and months to repair it. Building a team is as much about finding the best skilled players as it is about finding 17 players who can come together and form a team.

The breakdown (in no particular order) of the evaluations will be as follows:

TECHNICAL: (Skating, Agility, Passing, Puck-Control, Shooting)

- How well does the player skate?
- Individual offensive skills, puck carrying, shooting

TACTICAL: (Sense of the game, positioning, read and react)

- Getting open for passes and going to the net. Offensive support. Does the player get involved in the offense or just wait for the puck?
- Individual defense. Is the player aggressive to check the puck and does he/she stay on the defensive side between the puck carrier and the net.
- Does the player work to get back into the play during transition (back-checking)?
- Team defense. Does the player cover pass receivers away from the puck and protect the middle of the ice from the defensive side?

MENTAL: (Motivation on the ice, intensity, attitude, work habits)

- Is the player aggressive chasing loose pucks? More than half the game is loose puck situations.
- Does the player make good things happen when he/she is on the ice? Many effective players don't look pretty and many pretty players aren't effective.
- Attitude on the ice and in the dressing room.
- How does the player react in the face of adversity (stick slamming, berating teammates etc.)?

Players may also be asked to play different positions than they are accustomed to if the coaching staff feels that their skills are better suited for that position.

A few simple rules we follow:

- a) No player is ever moved down in level within the same age bracket in Atom/Peewee or Bantam, (i.e. A "BB" level peewee player cannot be moved to the "CC" level peewee the following year).

Conditions to be met:

- i. Player must attend tryouts
- ii. Player must be trying out for same position as previous year when level was attained

- b) Prior year coaches ranking and comments are given consideration when ranking and placing players

BOTTOM LINE, the tryouts are all just part of the process of putting a team together. It isn't a question of whether a coach likes or dislikes anyone, or that any politics are involved. It's simply a question of skills and the ability to play. Players that show the selection committee they have the skills will be placed on a team with other players equal to that level. Always keeping in mind that there are sometimes more qualified players than there are spots.

While we will try to do our very best to make your child's and our coaches' experience, throughout this process, as positive and fun as possible, you can also assist by making sure your child is adequately prepared for evaluations (proper equipment, attendance at the right sessions, etc.). Be calm, go out and have a blast!

Here is a list of helpful hints to remember during tryouts.

Players Checklist:

Do:

- ❖ Present your best effort during all activities
- ❖ Remain calm and pay close attention to instructions
- ❖ Make sure your equipment is in great shape
- ❖ Always be on time and ready to go
- ❖ Be relaxed, go out and have a lot of fun

Don't:

- ❖ Be nervous or anxious
- ❖ Be afraid to ask questions
- ❖ Forget that an all out effort is important
- ❖ Forget to have fun
- ❖ Forget it is truly only a game

Parents Checklist:

Do:

- ❖ Keep the tryouts in the proper perspective
- ❖ Keep everything positive
- ❖ Have fun with your child
- ❖ Stay calm for your child

Don't:

- ❖ Create additional pressure for your young players
- ❖ Get uptight during the tryout process
- ❖ Create a negative environment.
- ❖ Set unrealistic expectations.

And finally we would like to leave everyone with this thought. Playing on a double letter team requires commitment. Commitment relates to both the player and his/her parents. DOUBLE LETTER TEAMS have a substantial number of extra practices, exhibition and tournament games at a greater cost in time and money. Coaches of the DOUBLE LETTER TEAMS expect all the parents to be involved in fundraising and various volunteer positions on the team. Please be aware of your commitment to your child's TEAM so it may be a rewarding experience for ALL. There is a difference between being interested in playing and making the commitment to play. One you do when it's convenient, while the other involves some sacrifices.

Special Circumstances

The primary goal of the evaluation process is to provide the very best possible conditions for the players to showcase their skills. The LMHF strives to provide a fair opportunity for the player to be seen as often as possible and in as many situations as possible. Keeping in mind that special circumstances may occur during the tryout period, warranting special consideration, the LMHF would like to provide the following guidelines:

A) Out of Town during the Tryouts

If a player is unable to attend any portion of Lakeshore Minor Hockey's tryouts, she/he will be included, time permitting, in the remaining portion of the tryouts. However, the player must still pre-register and pay all applicable fees.

