

## **Youth Ice Hockey Development in Qatar**

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<p>This thesis discusses the process of youth ice hockey development for Qatar, mainly focusing on the 2015-16 season. In order to understand the process, you will be provided with background of the governing organizations and how they operate before actually venturing to the development plan process.</p> <p>As hockey is a fairly unknown and unusual sport in Qatar, due to mainly geographic reasons, it poses certain limitations to what can be done. However, with proper planning for current and future endeavors, it is possible to develop ice hockey efficiently.</p> <p>With help from the IIHF, we set programs for recruitment and coaching education programs in order to establish an environment of sustainable development. We used national team players as prospective assistant coaches and focused on recruiting local children to learn the game of ice hockey. We also extended cooperation within neighboring countries, mainly United Arab Emirates, for tournaments and possible camps to benefit both parties.</p> <p>Essentially, the youth development throughout the course of two years has been very successful and has laid a foundation to build on going forward. However, due to some problems, which can be perceived as long term and short term, some things need to change for Qatar to gain access into their full development potential.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords: development, ice hockey, youth, coaching, sport organizations</b></p>	

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# 1 Introduction

The topic of this thesis is youth ice hockey development in Qatar. Currently Qatar is an associate member of the International Ice Hockey Federation (henceforth referred to as the IIHF), meaning that development of the hockey program has become more essential to them. Ice hockey is run through the Qatar Olympic Committee, and more specifically the Qatar Winter Sports Committee, which also currently oversees short track skating and curling. We will discuss their backgrounds and roles in more detail in the next part of this thesis.

As Qatar is a new and exotic country in the world of ice hockey, it makes then subject different and interesting. Also, since I have been a part of the hockey development of youth hockey in Qatar for the last two years, I feel like I can provide some ideas and insight to perhaps further the process. Developing hockey in a country with a completely different culture from Western countries poses its own challenges throughout the way. However, these challenges also serve as valuable lessons, as you must constantly seek alternative methods to recruit and retain kids, while adjusting to cultural differences. And since the objective is to develop local players, recruitment and coaching methods must be adjusted accordingly.

Essentially, a development plan specific to youth hockey development will be the main focus of this thesis. It will begin by examining organizational structures and functions, followed by the sports structure of Qatar, along with providing some background information as to where the development program was started. Firstly, one of the most important things to consider was the importance of having an equipment support program. As an associate member of the IIHF, Qatar was entitled to receive full sets of equipment to support the Learn to Play program, which will also be discussed within this paper.

Furthermore, it is crucial to discuss the importance of the IIHF- approved Learn to Play coaching education program, as it is the foundation to enable continuity of the development program. As most coaches are expatriates, they tend to be a rather

temporary solution for a development program. Through running coaching clinics for local players, it was aimed to provide necessary basic knowledge to handle coaching responsibilities. The coaching program and its structure will also be discussed and evaluated in terms of effectiveness.

The third part of this thesis is going to give a detailed view on what the development plan was, as specifically tailored for Qatar. This thesis will go through the entire process, from setting objectives to implementation and evaluation of the development plan. As an important piece of information, youth hockey development is currently in its third year as organized by the current staff of the Qatar Winter Sports Committee with full support. It is most certainly a challenging and interesting experience to be a part of. The main objective of this thesis is to provide a framework and suggestions for increased and improved development of Qatar's youth hockey program.

One of the aforementioned challenges, as in many countries with smaller populations, is the lack of players. In Qatar hockey is not that big of a sport and a majority of children are more oriented towards sports like football and basketball, as they are more developed and easily accessible. In addition, a great majority of the population of Qatar are expatriates, leaving a relatively minor percentage who are Qatari. To address this issue, it was set out to focus primarily on the recruitment program, to increase the number of players and set up a structure of advancement within the hockey program. The most important issue was to retain players after recruitment, as there are only had a limited number of them.

Another challenge was essentially a lack of ice time and quantity of facilities. As of now Qatar currently has one Olympic- size rink. But due to high demand, ice times were limited to only 2 times a week for all junior players. This meant having to practice with all juniors (age ranged from 6 to 15 years) simultaneously. This posed certain issues that will be discussed elaborately later in this thesis.

## **2 Organizational structures and functions**

To provide a theoretical basis for the development plan of Qatar youth hockey, first it must be examined what organizations, particularly in business and sports, are constituted of. Firstly, it will be researched what a high performing organization comprises of. As opposed to examining simply the different kinds of structures, this thesis will instead take a performance- oriented approach and attempt to investigate what efficiency is all about.

Organizations in sports, business and other areas come in different types, sizes, and each with their own demographics and goals. Therefore, there is no specific way of doing things the right way, so to speak. The concept of adapting to cultures, rules and regulations, and working with what you get are all factors that need to be taken into consideration when formulating and evaluating strategic plans.

Firstly, examining the process of creating a high-performing organization and the factors that are essential in that regard is relevant. Concepts such as strategic planning, plan implementation, evaluation and staff management will be covered to create a holistic idea of what is generally viewed as effective methods of planning and execution. This ties in with the practical part of the development plan in the sense that it provides a platform for efficient and productive evaluation of the plan and implementation of it.

### **2.1 Building a high performing organization**

In relevance to building an efficient development program for ice hockey, it is essential to understand the necessary components to building a high performing organization. Whether it be a committee, federation or association, the goals of all these different types of sports organizations is the same: grow the sport, increase the number of players, develop performance of athletes, and educate coaches and managers to be able to heighten the standards. According to Douglas Long there are key components contributing to the success and performance of an organization, whether it is business or sport development oriented. He suggests

that in order to construct a high performing organization, one must take into consideration the following” components of performance”:

1. Overall organizational
2. Unit or department
3. Team
4. Individual

(Long, 2016, 29)

At the very beginning the largest level of performance components is at an organizational level. This means that the person or people in charge are ultimately responsible for how much success is to be attained. They are the leaders of the organization and they have the final say. Having said that though, the success of an organization is the collective effort from the individuals within it. All sections must work together and separately to ensure that their part is done at maximal efficiency. The leaders (whether they be chairmen, general secretaries, etc.) are the ones responsible of making sure that they perform at their expected efficiency level. In relation to this thesis, that would be the Qatar Olympic Committee. (Long, 2016, 31-32)

The unit or department level is where there are specific tasks and areas of specialty for the workers there. This component also requires the leadership of an executive who is required to create an environment where employees feel comfortable and not under excessive pressure. (Long, 2016, 68). Also, everyone should be assigned to a task matching their skills to maximize the probability of success. Even one misplaced individual could cause lack of productivity if placed in an environment where they do not have competence for their task and are displeased with the environment. This requires social skills and constant monitoring from the executives to make sure that everyone in the department or unit is committed to the common cause. They must also be able to cooperate with other unit or departments efficiently to help the overall organizational goals. And at the same time, they can be viewed as a” mini-organization” with their own visions and goals. (Long, 2016, 62)



A team is defined as:” A group of people with a full set of complementary skills required to complete a job, task or project” (Business Dictionary, 2016). Through that definition, it is appropriate to say that a team is comprised of different kinds of people, each with their specific skill set required to perform at maximum capacity. Douglas Long suggests that for a team to be successful, it is to be formed in a manner where the final result is only achieved if each and every individual puts in their own share of work. In addition, it is suggested that for a team to reach a level of high performance, there must be a performance challenge that requires strong team effort to work (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993, 12) This simultaneous end result method requires everyone to work together in order to complete a task or project. So as opposed to rewarding everyone completing their own tasks, the entire team is rewarded for completing the whole task, thus reinforcing true teamwork to take place. Equally important to consider is if a team is necessary to carry out a task. The logic of that thought is that one should think about the minimal number of people required to perform a task. Teams are efficient mostly if they are needed. (Long, 2016, 93-94)

In terms of the individual, they are what make an organization high or low performing. Certain things to be considered for individuals of companies is that to ensure an environment where high performance is possible, the individuals need to be appropriately trained and educated to complete their specific tasks. Those properly educated and most proficient in specific tasks will have an easier time completing assignments consistently and with high quality as opposed to individuals than individuals who are lacking in how-to knowledge and proper education for their specific duties. (Long, 2016, 121)

To truly have a high performing organization, one must consider that unexpected turns may result in a halt or a slowing down of development. Therefore, leadership needs to be aware of all activities and monitor them consistently. In addition, there needs to be several backup plans, meaning you prepare for various scenarios that might hinder performance, to be able to adjust and adapt for the unexpected.

