

Consideration of Bantam Merger between Hanover Hockey Association and the Upper Valley Hockey Association

Purpose of this Document:

Hanover Hockey Association (HHA) and Upper Valley Hockey Association (UVHA) Boards are considering a Bantam merger and final decisions will be made no later than early August. This document is intended to inform Bantam players and other Bantam stakeholders (parents, coaches, hockey association members and Boards) of the potential Bantam merger. This document reflects the opinions of UVHA (Jim Damren, Ernie Gour, John Rogenski) and HHA (Scott Peters, Steve Bensen, John Montgomery) representatives who met on June 19th to explore the needs and options for merging Bantams.

The Bantam Problem:

The dynamic characteristics of Bantams have historically presented unique challenges to associations attempting to establish stable teams. The main challenge unique to Bantams is high levels of unexpected player loss due to High School Hockey, injury, alternate school (Prep School) and loss of interest. High levels of unexpected player loss, which often occurs after the season has started, can have a dramatic impact on the sustainability and competitiveness of remaining teams. The intense physical demands of competitive Bantam hockey further compound the challenges of unexpected player loss; teams with less than two lines simply can not remain competitive against deeper teams. The frequent result of unexpected Bantam player loss is that associations are faced with the prospect of collapsing two teams of different levels, which often results in an oversized team with a wide disparity of skill levels, or fielding a team with less than two full lines, which often results in a less competitive team.

Hanover Hockey has experienced ‘the Bantam Problem’ for several years. After assessing current Bantam registration numbers (24-skaters, 2-goalies) Hanover Hockey contacted the Upper Valley Hockey Association (UVHA) to discuss the Bantam problem, determine if UVHA faced a similar problem, and to consider whether merging Bantams would alleviate the Bantam problem.

UVHA / HHA Meeting on June 19th:

Representatives from UVHA (Jim Damren, Ernie Gour, John Rogenski) and HHA (Scott Peters, Steve Bensen, John Montgomery) met on June 19th to: 1) discuss the Bantam problem and its impact on each association, 2) consider if a Bantam merger would enhance the Bantam situation for each association, and 3) consider possible circumstances of a Bantam merger. The following represents a consensus of the ideas exchanged during the meeting:

Discussion of the Bantam Problem – UVHA and HHA representatives understand and have experienced ‘the Bantam problem’. Both associations appear to have ‘a Bantam problem’ for the upcoming season. HHA has a ‘minimum roster’ for two teams – any player loss would compromise the ability to field two teams. At current registration levels UVHA has a ‘fat’ one-team roster and insufficient players for two teams. UVHA is also likely to experience player loss to High School programs.

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Benefits of Merging Bantams - UVHA and HHA representatives felt that a Bantam merger would allow the reliable formation of three Bantam teams and enable a more accurate match between player skill levels and team tier placement. In other words, each of the three teams would have a greater level of consistency between player skills.

Possible Circumstances of a Bantam Merger - UVHA and HHA representatives exchanged ideas and discussed possible circumstances of a Bantam merger. The following ideas emerged:

1. Team Determination – How will merged teams be determined?

- UVHA has 19-20 players including 4 or 5 that may make a High School Team. HHA has 24 players and 2 goalies. The consensus was for 3 Bantam teams with all three teams registered in the GSL (Tiers 1, 3, 5); Tier 1 and 5 teams will be affiliated with HHA and the tier 3 team will be affiliated with UVHA.
- The consensus of the representatives was that the New Hampshire league was superior to Vermont for boy's Bantam hockey (more teams and tiers) and that all merged teams would play a non-league schedule against Vermont teams anyway.

2. Player Assignment to Teams – How will Bantam players be assigned to teams?

- Players will be assigned to teams based on joint try-out results; players may elect the Blue (tier 5) team and skip try-outs. The joint try-out is proposed for the week of Sept 29 in conjunction with other HHA try-outs. The Bantam selectors would either be: 1) completely independent, and / or 2) equal in number with regard to UVHA and HHA affiliation.
- Once teams are decided, any in-season player movement between teams would require a majority approval of the UVHA / HHA Bantam Committee.

3. Coaching Assignments – How will initial coaching positions be determined for merged teams and how will 'in-season' coaching changes be administered?

- Coaching coordinators from the two associations (HHA-Steve Bensen, UVHA-Ernie Gour) will decide coaching assignments. The objective is to have both UVHA and HHA coaches on each team.

4. Registration – How will registrations be processed for players on merged teams?

- Pursuant to League regulations, players will ultimately need to register with the association hosting their team.
- UVHA fees are expected to be \$ 700 - \$ 750 and HHA fees are approximately \$975.
- The idea is to have players register with their "home" association and then after try-outs players will be 'released' to the association hosting the player's team, if necessary (i.e. UVHA players making a HHA hosted team will be released to HHA and HHA players making a UVHA hosted team will be released to UVHA).
- The idea is to have the releasing association collect and send the full registration fee with the release to the receiving association. There will be no upward registration fee adjustments despite differing registration fees between

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associations; however there will be a downward registration fee adjustment so that HHA players playing on a UVHA team will pay UVHA rates.

- 5. Financial Arrangements – What are the financial arrangement between association regarding revenues and costs?**
 - After try-outs the associations will exchange full registration fees (see registration info above) for all released players (i.e. player registration fees follow the player). Each association will pay all costs (ice, referee, tournaments) for the team(s) hosted.

- 6. Association Policies – Policies differ between the two Associations (ice time and scheduling, disciplinary processes, number of tournaments included in registration, refunds, registration fees, etc.). How do players, coaches and parents know what policy applies?**
 - Administrative, registration and financial policies will generally default to the players ‘home’ association, where the player originally registered. Policies related to hockey operations (including practices, games, ice scheduling, player conduct, etc.) will generally default to the association hosting the player’s team. A joint UVHA – HHA Bantam Oversight Committee will determine which policy applies in situations where it is not clear or there is a need for coordination between association policies.
 - HHA would provide up to six additional ice times (early season and late season) so the UVHA hosted team has a similar season length and ice time allocation as HHA hosted Bantam teams.