

Selection guidance for junior players in the Men's Section

September 2023

Selection is based on many things discussed below, including age, experience and ability. The intention is to allow juniors to start playing senior hockey at a level that they will find enjoyable and have the right level of challenge. Younger or more inexperienced players will start in lower teams where the game will be at a standard and pace that will allow them to learn and adapt to senior hockey.

Whilst we prefer consistent sides to play every week, this is not always possible. Players can sometimes be selected for a different team week to week. If a captain is short of players, junior players may be called into a higher team for just one week and then return to their previous team: this is normal, and we encourage young players to treat it as an opportunity to gain experience at a higher level. Depending on how fixtures fall, players moving between teams can end up with a run of away or home fixtures in a row, this will tend to even out over the season. Teams will transport players if parents are happy to allow this, which means that parents do not need to trek around the Midlands.

Progress

At SCHC we provide hockey for all abilities and the selection process is designed to allow each player to play at a level that is suitable for them and to progress at their own pace. As junior players get older, more experienced, and physically bigger/stronger they will be considered for higher teams. There are many factors that go into selection of juniors, including ability, experience, physical/emotional maturity, attitude, position played, commitment to training and availability - **players who play regularly will be considered ahead of those who rarely make themselves available.**

Players and parents should not worry if others in their age group are playing in a different team, the many factors listed above will influence this. Juniors starting league hockey at age 13 have 6 seasons before they finish their secondary education, so there is plenty of time for all young players to develop and progress. If your child is picked for a higher side but would be happier playing in a lower side then please have that discussion with the relevant captain.

Senior hockey is not the same as school hockey and young players adapt to it at different speeds. Just because your child plays in a particular team or position for school, it does not mean that they will play in the same team or position in senior hockey. This does not mean that either the school or the club has got anything wrong, they are just operating in different circumstances and this leads to different decisions.

Understanding the league structure

England Hockey has recently re-structured the league system throughout the country to bring it onto a common footing. Teams have been allocated into one of five levels and 10 divisions, with the Midlands divisions at National Level 3 and below being split into geographical areas. There are therefore 30 divisions within Midlands Men's Hockey.

SCHC men's teams play in the following levels and divisions of the league:

National Level	Midlands Division	SCHC Teams
2	Prem	1 XI
3	4 W	2 XI
4	6 NW	3 XI
4	7 NW	4 XI
4	8 NW	5 XI
4	8 SW	6 XI
5	9 SW	7 XI
5	10 SW	8 XI
5	10 Dev S	9 XI DEV

The distribution of our teams means that our 5XI & 6XI are both playing at the same Division Level – 8, but in different geographical areas. This means that players selected for these teams will all face the same level of opponents.

We encourage players and parents not to place too much importance on which team they are picked for and concentrate on playing and enjoying the game. Sutton has lots of teams so focussing on a team number is unhelpful. Some small clubs only have a couple of teams, so all their players are in the 1st or 2nd team. For example, our 5XI and 6XI are playing against other clubs' 2XI, and our 7XI & 8XI are playing against other clubs' 3XI.

Factors which are taken into account during selection

Many factors are taken into account, including, in no particular order:

- Position played
- Experience
- Fitness
- Form
- Ability
- Attitude
- Presence and performance at training
- The opposition being played
- How regularly they are available
- How many other players are available overall
- The team's way of playing
- Balance of the side

This is not an exhaustive list, but it does illustrate how many different issues the selection meeting has to juggle when picking the sides. The bottom line is that we have to put out 9 sides every week and there are only a finite number of places in each team. Long experience also confirms that we need a certain number of senior players in each team. Hockey is ultimately



meritocratic, the club wants to do well and if players are playing well, this is noticed and they will be given opportunities in higher teams.

Other considerations

SCHC is a club which treats members as individuals and as part of our hockey family. Some members have responsibilities outside of hockey that impact when/where they can play and this is also taken into account. Some members have caring responsibilities or work commitments that are not always flexible and we try to accommodate these where possible. This may mean that some players are not able to play every week or are not able to travel to play. Such issues are considered on a case by case basis and where we can help, we want to do so. The trade off is those players accepting that they may not get a game every week, or they will have to play for whichever team has a place for them, even if their hockey ability might allow them to play higher.

To clear up a misconception, there are no players who get to pick and choose when and where they play and for which team.

Play for the enjoyment

We cannot stress enough that the very best way to help your child is to encourage them to enjoy playing hockey for whichever team they are picked for, to play to the best of their ability, and not to worry about it.

Who to talk to about selection

If you have any queries about selection, then in the first instance you should talk to the relevant team captain who will be able to explain things.

If your query is not resolved, then you may like to talk to:

1XI to 4XI	Gareth Griffiths
5XI to 9XI	Chris Ball

We hope the above will give you a better idea about how the Men's League is structured and what is involved in getting 9 men's sides out every week.

Gareth Griffiths
Men's Section Club Capt

Chris Ball
Men's Section Club Vice Capt