### **3 Efficient strategic planning**

In terms of strategic planning, it is perhaps the most important element to maximize the potential for the greatest success in implementing a development plan for a sports club or running a business. Having a solid strategic plan in place indicates that there are clear and measurable goals that can be evaluated. Consequently, this difference from the start to the end of the implementation process are what the management view as success or failure to reach set goals.

A strategic plan is defined by John M. Bryson as:” A deliberative, disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why.” (Bryson, 2011, 8) To simplify, a strategic plan defines the purpose of an organization and creates a sense of focus in supporting actions that benefits and fits that purpose and identity.

In the case of this thesis, the relevance here comes in understanding what the goals, visions and missions are for the Qatar Olympic Committee and more specifically the Qatar Winter Sports Committee, both which will be discussed later in this work. Essentially here we are talking about non-profit organizations in the sense that all the money being made is invested into the development of the sport.

#### **3.1 Formulating a strategic plan**

To construct an efficient and measurable strategic plan, there must be values, goals and methods, all reflecting to the purpose and needs of the company, club, or federation. Some entities look for financial profit as a measure of success, whereas in clubs or national sports team’s success is measured through trophies, medals, and placements within a league or in tournaments. The process of strategic planning includes setting organizational goals, defining strategies, developing detailed plans and determining the best possible way to get to a preferred outcome (Steiner, 2010, 14). Essentially what this means is that when the strategic plan is put into place, there must be constant awareness on what to do at different times to ensure maximal potential in the implementation stage.

Simply put, there is several ways to formulate a strategic plan and everything revolves around the vision and mission of the organization in question. Below is a figure illustrating the process of making an efficient strategic plan:

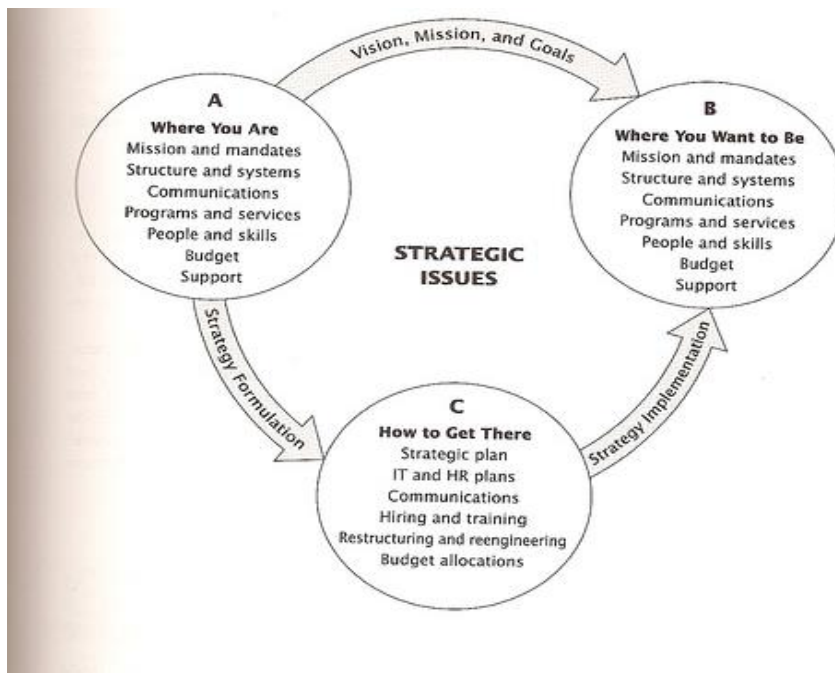


Figure 1: ABC's of strategic planning (Bryson & Alston, 2004)

As is evident through Figure 1, it is important to understand the current state and resources, the plan for future improvement, and in between what needs to be done to achieve the "dream" or ultimate goal. As mentioned in the previous section, to truly achieve goals, the leadership especially needs to be aware of any possible obstacles that might interfere with the optimal pathway to success and reaching the targets. All the three components in Figure 1 must be realistic for them to be attained. Having a dream is different from having a measurable goal.

## 4 Sports organizations internationally and nationally

As a theoretical background for understanding the layout of this thesis, it is important to understand the types, functions and effectiveness of sports organizations. The theoretical part is to provide a framework which may contribute to understanding the decision-making process of sports organizations.

### 4.1 Types and functions of sports organizations

Essentially there are three types of sports organizations, each with their predefined structures and goals for developing and providing various sport services, both at international and national levels. These are:

- sport governing bodies
- sport providing entities
- sport spectacle organizations

Each of these types of sport organizations have their specific array of responsibilities, as indicated by the Table 1 below:

	<b>Sport governing bodies</b>	<b>Sport providing entities</b>	<b>Sport spectacle organizations</b>
<b>Mission</b>	Promote sports at all levels in a given territory and sport discipline.	To satisfy a community's motivation to practice physical activity and socializing through sport activities.	Represent, promote and safeguard the interests of all actors participating in the competitions they produce.
<b>Goal</b>	Govern the sport, ensuring its promotion and development at all levels, monitor the administration of sport, guarantee the organization of regular competitions as well as the respect for the rules of fair play.	Design and offer sport activities, both at a recreational and competitive level, and at individual and team programs, oriented towards official competitions in order to achieve sporting success and social integration.	Design a regular competition system ensuring the contest among rival teams or individuals in a given sport discipline and under the same ethic codes.
<b>Main activity</b>	Govern one or more sport discipline.	Deliver sport programs.	Generate competition opportunities.
<b>Examples</b>	National Associations, Federations, National Organizations, Olympic associations/committees.	Clubs, community centres, fitness centres, university sport programs.	Leagues, associations, circuits, tours.

Table 1: Sports organizations structures (Gómez, Opazo, Martí; 2007, 5)

In this thesis, the focus will be on unravelling the section of sport governing bodies, as it is the most relevant for the purpose of understanding the structure of hockey development in Qatar as well as at an international level.

