



England Hockey Schools Communication – Junior Competition 2009/10

England Hockey would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who attended the constructive and informative meeting at Bisham Abbey on the 23rd June 2009. We appreciate that many of you travelled at short notice to attend this meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss changes to the Junior Competition programme and listen to the challenges you have with implementing these changes in your schools. In addition to those that attended the meeting we also received feedback from schools and individuals giving us their views on this area of the System that weren't at the meeting

There were a number of wide ranging points made during the evening however we collectively agreed to focus on the following key points and provide a response back to you all by Friday 3rd July.

- Two term hockey is not practical
- Reinstatement of the U14 National Cup
- Flexibility on weekday and weekend competition dates
- Flexibility on players playing in more than one age group

Since last week's meeting we have spent a considerable amount of time carefully reviewing the key points, revisited the rationale behind the Junior Competition decisions, analysed the evidence, rational and consultation that led to the development of the Single System principles and subsequent introduction of the System following England Hockey Board approval in July 2006. In addition to this we have looked carefully at the long term impact any potential changes could have ultimately on the players and the overall integrity of the System. As a result of this we have come to a number of decisions for the 2009/2010 season only. They are as follows:

Key Point	Single System Principle	Decision
Schools cannot play hockey in two terms as this conflicts with other sports and practical issues around staff and facility capacity	A structured season focused on two periods of Preparation, Competition and Rest. (2 cycles of double periodisation) The Centralised Calendar is the mechanism by which we ensure	For 2009/2010 season we will postpone the delivery of the schools competitions across the two competition periods. With the agreement of County and Regional organisers there will be



	<p>all competition is run in the two designated competition phases. This drives the periodisation cycles and critically reduces the conflict for players.</p>	<p>flexibility for schools that can only play during their one major hockey playing term.</p> <p>However no County or Region will be able to plan competition dates that conflict directly with any Single System activity, as published in the Centralised Calendar.</p> <p>All Counties and Regions should follow the published competition formats as outlined in the Centralised Calendar and Competitions Framework published in May 2009.</p> <p>England Hockey will work with the County and Regional organisers to agree play by dates for the different rounds competitions</p>
<p>Schools felt strongly that the U14 Cup should go to a National Final and not stop at Regional level. Strong feel that players will go to other sports if they can't progress into a National final</p>	<p>Single System principles identify the need for different age groups to take part in appropriate levels of competition. U14 is the first full season of 11 a-side hockey and a national competition is not considered appropriate for this stage of development.</p> <p>The U12 (clubs) and U13 (schools) national competitions are not considered to be inconsistent as they form the pinnacle of the 7 a-side version of the sport</p>	<p>For 2009/2010 season there will be a National Final for the U14 Schools' competition.</p> <p>Dates for the National Rounds will be circulated by Friday 10th July 2009.</p>



<p>Player eligibility – not allowing players to play in two age groups in the same competition disadvantages the smaller schools. Age groups need to be more flexible to allow players to play</p>	<p>To prevent the over playing of young talented players.</p>	<p>This decision remains for 2009/10 Players are not able to play in more than one age group for each competition</p>
<p>Insisting that schools compete midweek is a problem in getting players released for the number of competitions they may enter.</p>	<p>Reduce fixture congestion and conflict on player's time.</p>	<p>The U14/U16 regional rounds of competitions may utilise week-end fixtures, providing the proposals do not conflict with any Single System activity, as published in the Centralised Calendar.</p> <p>The National Finals for any competition will be played at a time recommended by England Hockey.</p>

Prior to this communication with you today we have informed verbally the Regional and County Association junior competition organisers of the decision to delay the implementation of the above areas for 2009/2010. As the primary organiser of these competitions they need to be aware of the decisions and subsequent implications on their planning and discussions with schools entering the competitions.

As expressed at the meeting the work undertaken during the last 4 years of single system development has been carefully thought out and any subsequent permanent changes would need detailed consideration and discussion with the England Hockey Board. We acknowledge and accept that the period of consultation and dialogue with schools could have been more effective and appreciate that implementing change of this scale takes time and cooperation by all members of the hockey family. We need to work with you to manage the pace of change and hope that the decision we have made for 2009/10 reflect this acknowledgement.

We are committed to working closely with all schools in England to deliver the sport of hockey to as many young people as possible and fully acknowledge the challenges the changes to the player pathway,



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competitions programme and centralised calendar present. The central challenge for us all is the successful implementation of the double periodisation principle which is deeply embedded in the construction of the entire Single System. Clearly in the first instance we need to work more closely with you over the next 6-12 months to explore and discuss fully workable solutions to delivering the schools competition programme for the subsequent seasons.

To help move this dialogue forward over the next 6-12 months England Hockey would welcome the establishment of a Schools Leadership Group to provide a conduit between schools and England Hockey. As discussed on the night we would need to ensure this group is representative of the schools and therefore suggest it includes representatives from the following areas:

- State Grammar (former and present)
- Boarding Schools
- Day Schools
- Rural based schools
- State schools (club/school link)

In addition England Hockey would like to run an annual schools conference where we can provide a mechanism to listen to schools views and ideas, share information and good practice, provide NGB guidance and deliver practical hockey sessions designed to support your needs. The development of this concept could be worked up by the Schools Leadership Group.

We would welcome feedback on these two proposals and recommendations from you on who should sit on the Group. If you are in favour we would like to have a meeting of this group in mid September 2009. All feedback can be emailed to bev.blackburn@englandhockey.org

For further information or queries you may have on the 2009/10 competitions please contact your County Hockey Representative or your Regional Hockey Office

Holly Woodford
Development Director

3rd July 2009