

ONTARIO JUNIOR HOCKEY LEAGUE

JUNIOR HOCKEY TRUTH

LEAGUE GUIDE



If you want to learn how to play in the OJHL, this is your stop. The Ontario Junior Hockey League gets more scholarships than any other Junior A league in Eastern Canada, as you'll find out below in my guide, which includes interviews with the commissioner and a current player.

HOW TO PLAY IN THE OJHL

There are many different roads that can lead players to the OJHL. Many players enter the scouting spotlight through the GTHL and AAA system in Southern Ontario. However, others also find their way through the top-notch Junior B in the area.

As with most Junior A leagues, players who finish up midget in AAA have a scouting advantage with the OJHL. They will be seen more and be competing against players of their same age and talent level. If a player plays AAA in the GTA or Southern Ontario, he'll be seen by scouts in this league.

Likewise, good young players, those under 18, who play in the GOJHL will also have an inside edge. By playing at the junior level, a player shows he can handle the size and strength of older players already. Additionally, the GOJHL is arguably the best Junior B league in Canada, and with the overflow of talent in Ontario, players coming out of this league are given a fair shake.

In addition to playing in the right league while being midget-aged, players should also put themselves in scouts' sight outside of league play. This can be done by attending spring and fall camps for OJHL teams. (Check out the Junior Hockey Truth Training Camp Invite Formula for more info on receiving an invite.) The earlier a player can be seen by an OJHL team, the more likely they can form a connection or affiliation with that club. In turn, this will give the player an inside track to making the team. Connections, connections, connections.

AVERAGE AGE TO BREAK INTO THE OJHL

The best young talent break into the OJHL as underagers at 17. However, most players crack rosters at 18. This is typical of most Canadian Junior A leagues.

The OJHL is a bigger, older league keeping the Canadian Junior A maximum of nine 20 year-olds. (Players sent down from the OHL at 20 count for two of these spots though.)

OUT-OF-PROVINCE-PLAYERS

The OJHL has few players from outside Ontario. (In fact, the league has few players from outside of the GTA and Southern Ontario.) There is simply a surplus of talent already in the area.

Players can end up here via trade though, or through this league's unique setup for American players.





AMERICANS IN THE OJHL

The OJHL has an interesting quirk in that they boast one American team comprised predominantly of American players. The team, situated in Buffalo, works in partnership with the NHL's Buffalo Sabres and inherits their name.

This club has been an anchor for American talent in Upstate New York for decades, and it has been part of the OJ for over 15 years. In that time, it's produced many NHLers too. Nearly all players on this club are from New York and the team is currently coached by former Buffalo Sabre Michael Peca.

Outside of the Buffalo organization, there aren't many Americans in this league.

NHL DRAFT PROSPECTS

This league is always good for two to five picks. Usually, these picks are in the mid-to-late rounds, but second and third rounders aren't unheard of.

The OJ also gets more NHL draft picks than any other Junior A league in the East. If a player warrants the NHL's attention, they wouldn't pass him up based on playing in this league.

TRAVEL: 4/5

OJHL travel is fantastic with most teams being situated close to one another. Most bus trips are only a couple of hours and overnights are less common than in western Junior A leagues. Players can often live at home if they are local too. This is key in a pay-to-play league.

There is, however, the issue of crossing the border to Buffalo. Players should ensure they have valid passports before the season begins to avoid any hassles.

SCHOLARSHIP POTENTIAL: 4/5

A key advantage to playing in the OJHL is its proximity to American schools. There is no league in Canada that is closer to NCAA and NAIA programs. This is why the league gets the second-most scholarships in Canadian Junior A.

On top of that, the league gets a fair amount of Division I scholarships to high-ranking schools. Where many leagues load up on Division III scholarships or full rides to lower-level NCAA schools, the OJ steps it up.

The league is also right under the eyes of OHL. Some OHL teams use OJHL teams as affiliates to develop their prospects.

ENTRY DRAFT: NO

At this time, the OJHL does not have a draft. League commissioner Marty Savoy says it is likely to happen at some point in the future.

PROTECTED LIST

The OJHL does keep a small protected list of 35 players. Additionally, there is a second list for players who have moved to higher levels and still have junior eligibility.

Teams also have AP cards players can be signed on. (Twelve skaters and two goalies.) When a player is signed to this card he can play up for a couple of games (and only for the club they sign with).

PAY TO PLAY: YES

In 2013-14, the OJHL introduced a pay-to-play policy. Given that Ontario has an abundance of hockey teams at a variety of levels (NHL, AHL, CHL, OHL), Junior A hockey can be a tough draw fan-wise. Since the OJHL leans on private ownership, the pay-to-play model allows teams to balance budgets and keep the league at a high level of play.

Parents can expect to dish out between \$1500 to \$4000 per season depending on the team.

OJHL DETAILS

Nicknames you'll hear: "The O.J.," formerly the OPJHL and OJAHL.

Provinces/States covered: Ontario, New York

Established: Junior A existed in various incarnations in Ontario since 1968. The OJHL is the most recent, starting in 2010.

Teams: 22

Games Played: 55

Trophy Name: Dudley Hewitt Cup (Ontario)

Reigning League Champion: St. Michael's Buzzers, 2013

Royal Bank Cup National Region: Central

SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

According to the OJHL Guide and Record Book, there were 115 players with college commitments during the 2012-13 season. Of these scholarships, 59 were to division I schools, 34 were to division III schools, 22 were to CIS schools.

NOTABLE ALUMNI:

Adam Oates, Paul Coffey, Doug Gilmore, Curtis Joseph, Keith Primeau, Mike Cammalleri, Kevin Bieksa, Mike Smith, Andrew Cogliano



RADIO/TV COVERAGE

OJHL games are streamed live on the league's FASTHockey portal. Many games have audio commentary (local radio) to go along with the on-ice action.

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