## **4.2 Sport governing bodies**

Being the central type of sports organization with regards to this thesis, it is essential to review the components it is comprised of, as well as their specific functions of the various types of governing bodies. From a general standpoint sport, governing bodies need to fulfill certain tasks and requirements to be defined as effective ones. It is important to be aware that each sport governing body has their own specific values and goals unique to the realistic perception of their abilities and size of the organization. From a general viewpoint, tasks of the sport governing bodies, both internationally and nationally are:

- Forming and upholding the rules and regulations of the sport, and designing a system defining consequences of defying them for individual teams or clubs operating under the governing body
- Promoting the sport to attract new players and increasing popularity amongst spectators
- Organizing international competitions, as well as governing the national team
- Organizing a national league or competitions (tournaments) in their own country

(Sporting Bodies and Organizations, 2016)

There are various types of sport governing bodies, working on different scopes. Some work at a larger scale, governing the sport for multiple countries and setting rules and regulations at a widely international level. Others work at a national level, tailoring rules and regulations, as well as development strategies, to suit their own needs with regards to existing parameters. Mainly the most relevant types of sport governing bodies are:

- **International Sports Federations:** these types of governing bodies are the common leader in their sports disciplines. They provide the rules and regulations to be followed by their international members as well as organize international competitions, such as world championships. They also have the major responsibility of promoting the sport across the world.
- **National Sports Federations:** they have similar tasks to international sports federations, with the difference of applying them within one country. They can for example adjust promotion of the sport to suit their specific population, culture and goals
- **Multi- sport event organizers:** these types of organizations oversee organizing events consisting of more than one sports discipline. The most known example of this is the International Olympic Committee

(Sport and Recreation, 2012)

## 5 Sport governing bodies for ice hockey at international and national levels in Qatar

### 5.1 IIHF

The IIHF is the most essential federation internationally, particularly for nations at the beginning stages of their development. Certain programs need to be put in place for a member of the federation to be able to claim that they are developing. These programs, in general, are: coaching education program, official's education program, and Learn to Play (LTP) programs. Essentially if these programs are in place then the IIHF considers countries to be actively developing the sport.

The IIHF, founded in 1908, has for quite some time been the main organizer of international ice hockey events. They operate several World Championships at several different levels and age groups, as well as some continental competitions (The IIHF, 2016). Currently the IIHF has 77 member associations of which there are three categories:

1. Full member: this consists of nations that have a separate ice hockey association, separate from a winter sports federation, and participate annually to the world championship program
2. Associate member: consists of nations that either do not have fully independent ice hockey associations or have associations, but participate in IIHF championships to a limited extent
3. Affiliate member: consists of nations who only participate in IIHF Inline championships

Currently the IIHF has 54 full members, 21 associate members, and 2 affiliate members (IIHF members, 2016). As mentioned previously, Qatar is currently a full member of the IIHF as of March 2016, (IIHF Congress meeting, 2016). Therefore, they are relatively early in their development process. This membership, however, is a crucial part of developing hockey to the next level locally, as IIHF members receive several benefits and access to educational material. These include the IIHF Equipment Supplier program, which will be discussed later, as well as IIHF Coach and Official's Development Programs (IIHF sports, 2014)

The main two programs that will be addressed in this thesis are the Coach Development program and the IIHF Junior Hockey Development Program, with the main emphasis being on the Learn to Play (LTP) and recruitment programs. These are the most relevant IIHF programs for Qatar at the current state of development. Through use of these materials it has been easier to make plans that not only develop youth hockey, but the sport as a whole in Qatar. (IIHF sports, 2014)

## **5.2 Qatar Olympic Committee**

The main governing body for all major individual and team Olympic sports is the Qatar Olympic Committee (QOC). The QOC was founded on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, 1979, after it was determined that Qatar required some structured organization to support their regional, continental and international athletic. At this point the QOC

was founded to effectively begin a campaign to be able to participate in future Olympic games. The first Olympics that Qatar was a part of were that of Montreal in 1976. They did so as an administrative delegation, therefore not participating with athletes at this point. (QOC history, 2011)

The QOC went on to join international, continental and regional committees to further establish a permanent presence in the field of Olympic sports. In 1980 the QOC was admitted to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in 1981 they entered as a member of the Olympic Council of Asia, and in 1982 they became a member of the Arab Sports Games Federation. At this point the QOC had now become a fully equipped Olympic committee and could focus on developing Qatar to become a competitive member of the Olympic games (About QOC, History, 2011)

The QOC has set specific values and goals that may differ from other Olympic nations around the world. The values of the QOC are:

1.           **Appreciation:** meaning that outstanding performances of both individuals and institutions shall be recognized and rewarded in some form
2.           **Development:** development of teams/athletes by ensuring that the working environment is maintained and continuously developed to suit their needs
3.           **Innovation:** Organizing sports activities and programs, as well as hosting sporting events in new and creative ways
4.           **Quality:** High quality service and provision of high quality sports and recreational sports facilities
5.           **Trust and Accountability:** establishing a trust between leadership and teams, as well as shared responsibility between the QOC and the community

(QOC values, 2011)

In terms of goals, the QOC has set a very ambitious goal that extends itself to 2030:

” To become a leading nation in bringing the world together through sustainable sports development” (QOC website, 2016)



This translates to mean that Qatar as a nation is very much invested in sports development. One major factor in achieving those high-performance goals is cooperation with the world-famous Aspire Academy, which provides the very best and most recent training and testing equipment and facilities, along with a top-of-the-line medical department, focusing on sports-specific medicine. The facilities and staff provided are there to root out talented athletes and nurture that talent to develop them into world-class athletes. Having these facilities available is helpful in attempting to retain a smaller population of athletes and maximize their potential. (Aspire Academy- Our Partners, 2016)

Currently the QOC consists of 25 fully supported federations, ranging from chess to football to weightlifting (Hukoomi, 2016). The ruling royal family of Qatar, the Al-Thani, support the QOC and in fact their current emir, or leader, is from this family. Essentially due to the very good financial status of Qatar as a country, sports development is doing very well, due to significant resources put into it annually. However, despite financial subjects being important in Qatar, the focus here is going to be more about how the QOC fits into the picture in terms of development of the hockey program.

Simply put, since all sports federations, associations and committees are under government support, the QOC is essentially the managing body. They distribute budgets and seek to provide the best possible facilities and staff for their federations to develop. Even though in many levels some federations are at their beginning stages, the ambition for rapid development persists. Goals are set high to provide added motivation for rapid development of teams and maximizing short time frames. (QWSC staff meeting, October 2014)

### **5.3 Qatar Winter Sports Committee**

The Qatar Winter Sports Committee (QWSC) is a division of QOC that is responsible of running all winter sports in Qatar. Currently the QWSC is running ice hockey, short track, and curling. As is evident, Qatar does not currently have a

fully independent ice hockey association or federation, but despite this development is rapid and improvements are made consistently.

As a branch of the QOC, the QWSC is a fairly recently founded committee. It was established in 2014, with full membership with the QOC confirmed on October that same year. It was established as an effort to provide structure, as well as governmental recognition and support for the winter sports activities in Qatar. Previously youth hockey was solely operated by the Qatar Minor Hockey Association (QMIHA), a non-profit organization run by expatriate volunteers. However, since it is primarily targeted at children of expatriates in Qatar, it does not serve to develop hockey at a national level. Essentially what this means is that the QMIHA provides organized hockey for youth, but cannot be counted as representing the state of Qatar as an association (Adel Al-Mutlaq, October 2014).

