

All you wanted to know about regional and state selections and development programs but didn't know who/ what to ask

So, you have a keen young hockey player in your family maybe around 10 years of age or perhaps a little older. All that great coaching and development at Footscray Hockey Club is starting to pay off, and you're wondering, what else could they do by way of development and next steps. Well, here are the answer to some of your possible areas of interest from a parent who has been in your same position.

The following is an overview of the ways that your child can develop his/ her skills outside of the club's programs. Hyperlinks are provided to further information. There are other parents around the club who can provide further information as they have also been on this journey.

1. Elite Skills Days <https://hockeyvictoria.org.au/elite-skill-development-day/>

Hockey Victoria (HV) runs Elite Skills days which start at age groups from Under 13 to U18. HV says that *the Elite Skill Development Day provide athletes who have played at zone level or higher with the opportunity to participate in intensive and specific skill training in small group environments. Groups will be coached by current State and Victorian Institute of Sport Coaches and Athletes, a number of whom are coaches in the Hockey Victoria Academy program.* In fact, you will often see FHC senior players coaching these sessions.

Note that while there is reference to playing at Zone level, don't get put off if your child has not been in a representative team yet. This is especially the case for U13 players. In relation to U13s, players who are 11 or 12 years old are the ideal age. Your child should have been playing full field already and has basic skills of dripping, hitting, pushing and trapping – they will receive tips on how to improve during the Elite Skills Day.

Timing: The Elite Skill Development Days are run throughout the year and in conjunction with school holidays as well as leading into The Final Player Assessment Days.

What to do next: Keep an eye out on the HV website for details of the next Elite Skills day. The next school holidays are likely to be for U13s as U15s and U18s will be competing in Australian championships.

2. Zone participation in the Hockey Victoria Junior State Champs (U13; U15; U18 Boys and Girls)

Footscray is in the Western Wildcats zone, which includes players from Altona, Geelong and the Surf Coast.

In 2020, the event will be played over 4 days running from **Thursday 2nd July – Sunday 5th July**. [The 2020 JSC Events will be hosted at Greater Shepparton City Council for the boys' competition and the City of Greater Bendigo for the girls.](#)

Nominations for Western Wildcat teams are now open – you will need to register your child on the HV portal at <https://hockeyvictoria.org.au/2020jscnow-open/>. You must nominate by Wednesday 15 April with the trial date 19 April (TBC according to HV). Trial details will also be provided then but are likely to be on a Sunday morning. For younger players who may be trialling for the first time at U13 level, again they should have played full field hockey before. Regional trials are also useful for the experience of trialling, as your child will learn about what is involved in a trial.

If you would like to stay up to date with all the latest announcements and news relating to the 2020 Junior State Championships, please register to join the HV mailing list using the following link – <https://form.jotform.com/hockeyvictoria/2020-jsc-mailing-list>

3. School Sport Victoria (SSV) U12 and U16 representative teams

If your child has high level skills for his/ her age group, then it may be appropriate for them to trial for a SSV representative team to compete in the Australian Schools champs in August (Canberra for U12 or Hobart for U16). Registrations to trial for 12 Years and 16 Years and Under Hockey will open on 1 March 2020. <https://www.ssv.vic.edu.au/team-vic/pages/hockey.aspx>

If you are not sure whether your child is at a level of skill to trial, just ask their coach or one of the friendly people around the club. Trial Selection Criteria are available at the links below:

U12 <https://www.ssv.vic.edu.au/team-vic/Documents/TeamVicHockey12andUSelectionGuidelines2020.pdf>

U16 <https://www.ssv.vic.edu.au/team-vic/Documents/TeamVicHockey16andUSelectionGuidelines2020.pdf>

4. Academy and State team selection – U13, U15, U18

For skilled players (for their age level), Academy and State selection may also be an option. HV runs development programs called HV Academy for these age levels which occur at varying times of the year. Academy programs normally run over a series of weeks.

State selection trials are also run that align with championship dates. Your child needs to have been in Academy or identified by an Athlete Identification Officer (AIO) to trial. Details of trials are on the HV website. If your child is invited to trial, the normally this is a two-stage trial process with players selected to the second stage after which teams are normally announced.

Note that HV also runs indoor hockey development programs and trials.

5. Tips for parents

Obviously, all the above can be quite tough for our kids - as parents, our roles are to support our kids. It can be difficult when we are watching them. Here are a few tips in relation to trials.

While we normally like to cheer our kids on during games, at trials, please don't do this. Cheer silently under your breath if needed, but your child is likely to feel embarrassed and/ or distracted by that extra attention.

Also, be aware that during game play your child may be on the sidelines waiting to substitute on. You may feel that your child is spending too long on the sideline but please resist the urge to call out to your child to get onto the pitch. Again, that will embarrass your child and you don't want death stares and silence in the car on the way home.

If your child is carrying an injury, please do let the officials know.

If your child is successful, then of course do share in their success and recognise their efforts.

At the end of the day, although your child may be very disappointed, the world will continue on if your child is not selected. Be positive and encourage them to use this as a learning experience – there is always another day. Footscray and Hockey Victoria want our hockey players to be lifelong hockey players who participate in the game at all age and experience levels!

Want more information – feel free to email me at bezzobst@gmail.com

Best, Tania