



## Dear Hawks & Phantoms Families,

As we wrap up another successful Hawks and Phantoms season and begin to think spring, I would like to extend a sincere thank you to everyone who responded to our second annual mid-season survey. Once again, whether your feedback was positive or negative, I appreciate you taking the time to share your thoughts with us.

The 2024-2025 mid-season survey was sent to **over 650 families** across all levels and age groups from Mite to Midget. We received **435 responses**, representing a **67% return rate**, which is amazing. I am proud to share that **86% of respondents are Satisfied or Very Satisfied** with your overall experience with the Chicago Hawks/Darien Phantoms Hockey Club, which is a roughly 5% increase from last year.

We appreciate everyone's patience as we finalized the survey results. Our board and directors worked diligently to analyze the data, identify key insights, and implement meaningful improvements based on your input. This process took time, but we believe it was essential to making informed decisions that will lead to positive changes for the 2025-2026 season. Below you will find a recap of changes made this season as well as some of what lies ahead for the Chicago Hawks and Darien Phantoms.

## Proud of Who We Are

The Chicago Hawks/Darien Phantoms Hockey Club is **home to over 725 youth hockey players and 32 hockey teams**. We have the ability to provide youth hockey experiences for players at every level from beginner through AA travel hockey. With this comes a great responsibility to ensure that we provide a safe and positive experience for youth hockey players at every level and that we continue to develop strong athletes and good people.

While we enjoy every season at the Hawks and Phantoms, we recognize the ongoing need to improve and be the best that we can be.

**Below are some of the improvements that were made in advance of the 2024-2025 hockey season as a result of your feedback:**

### **Ice Time:**

This season we focused on ways to include additional ice time and improve ice usage. With roughly 3,000 hours of ice time across 32 teams (Mite to Midget), we added longer ice slots and offered additional full ice slots or rollover ice. We also added more Friday game slots.

### **Stick & Pucks:**

In October, we introduced “Stick & Puck” slots to give players the opportunity for extra ice, practice and fun. Stick and pucks allow players to get creative, try different things and simply have FUN together.

### **Video Review Room:**

We created a separate video review room to allow more teams to incorporate video review, which is a valuable learning tool for coaches and players.

### **Endurance Training:**

During September and October, we offered endurance training in the Field House in addition to off-ice practices.



### **Team Reviews:**

Steve Poapst, Hockey Director and Steve Climo, Mite Director, dedicated time to watching teams at every level during practices and games to evaluate development and help coaches facing challenges or in need of improvements.

### **Social Media:**

We have added Instagram profiles for [@ChicagoHawksGirlsHockey](#) and [@ChicagoHawksGoalies](#) to give more ways for our families to stay connected and to highlight these important programs.

### **BlueLine Banter Podcast:**

This season we launched our BlueLine Banter podcast and produced 7 episodes discussing everything from 'Preparing for Tryouts' and 'Preparing for the Mite Tournament Experience' to the 'Chicago Hawks Girls Program' and a 'Conversation from the Crease' featuring Corey Crawford and Jeff Glass. These episodes have been downloaded over 1,340 times across Apple Podcasts and Spotify!

### **"Hockey After High School" Seminar:**

A 'Life After High School' seminar was designed to help student-athletes navigate their next steps after their high school hockey careers. The seminar covered various opportunities, including playing at the collegiate or junior level. Industry professionals, coaches and advisors provide insights and equip players with the knowledge and resources to make informed decisions about their future.

### **ACHA Showcases:**

The Chicago Hawks Hockey Club and Lewis University are sponsoring the 2025 ACHA College Showcase for any 2007's, 2008's and 2009's interested in continuing to play hockey at the collegiate levels. This event, taking place on March 15, 2025 at the Darien Sportsplex, will feature a general presentation, showcase games as well as meet & greets with various college coaches in attendance. **Colleges include:** Lewis University, Illinois State University, St. Norberts College, Aurora University, Milwaukee School of Engineering, Northern Illinois University, Central Michigan University and Iowa State University.

### **Survivors for Change:**

In the Fall, our coaches were introduced to the Survivors for Change Coaching Curriculum that equips them with essential tools to foster safe, positive and inclusive environments in youth sports. Emphasizing the importance of healthy relationships and effective communication with both athletes and parents, the program enhances team and program culture while supporting overall well-being. Coaches learn to recognize and address potential issues, promote collaboration with parents, and create a nurturing, enjoyable sports experience for all participants.