Subsequently, the QWSC aims to primarily develop local hockey players that could be eligible for future IIHF championship programs, since it is part of QOC, which by extension makes the QWSC a relatively independent committee. The QWSC has several goals to develop winter sports, mainly the following:

- To promote, encourage and support good citizenship and sportsmanship among the athletes, members, and officials of the QWSC
- To develop and provide opportunities for learning, enjoying and participating in the games of amateur ice and inline hockey
- To establish, maintain and promote the level of public interest and awareness to increase participation in amateur ice and inline hockey
- To develop, conduct and supervise effective ice and inline hockey activities; and to coordinate development programs in conjunction with the International Ice Hockey Federation
- To support initiatives to build or improve facilities dedicated to the game of amateur ice and inline hockey

– To recognize, encourage and support the athletes, officials and organizations that contribute to the success of Qatar ice hockey and inline hockey programs

(QWSC, 2015)

Since the QWSC has provided the IIHF with sufficient evidence to prove they have national development plan, they gained associate membership. As mentioned earlier this is very crucial to take steps going to the ultimate goal of participating in the world championship program. And as of 2016 Qatar is now a full member of the IIHF, with development goals having been reached to provide support for that motion on behalf of the IIHF (IIHF annual congress meeting, 2016)

## **6 Project planning and implementation in Qatar**

For one to make a development plan that will be successful, one must first know the current situation and subsequently unveil what you are going to have to work with. Particularly coming from Europe to Qatar, a predominantly Muslim country with several cultural differences and a variety of differences in conditions, it presents its own challenges to the people working to develop the sport. What is to be taken of this is that it is extremely important to first understand some of the cultural nuances of Qatar as a nation and the local residents. Having some background will aid in attaining maximal benefits for all efforts put into development plans for all levels.

For the purpose of clarification, it is essential to have a timetable of sorts to track the progress of the development plan itself. The following table is a detailed schedule on what was done and when it was done, focusing on the 2014-2015 season when the program was initiated:<sup>7</sup>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>October 2014</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- first steps to get familiar with current situation</li> <li>- player skills evaluation through game oriented practices</li> <li>- planning the season (tournaments, camps, outline of season)</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>November 2014</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formulating a plan to divide groups according to skill levels</li> <li>- planning equipment needs for junior teams</li> <li>- initiating IIHF coach education seminars (16.-20.11.)</li> <li>- generating a plan for school recruitment program (contacting Ministry of Education through QWSC)</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>December 2014</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- youth hockey camp in Doha (27.-29.12.) → incorporating coaching education participants as assistant coaches</li> <li>- evaluation of LTP coaches and providing feedback from coaching instructors</li> <li>- determining individual development needs for junior players through more extensive evaluation</li> <li>- seeking cooperation with QMIHA to attempt to organize a” league” or regular games for juniors</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>January 2015</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- participating in first ever junior tournament with U15 team in Doha (22.-24.1.)</li> <li>→ teaching in-game skills; learning to play as a team and adhere to rules</li> <li>- entering the pool for tournaments organized by GCC countries for junior teams (U12, U15)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- organizing 2<sup>nd</sup> coaching seminar for LTP coaches</li> </ul>
February 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- initiating school recruitment program for U10 recruitment → presenting to Newton British Academy in Doha</li> <li>- running morning ice sessions for school kids under the age of 10 on a weekly basis for recruitment purposes</li> </ul>
March 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- resuming school recruitment sessions</li> <li>- running practices for divided skill groups serving their individual needs</li> <li>- continuing progress and promotion of players from recruitment/ Learn to Skate into junior hockey program → handing out full equipment for newly initiated players</li> <li>- preparing eligible junior candidates for Youth Olympics Skills Challenge camp in Vierumäki (held in July 2015)</li> <li>- Participating in U15 tournament in Abu Dhabi → evaluation of progress for junior team</li> </ul>
April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- continuing qualification of YOG Skills Challenge participants to determine finalists → finals for Qatar national stage</li> </ul>
May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluation of season → re-evaluating players individually and quality of practices simultaneously</li> <li>- setting new goals for the next season</li> <li>- naming participants to be included in IIHF Hockey Development Camp in July 2015</li> </ul>
June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ramadan → less practices at lower intensity, reviewing the season with the players and coaches</li> <li>- meetings with administration to include more junior tournaments for next season to develop in playing the</li> </ul>

Table 2: Youth hockey development plan timeline (Qatar Winter Sports Committee)

## **6.1 Background and statistics of Qatar**

First and foremost, as can be expected, hockey is not a relatively dominant sport in the Middle-East area in general, if compared to for instance Europe or North America. One of the main reasons can be rooted down to the fact that the weather conditions are warm and hockey can only be played indoors, whereas team sports such as football, basketball and for instance handball can be played practically year-round. This places hockey at a major disadvantage, in addition to the fact that it is a relatively unknown sport.

One key factor to be considered when coming in to develop youth hockey is the fact that Qatar not only has a relatively small population, but also the percentage of people that are Qatari is small as well. The estimated total population of Qatar is slightly over 2,2 million, of which Qatari nationals constitute roughly 278,000. This means that of the total population of Qatar, only around 12 percent hold a Qatar nationality (BQ news, 2014). It can be assumed, logically, that kids between the ages of 6 and 15 years old is only a fraction of this. In comparison, Finland has close to 76,000 people who are playing hockey, with closer to 40,000 who are juniors players. In this light one must recognize that the possibility of having a significant amount of hockey players in Qatar is an unrealistic goal to set in the beginning. (IIHF statistics, 2014)

## **6.2 Factors influencing formation of development plan**

Before any plan is made, it the variable factors that are specific to Qatar must be considered. This means identifying what is already set in place, what are the strengths and limitations that need to be considered to provide a realistic plan. As mentioned previously, hockey is a relatively minor sport in Qatar compared to

countries with optimal conditions and a significant number of players. This in and of itself is a major influencing factor before a plan can be conceived.

As of October, 2014, the QWSC sponsored one junior team, consisting of roughly 20-25 players, and the senior national team. These teams were primarily comprised of Qatari nationals and subsequently filled up with players of Arabic descent, either born in Qatar or simply living in Qatar. The idea behind this was for the QWSC to be the sole proprietor and sponsor for development of local players. This was somewhat of a measure to share responsibility of youth hockey development with QMIHA, run by and consisting mainly of expatriates, mostly from Canada and European countries. (QWSC meetings, October 2014)

Expatriates play a big role in hockey across Asian countries. They provide organized leagues and sheer numbers with their players. However, one of the persisting issues is that expats, especially in Qatar, only stay in the country if they are employed. By extension, their children arrive and depart with them. To provide sustainable development, the QWSC must cooperate with the expats, but have a main focus on finding and nurturing local talent. When making the decision to not initially include expats in the QWSC sponsored junior team, they provided a platform from where the coaching staff worked to form a formidable youth hockey development program with more sustainable results.

Another factor that must be considered is that the number of players that are of Arabic players was and is still very small compared to other countries with a more established system and simply, a bigger number of children. As Qatar is a small country, it cannot realistically expect to have a junior league with A, AA, and AAA-levels in each of the major age groups, such as U9, U12 and U15. This limits and slows down development in one sense, but then again it makes it easier to focus on smaller variables and have a more concise plan for that small number of players. This smaller scale of hockey provides an inexperienced country, in terms of hockey development, the time and scale that they can handle without having to deal with a copious number of clubs with their own particular challenges. So essentially it can

be considered a limitation but also a strength if one is to perceive this side of the argument.

In terms of facilities, this presents one of the biggest limitations for hockey development in general at a national level. Currently there are two active ice rinks in Qatar, both in located within malls; one is in City Center mall, and the other in Villaggio Mall. The one in Villaggio is currently the only Olympic- sized rink in the entire country. City Center uses its ice surface almost solely for public skating, meaning that all hockey in Qatar is run at Villaggio Mall, in the Gondolania Ice Arena. Both ice rinks require to be rented to receive ice time.

