

GLOUCESTERSHIRE HOCKEY ASSOCIATION

Junior Hockey U12, U10 and U8 Mixed, West Junior Competitions Committee reports for GHA AGM on Wednesday 17th May 2023

Junior Festivals.

In the first half of the season (October to December) there were Clubs Festivals for U8 mixed, U10 girls and boys, U12 girls and boys and U12 A Teams girls and boys. These were generally well supported as can be seen from the table below. The numbers would have been higher, but the weather on 11th December and 18th December meant the fixtures were cancelled due to snow on the pitches. Only the U12s went ahead on 4th December. The total entries were as follows:

U8 Mixed	U10 Girls	U10 Boys	U12 Girls	U12 Boys	U12 A Girls	U12 A Boys
22	33	18	56	36	17	14

Overall a total of 196 teams entered and average numbers were an increase over 2021 - 22. However, the trend has been for a rise in the numbers of girls teams and a decrease in the boys. A further positive has been that Westbury Academy has been sending teams which they have not done previously and even Clifton Robinsons sent a boys team on one occasion. These Clubs previously only entering Avon League competitions.

In the second half of the season (January to March) there were Clubs Festivals for U8 mixed, U10 girls and boys, U12 girls and boys and U12 A Teams girls and boys. There were not so many dates as in the first half of the season due to the 2 In2Hockey competitions and whilst numbers in U8s and U10s participating in the individual Festivals were largely as before Christmas those in U12s were lower. The U12 numbers were further reduced by the weather on 22nd January when the fixtures were cancelled due to a forecast of ice on the pitches and bitterly cold weather. The total entries were as follows:

U8 Mixed	U10 Girls	U10 Boys	U12 Girls	U12 Boys	U12 A Girls	U12 A Boys
24	31	21	17	11	8	4

Overall a total of 116 teams entered. The trend of a rise in the numbers of girls teams and a decrease in the boys remained as before Christmas. The participation of Westbury Academy continued and extended to all age and gender groups. Marlborough also sent a team on one occasion, but Clifton Robinsons did not come again and Worcester was also absent having been to a few in the autumn.

Junior In2Hockey.

The U12s In2Hockey took place on 12th February and the U10s on 12th March. On both occasions the weather was kind to us, which was a relief for me personally. In U12 girls there were 12 entries, in U12 boys there were 8 entries, the even numbers making scheduling relatively straight forwards. Results were as follows:

U12 girls.

Champions: Lansdown A

Runners up: Cirencester A

These teams went forwards to the West Area competition on 2nd April at Clifton College.

U12 boys

Champions: Cheltenham A

Runners up: Cheltenham B

Third place: Lansdown

Cheltenham and Lansdown teams went forwards to the West Area competition on 2nd April at Clifton College. Cheltenham Junior were runners-up.

In U10 girls there were 11 entries, in U10 boys there were 8 entries one of which was last minute.

U10 girls:

Champions: Cirencester A

Runners up: Lydney

These teams went forwards to the West Area competition on 16th April at Clifton College.

U10 boys

Champions: Cheltenham A

Runners up: Wotton-Under-Edge

These teams went forwards to the West Area competition on 16th April at Clifton College. Cheltenham Junior were runners up.

During the two In2Hockey competition days, feedback was received from a number of people and this has been collated and sent on to all the clubs that participated for them to consider and also to provide feedback of their own if they wish. Several matters from this are relevant for the AGM.

Firstly there were a few clubs who did not complete on time the bureaucratic elements of the entry process including in a couple of cases the payment of the fees. This did make the planning somewhat uncertain, but the Clubs were still allowed to compete. However, this did leave open the question of whether they should have been excluded.

The second issue was that some coaches were openly critical of umpiring decisions. This was fortunately directed at those who were more able to shrug off the criticism as they were older and experienced. However, it was disappointing particularly as every team had been given a copy of the pitch side code of conduct.

Thirdly, there were gaps in support with not all teams providing umpires and in one instance only supplying the assistant to myself that had been promised by press ganging a father on the day!

West Junior Competitions Committee

I have attended the West Junior Competitions Committee meetings which have been the forum for management direction for the West Area junior competitions with all the age groups up to U18s for Clubs, Schools and Counties. The various results for all the Clubs and Schools competitions are available, please contact me if people want to know the detail. It should be noted that Areas now run the lower tier competitions, In2Hockey qualifying and Indoor qualifying; the higher tiers for U14s

upwards being run by EH. The comments below therefore cover those competitions for which West Area are responsible.

