

MANITOBA JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

JUNIOR HOCKEY TRUTH

LEAGUE GUIDE



Below is my guide to playing MJHL hockey. After conducting interviews and researching league documents I've compiled the report below on how to best make a team and what to expect in the Manitoba Junior Hockey League.

HOW TO PLAY IN THE MJHL

The majority of MJHL players who are from Manitoba will likely be scouted for years prior to playing in the league. Through Manitoba's bantam system and Midget AAA league, players will be on the radar long before they hit junior. With this setup, most players who play will be taken in one of the MJ's drafts. (See "Entry Draft" for more info.)

Even players not taken in the drafts will still have a shot with teams. If a player isn't drafted, his goal should be to get on a protected list to become affiliated with a club. This creates investment before training camp and a trajectory for the player.

MJHL teams usually hold spring camps in addition to fall camps. Spring camps serve to separate the wheat from the chaff. If a player does well during the spring audition, he will get invited back in the fall... and getting invited to a spring camp is not that hard. Players can even reach out to teams and inquire about spring/fall camps.

There is also a Junior B league in Manitoba, the Keystone league, that sends players to the MJHL. This is not the common route though.

AVERAGE AGE TO BREAK INTO THE MJHL

Most players who break into the MJHL are 18 years old and do so after playing midget. For Manitoba-born players, this means after playing Midget AAA within the province.

That being said, it's not unheard of for 16 and 17 year-old players to crack rosters, especially in their hometowns. If a player is good enough to play, he'll get a shot, no matter what age.

OUT-OF-PROVINCE-PLAYERS

The MJHL gets a fair amount of OPPs, with most teams maxing out their imports. Saskatchewan sends the most players to this league, with Northern Ontario being a close second.

Interestingly, more players seem to come to this league from B.C. than closer Alberta, though there are some Albertans in the league. This could be due to how highly competitive spots are in B.C. and Manitoba's smaller population base. Few players come from east of Thunder Bay on the Canadian side of the border.

AMERICANS IN THE MJHL

The MJ as a league doesn't so much attract Americans as do certain teams within the league. The teams with a noticeable American presence include the Winkler Flyers, Neepawa Natives, Steinbach Pistons and Swan Valley Stampedes. Each had three or more American players in 2013-14.





The majority of Americans come from right across the border in Minnesota. There are also multiple players from Wisconsin, New York, and California, amongst other states. American players looking for a shot would be wise to search out a team with a track record of taking American players. Applying the Junior Hockey Truth Training Camp Invite Formula works in this league. Having a connection who can vouch for you will help with the process. Having a connection who can vouch for the player is never a bad idea either.

NHL DRAFT PROSPECTS

Before the NHL draft shortened to seven rounds, the MJHL used to be good for a couple of draft picks every year. Lately, there hasn't been many players taken from this league. The last NHL pick came in 2011.

Recently, there have been young players in this league who went on to WHL and college careers before becoming high picks though.

TRAVEL: 3/5

Overall, the travel in Manitoba isn't too bad compared to some leagues. There are a contingent of teams in and around Winnipeg, which makes for short one-nighters during the year.

Outside of the city, there are some northerly and westward roadtrips to places like OCN (The Pas) or Swan River. At the end of the day, these aren't all that bad.

Most MJHL towns are smaller centres with tightly knit communities. Players can expect good support inside and outside of the rink from the locals.

MJHL SCHOLARSHIP POTENTIAL: 3/5

The MJHL does get division I scholarships, but not as many as other leagues. On the flip side, the league does get an above average amount to Canadian schools, including the CIS and Alberta college league.

ENTRY DRAFT: YES

The MJHL has a standard six-round draft where 15 year-old players from within Manitoba are selected in order by teams. Draft picks may be traded amongst teams throughout the year as well.

A week before this draft, each team receives two local players automatically through an auto-protect system. No other teams may select these players in the regular draft the following week. This system ensure local talent stays local.

PROTECTED LIST: YES

The MJHL has a 50-player protected list, which includes the 21 to 23 players they keep on their active roster. The other players on this list are the prospects. Often these players are 15 to 18 years old, but they could conceivably be up to 20 years old.

To get on a protected list, a player simply has to play well and get noticed. It is not uncommon for a player to attend a training camp in fall and get protected either out of camp or later that season.

PAY TO PLAY: NO

The MJHL does not use a pay-to-play model. Teams are often community-owned, not for profit.

MJHL DETAILS

Nicknames you'll hear: "The M.J."

Provinces covered: Manitoba

Established: 1918

Teams: 11

Games Played: 60

Trophy Name: Turnbull Cup

Reigning League Champion: Steinbach Pistons

Royal Bank Cup National Region: West

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

According to the MJHL website, there were 44 players with college commitments during the 2012-13 season. Of these scholarships, five were to division I schools, 16 were to division III schools and other American tier III colleges, 11 were to CIS school and 12 to Canadian Senior Colleges (such as the ACAC).

NOTABLE ALUMNI

Bobby Clarke, Andy Bathgate, Ed Belfour, Butch Goring, Jordan Tootoo, Terry Sawchuck

RADIO/TV COVERAGE

Every team has a local radio station (that also broadcasts online) and games are available to stream online pay-per-view through FASTHockey as well.



LEAGUE CONTACT INFO

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