The problem arises with the amount of activities occurring at the rink. Currently these are the activities run by the Villaggio Mall ice rink:

- Gondolania Flying Camels figure skating team
- QMIHA U9, U12, U15, and U18 ice hockey practices and games
- Qatar national short track and curling teams
- Qatar International Ice Hockey League (QIIHL) A- and B- division games
- Qatar national men's ice hockey team
- Qatar national junior team; Learn to Skate, U9, U12 and U15 age groups
- public skating sessions for all

(Gondolania Ice Arena, 2016)

As can be seen, the number of groups that have use of the rink is fairly large considering that most of the programs can only operate during after- school hours. Essentially it cuts down the amount of ice to a maximum of 2 times per week for most groups, excluding games and other competitive events.



However, there is one major factor that has a positive impact particularly for beginners in the sport: ice hockey is free of charge for all players. The Qatar Winter Sports Committee, through the Olympic Committee, takes sole responsibility of paying for ice times; in addition, when travelling to tournaments, the QWSC provides travel and accommodation without any costs to the players (QWSC administration, October 2014). This is a key factor in providing sustainable development, as it lowers the bar to participate without having to think about the costs. In contrast, in countries like Finland parents pay for ice times and partake in travel and accommodation costs in the event of tournaments and regular season games.

The element that sets Qatar apart, despite all the limitations, is the fact that as an organization, the QWSC possesses resources to support growth in a maximal capacity. As a country, Qatar is wealthy and since they want to be primarily an advocate of sports tourism, the QOC and its divisions receive a significant amount of resources to ensure that all the elements for effective sports development are in place. This makes it easier to attempt to think big and be very ambitious when making plans for development at all levels. An example of how much is invested in sports in general is the establishment of the Aspire Academy, which is currently the world's biggest indoor facility, including top level coaches and equipment. No expenses are spared in Qatar when sports development is in question.

### **6.3 Setting Objectives and Implementation of plans**

Taking the factors that have influence regarding the formation of a development plan, the first step was to set realistic goals for youth hockey development. At this stage, it was just taking in all the factors possible and attempt to set goals that were tangible, but also ambitious and promoting a rapid but sustainable development of the youth programs.

Essentially to provide sustainability, the focus should be on development of locals, since, as mentioned before, expatriates come and go. Therefore, relying solely on

them is ill advised, as the success of the program would be highly dependent on the numbers they can provide. Same applies to the coaching staff. In order to generate an environment of sustainability, some of the responsibility should be shared with local people to make sure development continues even after they depart.

With these in mind the plan and goal was to provide a solid recruitment and coaching development programs. In both instances, the IIHF has plenty of material to help a country in their novice stage of development. From there it is only a matter of executing and scheduling the plans.

#### **6.4 Recruitment program**

First and foremost, it was sought to make sure that there is a solid recruitment program in place. As previously there had been only one coach handling everything on his own, the coaching staff increased by two in October of 2014. This made it easier to seek solutions as well as run the practices for kids.

Before unveiling and assessing the program at its beginning, it is significant to bring about the fact that due to their previous IIHF associate membership, Qatar was able to receive full hockey equipment for players starting out to play hockey. This is based on the IIHF Equipment Supplier Program, which provides nations, who have limited access to hockey gear, a starter pack. Particularly in Qatar it is greatly needed, as there currently is no store that sells hockey equipment of any kind in the entire country. This means that if players are to buy their own equipment, they would have to ship it from abroad, thus increasing the cost of participating.

There was a solid Learn to Skate program in place. In fact, pretty much all the junior players, regardless of whether or not they had ice hockey equipment, were doing only skating drills. As the number of coaches starting from the end of 2014 was increased to make a total of three, it brought about the possibility to engage in a more complex structure in practices. The plan was that in a very short period of time the players were to be divided into various groups that match their skill levels. This means that drills and the amount of challenge they provide is matching the

skill level of each group, thus enhancing overall productivity and individual development of athletes.

In terms of recruitment, the previous scheme had been working, but lacked organization in terms of the ages of the new recruits. As a goal for recruitment, the main emphasis was finding and gearing up as many children that belong to the 10 and under age group. In other, words it was decided that the best way to go if we were to provide sustainable growth was to mainly focus on having organized, properly planned and structured practices from an early age, along with teaching life skills specific to hockey players (discipline, hard work ethic, teamwork, respect, to name but a few).

## **6.5 Recruitment methods**

In terms of methods for recruiting children, there are two main avenues: one informal and one more formal. The fact of the matter in Qatar is that to recruit actively and efficiently, one must have a plan but also be ready to improvise and expand their horizon. Instead of the coaches and QWSC as an organization being solely responsible for recruitment, it was deemed valuable to utilize the players already in the junior hockey program to seek out and invite talent as well. The reason behind this is that they know what will be expected and have the ability to identify individuals who might be interested in registering for ice hockey. Also, they possess similar cultural values and in addition, meaning it is the best type of marketing for the sport in general.

The more informal method is scouting and recruiting kids from public skating sessions, and having the players already enrolled in the QWSC junior program to spread the word to their friends. The coaches try to specify to the players that mostly under the age of 12 are the primary preference for new recruits. However, if there is an individual belonging to the U15 age group, but displays proficiency in skating technique, exceptions will be made to recruit and teach them hockey-specific skills. The reason for actively informing players to find more kids to join is to be able for potential recruits to witness the excitement and passion that the

junior players and skaters have for ice hockey. Essentially it is a valuable indirect marketing tool.

The more formal and organized method is operated through the QWSC. This is recruitment through schools. As a government entity, the QWSC can inquire from local schools if their coaches may present their sports disciplines in detail. Through this method, the QWSC can target specific age groups to present to, depending on where the need is highest. The coaches go to schools and present what hockey is in a manner that incites excitement and anticipation to take part in activities.

As a follow-up for presentations, the classes are invited to participate in a morning skating session run by the QWSC coaches. The basic scheme is to have anywhere from 20 to 50 kids on the ice simultaneously and provide them with drills and instructions for the duration of around an hour or so. Coaches identify potential recruits based on the skating abilities they display, ability to listen to instruction, age, and finally as a minor factor, their nationality, as mandated by the QWSC.

The future plans include separating recruits as their own group and begin running a skating school, in order to really provide them with full time focus from coaches in a highly-structured environment. This would be the official Learn to Skate on behalf of the QWSC. This would provide coaches and players with more time and opportunity to try more things on the ice simultaneously, therefore maximizing the on-ice efforts and preparing players for transition into the junior program.

## **6.6 Junior hockey structure**

To have a clear sustainable continuity, the junior team required a significant reconstruction in terms of organization of practices and the team in general. As an example, back in 2014 the junior team consisted roughly of a total of 20-25 kids of various ages all skating. This was due to lack of a full coaching staff, as there was only one coach actively teaching the kids fundamental skating techniques.

After addition of two more coaches in October, 2014, and discussions amongst coaches and administration regarding how the junior program is to be run, it properly kick started the development process heading towards the right direction. Kids were divided into groups based primarily by age and skill level. Practices were based on individual skill drills in a station format, and tailored differently depending on what group was at that station (more challenging for older kids, and simplified and fun for younger kids) Essentially the process of progression for hockey players is currently as follows:

Recruitment → Learn to Skate → U9/U10 → U12 → U15 → National team

The reason for the jump from U15 to national team is that the core of the national team is around the 18 or 20 and under age groups. Essentially the idea is to use the junior development program as a feeder program to build up the national team. It is a project that was estimated to last quite some time, but after the first transitions from junior to seniors, it may gap the bridge between those two programs.