## **2025-2026 Season: Enhancing Long-Term Development & Retention**

As we look ahead to the 2025-2026 hockey season, we are excited to share our vision for enhancing long-term player development and retention. Utilizing your feedback and other information, we have worked through our plans for the future. Our goal has and always will be to create an environment that fosters skill growth, engagement and a lasting passion to the game.

While preparation for the 2025-2026 hockey season is underway, we are kicking it off with the restructured 2025 Spring Hockey Program, which will offer a blend of skill development and competition for all participants.

After survey results were gathered, we recognized a great need to restructure our spring program. We initiated outreach to other programs for collaboration, and after several planning meetings, we established **The Prairie State Spring**



**Hockey Co-Op.** This provides over 120 teams a streamlined, development-focused experience during the off-season. The Co-Op emphasizes skill development, game strategy, and team cohesion with 6 to 8 level-based games. Participating clubs include the Jaguars, Bulldogs, Chargers, Cyclones, Sabres, Vikings, WarHawks, Leafs, St. Jude, Tuskers, Timberwolves, Huskies and Hawks. To learn more and register for spring hockey, visit [chicaghawkshockey.com](http://chicaghawkshockey.com). In addition to a new spring hockey program, here are a few of the things that you can expect to see as we prepare for next fall.

### **Expanded Goalie Development Program**

To enhance the performance and development of our goaltenders, we are implementing a comprehensive goalie-focused initiative. Our goal is to ensure that goalies at all levels receive top-tier instruction, both physically and mentally, to help them excel in their role and elevate their overall performance.

#### **Key Components:**

- New Goalie Academy, which will provide structured, specialized training sessions throughout the season. Goalie Academy Featuring: Corey Crawford, Brooke Meyer, Garret Sparks, Anthony Petrak, and Michael Levine.
- Off-season goalie workshops that focus on refining fundamental skills, advanced techniques, and situational awareness.
- 'Conversations from the Crease' recognizing the mental demands of the position and introducing mental skills training sessions designed specifically for goalies.

#### **Level Directors**

To ensure the best possible development experience for our young athletes, we have appointed dedicated Squirt and Peewee Level Directors who will oversee player growth, coaching strategies, and overall program structure at these key developmental stages. Directors will collaborate with the Hockey Director, coaching staff and parents to ensure clear communication, provide regular player evaluations, and foster a culture of growth, sportsmanship and excellence. Their leadership will be instrumental in shaping the success of our players and the program.

#### **Ice Utilization Improvements – Long-Term Enhancements**

To maximize the efficiency of our ice time and enhance player development, we are implementing a strategic plan for long-term ice utilization improvements. These enhancements aim to optimize practice structures, increase skill development opportunities, and ensure that all players receive high-quality training sessions. We plan to leverage weekend ice slots to provide additional skill clinics, power skating sessions, and specialized training programs. We will continue with regular scheduled stick and pucks.

#### **Expanded Off-Ice Training Opportunities**

To enhance overall player development, we are increasing off-ice training opportunities for our Squirt-level athletes. These sessions will focus on building athleticism, strength, coordination, and hockey-specific skills that translate directly to on-ice performance.

#### **1616 Online Module for Players Ages 8-12**

The 1616 module is for the mental, physical and social wellbeing of youth hockey teams that blends real-life stories and on-ice drills from the best hockey players in the world with proven research-based curriculum and tools.

As President, some of my favorite highlights this season included our Try Hockey for Free Day, where an incredible group of volunteers helped introduce nearly 100 new players to this great game. It was inspiring to see our older players – even entire teams – dedicate their Sundays to assisting Coach Climo and his staff with the Little Hawks program, ensuring that every session ended with smiles all around. The same enthusiasm carried over to the Girls Little



Blackhawks program, where week after week, players developed their skills, confidence and love for the game.

The unwavering support from our members – including our own players – sets our club apart. This season, we are proud to have 24 seniors, each of whom has played a vital role in the continued success of our club. Their dedication and leadership have helped shape the strong, supportive hockey community we are today.

Once again, I want to thank you for being a part of the Chicago Hawks/Darien Phantoms Hockey Club and your participation in the 2024-2025 mid-season survey. I look forward to seeing you at the rink!

---

*"If everyone is moving forward together,  
then success takes care of itself." – Henry Ford*

---

Sincerely,

Amanda Hanlon  
President  
Chicago Hawks Hockey Club