Gloucestershire Clubs and Schools were well represented in both the outdoor and indoor competitions, but success was limited. In the outdoor: Clubs; Gloucester City, Cheltenham Hockey and Cheltenham Junior Hockey Club figured and in the Schools; KLB, Dean Close and Cheltenham College. In the Indoor Gloucestershire fared better in both Clubs and Schools. In the Clubs Wotton-U-Edge, Lansdown HC and Cheltenham HC all did well. In the Indoor Dean Close was successful going on to win the EH competition overall.

Other general points that have emerged over the season are as follows:

A few clubs had expressed their unhappiness regarding poaching of players by other coaches and clubs. It was talked about at length and the committee felt that there was nothing that could be done to stop this from happening but felt that the West JCC should send the EH link to RARE, right athlete right environment.

All Areas Web sites were up and running. Representatives to Point people to the web site for information.

Jackie Stanley had raised what the West could do to help and encourage more clubs taking part in the West Junior T3 leagues. There had been clubs wanting to take part in T3 competitions across the West but due to their location it had not been possible as clubs were not prepared to travel long distances. County representatives informed the JCC that they do hold a selection of 11 aside tier 4 and 7 aside under 8s, 10s and 12 competitions. It was felt that the best way forward was to gain information from clubs about why they only enter limited or no competition. This topic was the subject of almost every meeting and many ideas were discussed over how to address the travel issues.

At the most recent meeting (Thursday 11th May) Jackie Stanley presented the EH potential changes to the U14s and above competitions for 2023 – 24. These are not yet decided, but it appears as if there will be a reduction in the number of tiers and EH will run more of the competitions. In addition, an update to the competition regulations from EH is expected.

Lastly, the calendar for 2023 – 24 will be issued shortly once the EH decisions on the competitions structure is made.

Indoor

A meeting was held with the West Schools to discuss changes to School indoor for next season: It was decided that an Open Competition would be best.

- No County Rounds.
- All schools to enter the West indoor competition in early September.
- Schools will then be divided into qualifying pools depending on numbers and location.
- One School within each pool to host and arrange their own pool playing a league or round robin. Schools will play a minimum of 4 games in their pool.
- Top teams from each group come to a West final.
- The Final competition day will be no more than 8 team and will take place on a Sunday.

Management and Lead deliverers

Liz Powell is stepping down from her role as Chairperson. The Board will advertise the role of chairperson in the next few weeks. In addition, the Administrators role has become too time consuming. A wider group of helpers is needed to help support the setup of league fixtures and School competitions.

The West will need to find more deliverers to help run the West Junior competitions next season. Liz and Ray are both retiring at the end of the season and will be greatly missed as they have led most of the junior competitions over many years. Thanks also to Nicky Atkinson, Kerry Mullien, Malcolm Pressly-Smith, Jo McDermid and Richard Hill who have also helped at competitions.

County teams

These are reported under the County / Player Pathway report although there are some comments below.

Area 8 (national forum for Areas to discuss Junior Competitions).

Talent development mapping & forums – have plotted the talent system landscape for each area and will soon be holding an online national event to launch the Talent Development Forum where key talent developers/influencers will be invited to attend. Talent hardship fund – conversations have been held with Areas to discuss a potential hardship fund. Areas have agreed in principle to support the fund and the aim is to make the fund available for Talent Academy players in financial need from the 1st February. More information will be shared regarding these when appropriate. Talent System webpages have been updated recently providing further information and a new talent section on the governance portal is now live for Areas to access.

Talent Academy (TA) TAs are aimed at the highest potential players at U15 – U18. As of December 2022 all TAs had completed their assessment phase and delivered a first block of activity. England Hockey will complete a quality assurance process annually and to date have completed 19 TA visits pre-Christmas. Feedback from 8 areas members was given to EH (Heather Williams (GB Head of Elite Talent Development) and Sion Kitson (Talent Partnership Manager). regarding the general lack of communication from TA with clubs and counties. This was going to be look at before the next meeting.

State schools across all areas had been invited to take part in a state school competition in May at Nottingham. The West had just 1 entry, KLB school. EH asking to promote state school hockey.

School survey responses has shaped the calendar, specifically around 3 points:

1. There was strong support for the Indoor schools' championships to be concluded pre-Christmas
2. There was strong support for the U14s Championships to have a national knock out competition, T1 with a T2 plate.
3. There was strong support for the U16 Tier 1 competition to be run based on the U18 Tier 1 but smaller groups. With a T2 knockout and T3 plate.

The other point raised in the survey but with mixed feedback was with regards to moving the girls In2Hockey finals pre-Christmas, but others indicated they would like it pre-Easter. More work needs to be completed on this to determine if it should be moved and, if so, to when.

Border Schools – will need to choose which area they play in and will not be able to compete in other areas.

Ian Harvey
Junior Competitions
12th May 2023