What is currently missing, and would be a valid option to further reduce the gaps between age groups, is forming a team for a U18 age group. This would still be considered a junior team that can compete both nationally and internationally against teams consisting of players matching their age. This would be better as currently Qatar's U18 aged players play against adults, and there are not enough players to have an under 18 team yet. But this is a suggestion for future references years from the current point.

In retrospect, the junior program has been relatively successful; currently there are nearly double the amount of kids in the program compared to end of 2014. The efforts taken have successfully been able to build solid U12 and U15 teams that have already had some game experience in and outside of Qatar. This will be further discussed shortly.

## **6.7 QWSC cooperation with QMIHA**

As there are currently only around 40 children taking part in the junior program, split into three separate age groups, the QWSC does not have sole governance of

hockey in Qatar. At a national level, the majority of junior hockey operations is run by the QMIHA, due to the fact that they include all expats, in contrast to the QWSC method of seeking mainly kids born and raised in Qatar. (QMIHA, 2016)

Previously there has been little or no cooperation between the programs, due to differences in opinion, but as of recently the cooperation has become one of the more central characteristics and important pieces for junior development in Qatar. The reason of the importance of having support at a local level is that there currently is no organized junior league in Qatar run by the QWSC. In terms of playing games, the QMIHA junior teams (Qatar Raiders) are currently the only options in Qatar.

The junior team played its first U15 tournament in January of 2015, organized by QMIHA, and including teams from Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Saudi Arabia. This tournament marked the first ever game for the QWSC junior hockey program. From there on there have been several games and tournaments but still nothing regular. Exhibition games have been organized every once in a while, for the Qatar nationals' U12 and U15 teams against the Raiders, which is a huge step forward considering that by the end of 2014 there was virtually no cooperation at all between the two organizations.

## **6.8 Cooperation with GCC Countries**

The GCC abbreviation refers to the Gulf Cooperation Council. The member states are Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates (Wikipedia, 2015). Why this is important is that all of these countries have hockey activities within them, to varying degrees. These countries are all located within the Persian Gulf which means that travel distances are relatively short (IIHF members, 2016).

The most advanced of the GCC countries in terms of junior hockey development is the United Arab Emirates, more commonly referred to as UAE. They have a variety of age groups and independent rinks under their skating federations. This

grants them opportunities to host and organize junior hockey tournaments for all GCC countries, as well as for international championships.

As of the 2015/16 season, Qatar juniors were included in the mailing list to receive invitations for tournaments around the GCC area for U9, U12 and U15 age groups. This has proved to be a valuable source for somewhat regular games, as the juniors still lack regular games to apply learned skills from practices. But slowly there has been an increase in the amount of games and the plan is to continue to participate in these regional tournaments to gain more experience.

## **6.9 IIHF coaching education program**

To support the possibility of increasing numbers of youth hockey players, as well as continuing the objective to provide a sustainable environment for development, it was essential to provide some locals education of the basics of coaching. For this, selected players from the Qatar national team were to receive an education to start them off as coaches for the youth hockey program.

The coaching education program was provided and sponsored by the IIHF; it is the Learn to Play Coach Development program. There have currently been four seminars held in Qatar, run by national team head coach Marius Gliga, and supervised by Mr. Harald Springfeld from the IIHF in the beginning. The first of the four was held from November 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014. This was the LTP initiation course held for 6 Qatar national team players specifically selected by the coaching staff to best represent and continue development in this field. All the material, including binders and presentations, were provided through the IIHF Coach Development Program. It was the Introduction to Coaching segment of LTP coaching education.

The aim of this seminar was to provide a relatively basic understanding of coaching, specifically coaching children and teaching fundamental skills.

Furthermore, we also provided the coaching prospects with information about what it means to be a coach, some of them including:

- how to and why operate a Learn to Play program
- how to provide feedback to beginners
- basic teaching skills
- how to organize practices and games
- how to teach skills at a basic level (skating, stickhandling, shooting, passing)
- how to be a good leader

Mainly these fundamental skills were essential for the players to learn what coaching in a development program entails from coaches. With this information, the players took part in junior practices regularly to apply the learned knowledge, under supervision of the QWSC coaching staff. The coaches observed, evaluated and discussed the LTP coaches' actions on and off the ice to provide them with tools for developing as coaches and learn to evaluate themselves.

The second stage of the LTP coaching seminars was held on January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015. This was based on the IIHF scheme of Level 1 in coaching education. It elaborates on teaching fundamental skills to players, mainly shooting, passing, skating and stickhandling. Furthermore, it goes more in detail with the fine skills required of coaches to execute. Some of the prevailing topics included the following:

- communication skills
- role of the coach
- teaching techniques
- introduction to individual offensive and defensive tactics
- practice planning
- safety and risk management



The subsequent seminars moved on to Level 1 coaching, as officially recognized and provided by the IIHF. In level 1 coaching seminars (held on August 27<sup>th</sup> 2016 and October 24<sup>th</sup> 2016) the coaching candidates are demanded to delve deeper into the technical aspects of hockey and organization. The presentations themselves provide extensive details on how to teach specific parts of individual and team skills. Also in addition they describe various other aspects to be considered when beginning as a coach, and how to compose yourself in various situations. The amount of detail is supported with another binder filled with pointers and a drill bank to be applied when it is time for the practical part of education, which an essential component in the coaching education program.

This is a continuous educational program to provide the current LTP coaches more elaborate information to make them more responsible and independent as they learn. The demands will be higher from the official coaching staff and they are forced to think and plan for themselves, thus reinforcing their development on the path to becoming certified coaches.

## **7 Evaluation of development plan**

In terms of viewing the development of youth hockey in Qatar, there has been significant progress in only one year. However, as well as there being several significant advancements and improvements in both structure and execution, there are still plenty of things that can be improved. Some of these can be controlled by the coaching staff and administration with minor adjustments to strategy, and now, having the experience of working in Qatar for a few years, there can make more realistic goals when formulating a plan for hockey development. Other things require government support and this is oftentimes a bit harder due to the miniscule role of the QWSC in the QOC.

## 7.1 Facilities

As mentioned before, the need for proper, independent ice hockey facilities is dire if there is to be a growing base for youth players. This is simply needed because currently the youth development program can only accommodate a maximum of 50 players during the 2 hours per week used for junior hockey. The issue of having players with ranging ages and skills will be further discussed shortly.

The main existing problem with the facilities currently is that there is only one Olympic- size rink in Qatar. As previously mentioned, the groups utilizing the rink are many, all of which share the same ice, thus disabling being able to add ice time. As is evident, this poses the majority of the problems if this program is to grow into a formidable youth development program. The current structure works just fine as practice plans have been adjusted according to age and skill groups, which has maximized the efforts at least on the ice. So as far as that goes, the time is used more efficiently, enabling all players to develop with relation to their skill levels.

The solution for this problem is a simple one, but accomplishing it requires a significant amount of resources and support from upper management both in the QOC and the Qatari government. To get to the next level and begin to develop players as their specific age groups, the main requirement would be the construction of a rink that is essentially managed by the QOC and dedicated to the QWSC for their developmental purposes. This involves a lot of politics, which will not be discussed elaborately. Essentially the QWSC as an organization is required to provide reasons and plans indicating that they genuinely require an independent facility for our operations in order to gain approval from the upper management.

