

(DRAFT@9/30/2012)

USA FIELD HOCKEY – MASTERS HOCKEY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

USA FIELD HOCKEY BOARD MEETING, NOVEMBER 13, 2012

Introduction and Background

Masters hockey (typically for those of both genders aged 40 years and older) is developing fast in world hockey. The International Hockey Federation (FIH) is actively encouraging the growth of national programs for the 'more experienced' player. This encouragement now includes formal recognition of international Masters competitions previously independently organized by the International Masters Hockey Association (IMHA) for ages 40 to 60, and the World Grand Masters Association (WGMA) for those aged 60 or older. FIH sanctioned for the first time the recent Masters and Grand Masters World Cups held in August 2012 in the United Kingdom. Combined, these events included 65 national teams from 14 different countries, with the USA participating for the first time internationally in the Men's Over-45 age category.

In addition, many European and Australasian countries organize Masters club leagues for both genders.

Increasing playing opportunities ensures that older players continue their involvement with the sport beyond their 20s and 30s: they are also more likely to become coaches, umpires, and mentors to young players and those starting out playing this great sport. These older players also get and stay involved with the management and support of hockey clubs: the organizational structure on which the sport is primarily-based worldwide. And, of course, encouraging players to continue to play longer promotes good health and better fitness in general.

USA Field Hockey's Strategic Plan focuses on growing the sport nationally through youth development programs and the club system. To succeed and be sustainable, both initiatives require the involvement of older players to volunteer, manage, umpire, coach and organize. Long term, USA Field Hockey also wants to promote the concept of "Hockey for Life" to ensure that people continue to play beyond the current arbitrary and very short limits of high school and college.

At the 2012 Masters World Cup, the USA Men's team discussed how to maintain the momentum generated from participating in the event: this discussion document and proposed development plan for Masters Hockey in the US has been generated for the USFHA Board from those discussions.

Presented below are a series of short, medium and long term action items with associated dates. We welcome comments from the Board on the individual goals and on the plan as a whole. With the Board's approval, we would like USA Field Hockey to adopt the following as a development plan (the 'Plan') for implementation.

Short Term Action Items (next 6 months)

- **Establish two 5–person Masters Committees: one for each gender.** This should be relatively easy for the men, given the enthusiasm from recent participation in the Masters World Cup. For the women, Simon Gray and Pam Stuper will identify and contact key individuals to help set up a Committee. An attempt was made to send a women’s team to the 2012 Masters World Cup but this stalled due to the event coinciding with high school and college pre-season. Several individuals were, however, very interested in the event and we believe could become involved in organizing a women’s Masters hockey program. The Masters Committees may be organized in due course with regional representatives (SE, SW, NE, and NW): this would also assist in developing Masters hockey domestically within each region. Masters Committees would be charged to develop both indoor and outdoor hockey.

The two Committees would meet individually and collectively several times a year to plan for events and to coordinate development.

Action Items and Dates:

- Peter Jones, Jeremy Roberts and Simon Gray to initiate a Men’s Masters Committee (Dec 2012).
 - Simon Gray and Pam Stuper to identify and contact key individuals to subsequently organize a Women’s Masters Committee (Dec 2012).
- **USA Field Hockey to join the IMHA.**

Action Items and Dates:

- Simon Gray will contact IMHA through John Stuart, IMHA Vice President, to determine procedures and cost for joining IMHA as a full member, and work with Steve Locke to implement (Dec 2012).
- The IMHA may merge with the WGMA in due course in order to comply with FIH protocols. Progress on this will be monitored.

- **Publicize the USA Masters Programs**

Action Items and Dates:

- Peter Jones and Simon Gray will work with Ashley Meunier and Steve Locke to create a separate Masters webpage under the ‘National Teams’ link on the USA Field Hockey website, with a detailed description of the Masters Program, contact information and photos, and possibly video highlights from Canterbury (Dec 2012).
- USA Field Hockey website articles / Executive Director weekly e-Newsletter updates / FH Life articles to describe the Masters Program and its ongoing development (ongoing).
- The Masters Committees will each designate a Database Manager who will expand and maintain the existing Masters databases and spreadsheets. The Database Managers’ contact information will be listed on the USA Field Hockey website.

