Age Limit determination in Underwater Hockey in Australia

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Purpose:

- To safeguard athletes in the open aged sport of Underwater hockey. Determine ages which are applicable to allow athletes to start competing in the open age groups.
- To ensure new clubs starting have guidance about athletes and what age brackets should play together.
- To identify a suitable age for athletes to start playing and competing with athletes considered to be adults.

This document will refer to:

- Club hockey – competition at a local level where players are more familiar with each other and their capabilities
- State level hockey – Competitions where higher level of capabilities is apparent, and the athletes are not familiar with each other.
- National level hockey – National Championships held annually

Age limitations for inclusion in open aged games:

- Club Hockey – 14 years old
- State Level Hockey – 15 years old
- National Level Hockey:
  - Under 15 competitions: Age 11 to 15 (U15 1st Jan)
  - Under 19 competitions: Age 14 to 19 (U19 1st Jan)
  - Open competition: Age 16 and over – no upper limit

Definitions:

- Coach - preferred level 1 sports specific, Minimum Community coaching and SIA coaching courses.
- Referee - level 1 Underwater Hockey referee or a player with a solid understanding of the rules as assessed by the coach
- Game - a game that results in an outcome in an organised roster. i.e not a training night or session.
- Training Sessions – may involve skills, drills and match simulation. The training session must be managed by a coach.

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Below is how an exception can be granted:

Training Sessions

Below are the requirements for training sessions:

a) For sessions only involving skills and drills: i.e no actual game simulated or otherwise. ● The athlete must be assessed by the coach as being capable of engaging in the drills and skills at the level expected of the session. Each training session needs to be assessed with the athlete's safety as a priority.

b) If the session will involve a simulated game i.e 6 v 6.

- The athlete must be assessed by the coach as being capable of engaging in the drills and skills at the level expected of the session. Each training session needs to be assessed with the athlete's safety as a priority.
- The match simulation session should have a nominated referee
- The match simulation session should be under the control of the coach
- The athlete should be well educated on the rules of the sport and aware of the minimal contact they could expect while competing for the puck at times and how to best protect themselves – ensure mouth guards in place, glove fits well, goggles are safe
- The coach has received the express permission of the athletes' parent

Club Level Hockey:

If a player younger than 14 wants to play in the open aged game, below are the

requirements. **Competitive Game**

Exceptions can be granted with the express permission of the athletes' parents and the signing of consent to play.

In addition, the following limitations apply to ensure the athlete can be kept safe during play:

- There must be a minimum of two referees in the game
- The athlete must be assessed by their coach as being capable of playing at the level expected in the game. Each game needs to be assessed with the athlete's safety as a priority. ● The athlete under the age of 14 is identifiable to others who will be playing against them – examples but not the only method – identifiable cap and gloves
- The other players are informed that there is a younger athlete playing in the game and they should take caution to ensure that fair play is adhered to. Any unfair play as determined by the referees which could be considered unsportsmanlike conduct and will result in an automatic game dismissal rather than the standard penalties.
- The athlete should be well educated on the rules of the sport and aware of the minimal contact they could expect while competing for the puck at times and how to best protect themselves – ensure mouth guards in place, gloves fit well, goggles are safe.

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State Level Hockey:

If a player younger than 15 wants to play in the open aged game, below are the requirements.

Exceptions can be granted with the express permission of the athletes' parents and the signing of consent to play. The minimum age for an exemption is 14. State level hockey – Competitions where higher level of capabilities is apparent, and the athletes are not familiar with each other.

The following limitations apply to ensure the athlete can be kept safe during play

- There must be a minimum of two referees in the game
- The athlete has been assessed by their coach as being capable of playing at the level expected in the game. Each game needs to be assessed with the athlete's safety as a priority. ● The athlete under the age of 15 is identifiable to others who will be playing against them – examples but not the only method – identifiable cap and gloves
- The other players are informed that there is a younger athlete playing in the game and they should take caution to ensure that fair play is adhered to. Any unfair play as determined by the qualified referees will be considered with the normal rules of UWH
- The athlete should be well educated on the rules of the sport and aware of the minimal contact they could expect while competing for the puck at times and how to best protect themselves – ensure mouth guards in place, gloves fit well, goggles are safe.

National Level Hockey:

No exemption can be granted for a person under the age of 16 to play in the open aged elite

games. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GO7JxmZVfPW442lKzr74ASn9_LnT_e1b/view

Coaches must assess athletes based on the following information to determine they are able to meet the requirements for an exemption.

Playing against older athletes:

Will playing larger athletes pose potential injury. In all sports there is potential for injury.

In underwater hockey the sport has minimal contact when competing for the puck. The main contact areas and hence the highest potential for an injury risk is:

- Being curled off the puck
- Collisions when turning or curling
- Dangerous flick

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The athletes should be assessed to ensure they can protect themselves well in the following situations to a satisfactory level and consideration must be made in regards to the following:

- Being curled off the puck by a larger player (both reverse and natural curls)
- Avoidance of unintentional collisions when turning or curling themselves
- Ability to guard themselves in the event a puck is flick dangerously (note this is done from general observation, not flicking pucks directly at an athlete to test reactions.

Extra information that was used to provide the information in this document.

Royal Children Hospital Melbourne – Height and Weight

growth charts

Males aged 14 at the 50th percentile = 165cm tall and 52kg Males aged 18 are 177cm tall and 70kg. Females aged 14 at the 50th percentile = 160cm tall and 50kg. Females aged 18 are 163cm and 58kg

Given the sport is played underwater the weight difference is not as significant as it would be in a land-based sport as the weight is negated by water. Height only allows an athlete to have a greater reach than another so again it has no ability to cause a negative impact on the athlete who is aged 14. i.e 8kg for females is the expected increase and 18kg for males.

14-year-old females will potentially only grow a minimal amount from 14 to adulthood. Thus allowing 14-year-olds to start playing at this age will allow them to adapt as their skill level increases and they play athletes with higher skill levels. Underwater hockey has and will be a mixed sex sport.

It is anticipated that a 14-year-old athlete will compete in a competition at a skill level similar to themselves and by doing so this will encourage them to improve and develop within the sport while they age.

Ability to play physically against each other.

At age 14 males and females are very similar in size; both in height and weight so it is appropriate for them to play with each other. The sport is played as a mixed sport and has been done for an extremely long time. Females and males at the age of 14 should be able to play with adults.

There is an expectation that the athletes have undergone training in the sport, and it would not be their first experience.

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Other supporting information:

CMAS Rules: Note that these ages are for the highest level of Underwater hockey – the minimum level being National representation of the country.

1.3.1 The age of a Player is obtained by subtracting the year of birth from the current year. The Player will compete from January 1 to December 31 of the year in this category.

1.3.2.1/2 **Elite Men's and Women's Division.** Minimum age is 18 (see 1.3.3). There is no upper age 1.3.2.3/4

Men's and Women's Masters Division. Minimum age is 35. There is no upper age limit. 1.3.2.5

U24 Men's and Women's Division. The age category is 19-23 inclusive. 1.3.2.7

U19 Men's and Women's Division. The age category is 15-18 inclusive. Using this age limit we can see that 15-year-olds can play with 18-year-olds and essentially this would mean athletes wanting to compete at the age of 15 at the higher level would need to train with 18-year-olds when they are 14 to help them develop the ability to be competitive in that environment, they would be expected to play in the following year's world championships. This needs to be facilitated in the safer environment of club, state and national hockey.

This should allow us then to set a simple rule that 14-year-old athletes can compete with athletes 18 years and older at club level and only with approval at higher levels.