However, the problem in Qatar, as in practically every country, is that it requires a lot of people at different positions in governmental bodies to support the motion. Therefore, if this were to actually happen, it may take years to gain full approval to go through with. What makes this more challenging is that the Qatar government is deeply invested in preparing the stage for the FIFA 2022 Football World Cup. As can be expected, before the World Cup takes place, there will be little other sports

facility investment from the government. So, for the time being the QWSC are to work with what they get and make sure all the pieces are in place to maximize efficiency to achieve their more ambitious goals.

## **7.2 Evaluation of recruitment program**

In terms of recruitment, there are a lot of things that have been set and overall it works with the smaller scale currently being worked with. The QWSC has managed to make recruitment processing to target kids under the age of 10 primarily. This was done because back in 2014 they were lacking in younger children playing hockey. A majority of the team were slightly older and the little kids they did have came and went without full commitment to the sport. In order to make sure they could not only recruit, but also retain the under 10 age group, the QWSC had to make sure their recruitment strategy was as effective in order to attract them to hockey.

The school recruitment program was hugely successful in ways, but also lacking in certain regards. In terms of success, there was several morning sessions consisting of anywhere between 20 to 50 kids on the ice instructed by professional coaches. This enabled promotion of the sport and selection of individuals that were identified as people who might be easier to retain and get interested in becoming a permanent member of the team. Previously, kids were simply handed their gear and over time, a significant amount of them stopped coming to practices. Now there were proper presentations of hockey before the sessions, as well as a more solid structure of progression of juniors (Appendix 1). Currently there is a much younger core group, which went exactly according to the plan. A clear majority of the players are under 12 years of age, which is optimal to learn basic skills and individual tactics.

The reason behind this perhaps lies in the miscommunication between the coaches and administration. The issue is that the QWSC wants to primarily select Qatari nationals for their junior team, which is understandable to a certain extent, as it

technically is a national association. However, the unfortunate truth is, as mentioned previously, is that Qatari nationals are sparse in Qatar. And since hockey is a rather insignificant and unknown sport in the country, most of the kids go to football and basketball clubs instead.

Therefore, to genuinely grow the junior hockey population, but still have certain limitations, we must open hockey for all players born and raised in Qatar. This will open more opportunities for increase in numbers and possibility of the formation of several junior teams, and as a final goal, a junior league run by the QOC or QWSC. This would serve as a developmental league for the junior players. Here are some suggested requirements to begin to form a junior league in a single age group:

- at least 3 to 4 teams (10-15 players + 1 goalie per team)
- coaches for each team for games → using LTP coaches for an added learning experience for coaching education
- practices and games for all teams scheduled → more ice time
- operational executive for parents to contact, off-ice officials
- rules and regulations manual
- equipment (jerseys, goalie gear, etc.)

These are only some of the minimum requirements to begin forming a junior league. At a later stage comes things such as league websites, organization of tournaments, rewarding protocols and so forth. This plan requires a facility that can accommodate practices and games for these 4 teams throughout the week. With the current facility situation, it is impossible to execute this plan. But if this suggestion would be part of a development plan provided to governmental entities, it might provide a solid and reasonable argument as to why Qatar should have an ice rink for their Olympic ice sports.

### 7.3 Coaching education evaluation

In terms of coaching education for the national team players, the idea and initial plan was well structured and very particular. However, though it may have proved a significant asset to have more assistance with junior practices and games, it also has had its own problems. The problems revolve around the concept of consistency, both in the program itself and the coaching prospects.

The material presented in the seminars held was sufficient and slightly modified to be customized with the Qatari culture and mannerisms of the particular junior groups. Due to a similar cultural background, the LTP coaches have had an easy time addressing players and using their native tongue to elaborate and translate central concepts for them. Furthermore, since they are all players in the men's national team, they are respected by juniors aspiring to be in their position as players. This has provided an added motivation for players to work hard and develop their skills.

There have been some issues that require immediate addressing, both somewhat connected to each other. Firstly, due to various school, work or motivation related issues, some of the coaches are inconsistent in their appearances to help and coach the kids. Consequently, organization of further seminars has been deemed redundant, as coaches are required to have a certain amount of practical application of learned material to move to the more advanced courses. If this trend were to continue, the sustainability of the coaching program might dwindle, which would set Qatar youth hockey development in a stagnant state.

In order to tackle the issues, one option is to provide some rewarding incentive for the coaches in order to keep them motivated and willing to learn more. This incentive could take the form of some sort of allowance issued for coaches participating in a predetermined amount of practices per month. So, if a coach appears to practices, they will receive financial compensation for their efforts. Alternatively, the responsibility of the LTP coaches could be increased in terms of

practice planning and having them take charge in order have more ownership of the youth development. This might be a good option as currently coaches are assigned stations and occasionally plan them, but a QWSC coach is essentially running the entire practice. If LTP coaches would run some practices, they might feel more obligated to show up. The QWSC coaches can assign one coach each week who will take charge.

## **8 Discussion**

Within the span of a few years, there has been massive development in youth hockey in Qatar. There are more players and a stronger division in age groups, and practices are organized and consist of efficient time management to maximize skills development.

Furthermore, the addition of a coaching education program has provided a possibility for sustainability. The kids rely on what their countrymates teach them as well as expatriate coaches. This provides hope that if expatriate coaches were to move on to other ventures, there would still be a core coaching group remaining to provide support for youth hockey development.

As a country with a significant amount of resources put to sports, Qatar has the potential for very rapid development in junior sports in general, as they can provide low cost activities and, if they could receive a dedicated ice rink, would be able to dictate their entire schedule. Also, international tournaments for clubs mainly based in Asia is not a major issue. In order to fully tap into that potential, the QWSC must get past the bureaucracy and establish themselves as a well governed committee.

Since the IIHF mandated coaching education and Learn to Play programs have been set in place, Qatar in terms of hockey development has taken some major steps forward in a relatively short period of time. In conclusion, youth hockey development in Qatar is far from being advanced, but it has laid a solid foundation on which to build on. This in itself is a major accomplishment and the only way is forward.

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## Attachment 1: Development plan Manual



# **Qatar Youth Hockey Development Plan Manual: Qatar Winter Sports Committee**

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# 1. Introduction

As Qatar has taken its first steps towards becoming an organized entity in terms of hockey, it is only relevant that they have a structured plan for sustainable development for ice hockey to continue its growth in the country. The future is in the youth, so it is only expected that there is a specific plan to develop in that discipline

Therefore, the we have created a development manual specific to ice hockey and its status in Qatar. The aim is to provide information of what has been done and what is to be done in the future. The goals for development are ambitious as we are governing under the Qatar Olympic Committee.

Resources are not an issue as the Qatar Olympic Committee is trying to achieve success particularly in the field of sports, subsequently having massive governmental support for sports development at a national level. Though ice hockey is a relatively small sport, we have a good supportive structure to help us keep building and provide the players with an organized environment where they may grow. One indication of how resources make development in Qatar is that equipment is provided by the Qatar Winter Sports Committee (QWSC) as well as ice time being free of charge for all players.

## 2. Objectives of Qatar Ice Hockey Program

The main objectives of this plan are:

- recruitment of new junior players
- to promote and grow the sport of ice hockey in Qatar
- provide structured practices to enhance skills development for ice hockey free of charge
- teach children life skills through participation in team sports

## **2.1. Vision and Mission of Qatar Winter Sports Committee**

### **Vision of Qatar Ice Hockey Federation**

To build a successful ice hockey program to reach the goal of participation in World Championship Program and to provide the venue for future world championships.