B) Illness or Injury

Any illness or injury which prevents participation in the tryout process must be reported to the VP Double Letters immediately. Should the illness or injury prevent a proper evaluation as determined by the evaluation committee and the LMHF Board of Directors, then mediating conditions may apply and a doctor's note and/or other documentation may be required, at the sole discretion of the LMHF Board of Directors.

All players will be required to provide proof that they have been cleared to return to play after an injury that prevented them from participating in the tryout process.

If a player does not report for tryouts due to injury or illness without notifying the VP Double Letters, then it will be deemed that the player is not interested in attending the evaluation sessions and may not be considered for a spot on a Double Letter team.

C) Out of Club Tryouts

Each year, the Midget AAA and Espoir training camps coincide with the Lakeshore Minor Hockey Federation Midget double letter tryouts. Due to the number of players at the AAA and Espoir camps and after the final selections take place, it may be possible that some Lakeshore players who attended these camps will be returning to Lakeshore. With this in mind, whenever possible, players should be attending the Lakeshore tryouts in tandem with the other tryouts. The LMHF recognizes that schedules overlap, however, attending the Lakeshore tryouts is very important since trying out at Midget AAA or Espoir teams does NOT guarantee the player a spot at any level for Lakeshore Midget, which is a highly competitive, three year program.

Given that the out of club teams are essentially independent and draw from multiple recruiting territories, if a LMHF player is attending out of club tryouts for Hockey Quebec sanctioned teams (Midget AAA, Midget AA, Midget Espoir) and due to scheduling conflicts, is unable to attend Lakeshore Minor Hockey's tryouts in part or in whole, she/he may be included, time permitting, in the remaining portion of the tryouts. It will be the player's responsibility to ensure that every effort is made to attend her/his LMHF tryouts.

Note: Please note that Tryout Spots will not be held indefinitely.

D) Non-Participation in Tryouts

While it is a guideline of LMHF to not demote any players once they have attained a level, no player is ever moved down in level within the same age bracket in Atom/Peewee or Bantam, (i.e. A "BB" level Peewee player cannot be moved to the "CC" level Peewee the following year).

However, these conditions must be met:

- iii. Player must attend tryouts
- iv. Player must be trying out for same position as previous year when level was attained

If a player does not report for tryouts, then it will be deemed that the player is not interested in playing for a double letter team and her/his candidacy will be treated as such.

If a player switches position (i.e. Forward to Defense, Goalie to Forward, etc.) then, the player's level attained the previous year is no longer a consideration.

Other Circumstances:

Any other circumstance(s) not covered above, but which prevents participation by a player in the tryout process, must be brought to the attention of the VP Double Letters immediately. The LMHF Board of Directors will rule on the legitimacy of the circumstances and may or may not choose to impose mediating conditions.

Mediating Conditions

The LMHF evaluation committee may use previous evaluations and/or history of level played as the basis of players' placement for special cases (such as injury or illness). The selection committee would then appoint that player to the appropriate team at which point, the evaluation committee's decision is final and not appealable.

Please note that not attending the tryouts due to commitments to other sports, or being on vacation for the entire or part of the process, does not qualify for a mediating circumstance and thus will not be treated as such.

Grievance/Breach of Conduct

Concerns with respect to the evaluators, the evaluation process or any other related matter must be submitted to the LMHF Board of Directors in writing within three days of the occurrence of the alleged incident.

In the spirit of fairness and equal opportunity, please do not approach the evaluators during the tryout ice sessions but instead, please proceed to document the occurrence and submit it to the LMHF Board of Directors immediately.

The LMHF Discipline Committee will investigate the occurrence and deal with any attempts to approach, influence or interfere with any evaluator(s) before, during or after the evaluation process.

Disclaimer:

While every attempt has been made to provide, clear, accurate and detailed information, the Lakeshore Minor Hockey Federation reserves the right to make changes as circumstances warrant.

GO LAKESHORE GO!!!