- **Plan and Budget for 2013 Masters Events.** The IMHA has two international events planned so far for next year: a European Open in Belfast, Northern Ireland from August 17-25, 2013 and an Asian Masters at a location and time still to be determined. The next Masters World Cup is likely to take place in 2014. Based upon discussions within the Men's Masters Team at the World Cup, there is interest in participating in the European Open next year. An expression of interest has already been made to the event organizers for both USA men's and women's participation.

Two other ideas (with potential variations) have been presented so far:

- **USA vs. Canada Masters Challenge.** As far as we are aware, Field Hockey Canada does not as yet have an established Masters program for men or women. USA Field Hockey would approach Field Hockey Canada to gauge interest in some challenge matches in 2013. These would probably take place over a long weekend and consist of 3 games each for agreed age groups for each gender. This idea has the advantage that teams are likely to be well-matched and that travel and accommodation expenses can be limited compared to longer and more distant international events. There has also been discussion about including some of the other regional hockey-playing nations such as Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados and Mexico: this may also be the way to expand the event if an initial event with Canada is successful. In the event that the Canadians don't want to proceed, then an approach to the other nations for a 2013 event would be made.

Action Item

- Simon Gray to make initial contact with Field Hockey Canada (Dec 2012). If there is a positive response, planning to be taken over by the two Masters Committees when formed. If the response is negative, contact would be made with one or more regional national associations to arrange a 2013 local event.
- **USA Masters Teams to Participate in the 2013 California Cup.**

Action Item

- Peter Jones to make initial contact with the California Cup organizers to discuss potential participation (Dec 2012). Further planning to be taken over by the two Masters Committees when formed.

It was determined from discussions at the Men's Masters World Cup in Canterbury that National Governing Bodies typically fund part of teams' expenses: these can include event entry fees; kit, uniforms and travel / medical insurance expenses; and some travel and accommodation assistance. They also organize and pay for use of facilities for international events held within their particular country. The USA Men's O-45 Team for the Masters World Cup was primarily self-funded and it should be noted that with the significant expense associated with travel to the UK and accommodation for two weeks the player pool was limited as a result. The Masters Committees would work closely with USA Field Hockey to set annual budgets to match available financing, while striving to enter the most competitive teams into events. As the Masters'

program grows, it has the potential to attract more USA Field Hockey members from masters players who have not previously had a reason to join the organization. The Masters Committees would target long term sponsorship to assist with expenses: for this year's Masters World Cup the Men's Team successfully obtained significant sponsorship from New York's premier sports injury and orthopedics hospital, the Hospital for Special Surgery.

We anticipate requesting some budgetary assistance from USA Field Hockey for 2013 in the event that USA participates in any or all of the following events: USA vs. Canada Masters Challenge, California Cup, and European Open. Budget requests beyond 2013 would be prepared by the Masters Committees.

Medium Term Action Items (6-12 months)

We anticipate that the respective Masters Committees will address, plan and budget for the following:

- **2014 Masters World Cup.** The location and dates for this event have not been determined by the IMHA and FIH: it is likely that it will be held in the Netherlands, Ireland or New Zealand.
- **2014 and 2015 International Events.** Possible extension of an initial Canadian series to include Caribbean nations, Mexico, Chile, Argentina etc. Depending upon the next Masters World Cup venue, New Zealand Masters have invited the USA to tour New Zealand and play matches against local, regional and national masters teams.
- **Masters Divisions at the National Hockey Festival.** An unsuccessful attempt was made to start two Masters Divisions at the 2012 National Festival. A Men's Masters Division was not quite viable: the Women's Division less so probably due to the existing Women's Open Division. The Masters Committees would continue to evaluate viability of this idea: it is recognized that perhaps re-starting the Men's Open Division is a higher priority.
- **Establishing Masters National Team player pools by age group each year, with associated age group coordinators.** The Masters Committees would look at establishing distinct age group player pools to determine team viability for events. Working models to be examined include those now in operation by England Masters, Ireland and Hockey Australia. Assistance from USA Field Hockey would include email blasts to the membership.

Long Term Action Items (12 months+)

For the long term, goals will probably include development of international Masters hockey within the western hemisphere through the Pan Am Hockey Federation and member nations. The eventual goal would be a Pan Am Masters Cup in Masters World Cup off-years. Within the US, future domestic goals will probably include regional competitions and leagues. Depending upon the progress of Masters Hockey in the US, and performance at the 2014 Masters World

Cup, a long term goal would be to host a future Masters World Cup. The Masters Committees would address this in due course.