### **Mission Statement**

- To promote, encourage and support good citizenship and sportsmanship among the athletes, members, officials of the Qatar Ice Hockey Federation (QIHF);
- To develop and provide opportunities for learning, enjoying and participating in the games of amateur ice hockey;
- To establish, maintain and promote the level of public interest and awareness to increase participation in amateur ice;
- To develop, conduct and supervise effective ice activities and to coordinate development programs in conjunction with the Qatar Olympic Committee and the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF);
- To support initiatives to build or improve facilities dedicated to the game of amateur ice; and to recognize, encourage and support the athletes, officials and organizations that contribute to the success of Qatar Ice Hockey programs.

### **Values**

Qatar Ice Hockey Federation believes...

- In building the future of Qatar Hockey around the values of respect, responsibility, accountability, sacrifice for each other and selflessness.
- That all youth who wish to learn the skills of hockey should have the opportunity to do so, within the limitations of available facilities, financial restrictions and available coaches.

- In providing an environment in which Qatar residence can learn hockey skills, play at a level consistent with their aspirations, learn good sportsmanship and develop into young men and women that their parents and our country can be proud of.
- In a hockey program that will develop a player's character, as much as their hockey skills and life skills.

## **2.2. Structure and aims of junior hockey programs**

QATAR HOCKEY program is designed for all levels of players from Learn to Skate 10 years old below to National Team Development. From ages Under 10 years old, Junior Ice Hockey Development, to Senior Ice Hockey National Team Development. Qatar Ice Hockey Federation will offer Learn to Skate Programs to recruit players in the Junior Program. After finishing LTS, youth players have a choice to move up in QWSC programs which in our pathway, Learn to Play Hockey for 10 years old and younger. In the 12 to 16 age group, the QATAR HOCKEY will provide high performance training that encompasses everything needed for young aspiring junior hockey players to progress in higher levels. From Junior Program, 16 years and over will have the opportunity to participate in High Performance Training with the National Development Team. Qatar Ice Hockey Federation Athlete's Pathway

- **Learn to Skate**
- **Learn to Play**
- **Junior Ice Hockey Development**
- **National Ice Hockey Development**



## **LEARN TO SKATE (Ages 5 - 10)**

The Learn to Skate or Initiation program is an introduction to the basic skating skills with learning focused in a fun environment. With focus being on individual skating skills and development and the ability to understand instructions, the Learn to Skate program provides a unique experience and sports activity for all youth of Qatar.

### *Requirements:*

- Basic Skating Ability
- Skate and Helmet
- 5 – 10 Years Old
- Open to: Qataris and non-Qataris, Male and Female

Required ice time: 1 hour ice time per day

## **LEARN TO PLAY (Ages 10 and over)**

Learn to Play is focused on the FUNdamentals. Training emphasis is more on games and having fun while learning the basic skills needed to play ice hockey.

### *Requirements:*

- Basic Skating Ability
- Full Hockey Equipment
- Open to: Qataris and Non-Qataris; Male and Female

### *Program Highlights*

- Skating Instruction focused on:
- Technique
- Agility
- Acceleration

- Transition Skating
- Starts and Stops
  
- Skill Instruction focused on:
- Puck Control
- Shooting
- Passing and Receiving

*Off – Ice Program*

- Off-Ice Training to complement on- ice performance

Ice Time: 1 Hour/Day

Off – Ice: 30 min./Day

Players will play in their respective age groups, or in line with their individual abilities, so that each player has opportunity to develop rapidly by receiving full attention from coaches/instructors through station based practice.

Players will receive training and instruction in the FUNdamentals and application of techniques in game situations from instructors. In addition to the daily ice time, students participate in an extensive off – ice program which focuses on core strength training, cross – sport training, and plyometrics specifically designed for the needs of young hockey players.

### **3. Methods of promotion**

The following steps were considered during the marketing phase of recruitment organization:

- making general plan, setting goals, and considering tasks to be completed to reach those goals
- figure out the materials necessary to complete individual tasks
- evaluate performance and consider what is required to improve efficiency and quality of marketing, as well as considering the positive action

#### **3.1 School recruitment**

- Contact local schools to promote sport through presentations
- Organize skating sessions as follow up for presentations
- Distribute IIHF brochures to provide a simple explanation of requirements of ice hockey to parents and kids
- recruit kids showing prominence in skating ability to ice hockey, and those that need skating lessons will be enrolled in the Learn to Skate Program

#### **3.2 Public skating recruitment**

- More informal method of recruitment
- use of LTP coaches and existing junior players to recruit new kids to join the hockey programmer
- focus group: kids aged 12 and under and of Arabic descent (especially Qatari nationals)
- handing out brochures to provide understanding of the sport

## 4. Equipment support program

The QWSC has been granted IIHF equipment support as an associate member. In addition to that, they have also purchased new equipment to make sure that all possible recruits have a full set of gear once they enroll to the hockey program.

Full set of gear provided by the QWSC includes:

- helmet with cage
- hockey gloves
- shoulder, elbow and shin pads
- neck guards
- one hockey stick
- hockey skates
- hockey socks and practice jerseys
- jock shorts

All the equipment is held in the QWSC storage and will be registered to a player if the coaches deem them to be ready to participate in hockey practices. To do that, players need to pass their skating test, thus graduating from the Learn to Skate program.

## 5. LTP coaching education program

To ensure sustainable development of hockey, the QWSC has run the IIHF mandated coaching education program for local national team players. They participate in junior practices as assistant coaches for the QWSC coaches. Their job is to aid in running practices, simultaneously practicing what they have learned from coaching seminars.

There have been two seminars held in Qatar for the coaching prospects. The first seminar covered the following topics:

- how to and why operate a Learn to Play program
- how to provide feedback to beginners
- basic teaching skills
- how to organize practices and games
- how to teach skills at a basic level (skating, stickhandling, shooting, passing)
- how to be a good leader and what is a leader

Following up on these topics, and after practical application of these components, we moved on to more specific topics to enhance the LTP coaches' knowledge and enable more elaborate practical applications. The topics are:

- communication skills
- role of the coach
- teaching techniques
- introduction to individual offensive and defensive tactics
- practice planning
- safety and risk management

## 6. Practice structure

The following steps were taken in the practice planning process:

- identify the objectives for the practice
- after finding out about the number of participants, adjust practice plan to be efficient for the number of participants (consider age and skill levels)
- considering time allotted, plan a practice that includes skills practice but not forgetting the element of FUN
- evaluate how children respond to practices and make necessary adjustments

### 6.1 Practice Example for 60 min

- **18:00-18:05 → free skating without pucks**
- **18:05-18:45 min → 4x8 min station- based practices (skating, shooting, passing, puck control) focusing on individual tactics**
- **18:45-19:00 → small area games applying learned skills from the stations → for example 3vs3 with breakouts from behind the net made mandatory, or 3vs3 with scoring allowed only after making three successful passes**

The group were divided in four based on skill level and age/size of children to make sure each group had kids of matching abilities. The aim of the practice was to provide repetitions of movement patterns, as the children were essentially beginners for the most part. To counter the structured and highly controlled organization of the stations, we decided to add small area games to provide a less controlled type of practice to enable creativity while still adhering to rules and with specific learning purposes.