

Muckross Hockey Club

Senior Selection Policy

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1. Introduction and Principles

Muckross Hockey Club (“MHC”) aims, first and foremost, for its players to enjoy their hockey. We promote inclusion and community and foster a club environment that offers personal development through hockey, where-in members build skills in leadership and teamwork.

The Selection Policy is founded upon seven core principles:

1. Structuring teams into groups of players of a similar standard.
2. Fielding the most balanced teams to play at the best standard of hockey possible.
3. Providing appropriate platforms for progression of aspiring younger players.
4. Giving all players the opportunity to make their case for selection.
5. Rewarding individuals that demonstrate consistent performance and commitment.
6. Fostering a strong team bond on all squads.
7. Committing to fairness, transparency and respectful communication at all times.

MHC recognises that different members seek different rewards from playing hockey. MHC will do its best to accommodate, in its selections, this range from elite athletes to social players. Any specific, reasonable, selection request from a member (i.e. where confirmed not to provide undue advantage over other members) will be shown appropriate consideration.

The Club Captain and Vice-Captain are the custodians of the selection process and responsible for effective implementation of this policy, with the support of the Senior Committee. Operational responsibility is typically delegated to team management (i.e. Coaches, Managers and Team Captains).

In the spirit of cooperation and transparency, all members are welcome to respectfully put forward changes to this policy. Any recommendations must be addressed to the Club Captain **via email** at clubcaptain@muckrosshc.com

2. Selection Requirements

- To be considered for selection to a team, a player must be a MHC member. This means that they must have paid their membership fee or have an active payment plan in place by the communicated due date.
- MHC will NOT select non-member players. Exceptions will only be considered in very few circumstances (e.g. unable otherwise to field a team - risking negative impact on other members and the wider competition, OR when demonstrably linked to an agreed strategy for recruiting that player to MHC for a medium term involvement). Exceptions require approval from both the team management and the Club Captain.
- For MHC teams competing in the highest National Competitions, e.g. the EYHL, the club and team management will set a minimum expectation from the players representing MHC.

- In the higher competitive grades (typically spanning the top three MHC teams), MHC expects players to train regularly twice a week – unless agreed otherwise. Players who cannot fulfil this commitment, other than by pre-agreed exception, should expect this to undermine their case for selection to that team.
- Players must be fit to play. Where significant doubt prevails, MHC reserves the right to have the player complete an appropriate fitness test, or re-join from injury by playing for a lower team.
- Players must be of an eligible age to play.
- Breaches of the club’s Code of Conduct may result in reduced playing time or non-selection for the player in question.

3. Selection Attributes

MHC seeks to reward playing performance foremost in its selection priorities. However, we acknowledge that other considerations may be a factor in selections. These considerations might include commitment (e.g. pre-season participation, sustained patterns/history of valued involvement), off-field service to MHC (e.g. as a coach or volunteer) and/or specific goals with player development.

Winning is important but it is a short-term gain. Team management and selectors are expected to factor in player’s commitment to the Club as well as the long-term development of talent.

Selection aims to be objective, but it is not an easy task as there are a lot of attributes to consider. The importance of different attributes varies depending on the team in question and the individual preferences of each team management.

Attributes include, but aren’t limited to:

Commitment to availability for matches	Attendance and effort at training	Prompt, reliable communication as requested by team management.
Skills and ability	Fitness and pace	Ability or potential to play at the level of the team
Enthusiasm and positive attitude	Punctuality and reliability	Willingness to learn, be flexible and adapt
Position the team requires filling	Respect for team management and wider club volunteers	On-pitch conduct towards umpires, teammates and opposition players
Potential and desire to develop/improve	Leadership and teamwork	Experience and age
Commitment or service to the Club	Adherence to the MHC Code of Conduct	

At MHC, players who do not regularly conform to established club or team norms, other than by pre-agreed exception, should expect this will undermine their case for selection in that team. In addition to this, some teams may agree extra stipulations, typically set by the coach and/or the team management group, that reflect specific team goals.

4. Start of Season Selection

Unless directly communicated to do otherwise, players should return as part of the team that they played with in the previous season.

Team management, with assistance from other members of the selection committee where required, will observe players at training and during preseason matches. However, players are expected to be aware that the selection process vests a key responsibility on the player to demonstrate their case for selection.

It is at the discretion of team management to invite different players to training or matches. This does not equate to a player being selected for that team.

The full Selection Committee meet in September to agree initial selection across all Senior teams. Unless players are told otherwise, they will remain on the same team as the previous season.

Players should be mindful that selection is an ongoing process throughout the year, and that selections made during the start of the season are just initial.

5. Player Movement

It is important that players and parents of schoolgirls recognise that if they or their child are asked to move team, it is done with the best interests of both the player and the club in mind.

Whilst the club endeavours to maintain consistency across teams, and allow players to settle into regular hockey with one team, movement between teams should be an accepted part of selection.

MHC acknowledges that downward movement can be disappointing and selection aims to be mindful of this. However it is a part of being in a club and playing team sport, and players have a responsibility to be understanding of this and engage in respectful communication if they have any queries.

- o Team management (Coaches, Managers and Team Captains) each have a responsibility to recommend potential movements in and out of their squads. Any movement should be first approved by all the members of the team management and communicated to the other team in question through the Coaches.

- o If there are unresolved selection decisions between team management or different teams, the Club Captain should be contacted to assist.
 - o Players being selected for a lower team should be selected for the next senior team. The team management who de-selected the player must inform them of the decision, and the reasons why it was taken. Where possible, it should be done in person. Communication should be positive and emphasise the strengths that the player can bring to their new team and areas where there is room for improvement.
 - o Team Captains are expected to follow up to ensure that de-selected players have successfully joined and integrated in with their new team.
 - o Team management must communicate all movement in and out of their squads to the Registration Secretary to ensure players are correctly registered - registrationsecretary@muckrosshc.com
 - o Team Captains are expected to keep the Club Captain informed of movements at the monthly Captains meeting.
 - o In the interest of player welfare, the Club does not permit the movement of players to a lower team after the Christmas break, unless in exceptional circumstances. Exceptions require approval from both the team management and the Club Captain. Players may however still be asked to sub on a week-to-week basis.
 - o Inevitably there is a need for flexibility and compromise when teams are selected through the season to ensure that each team can continue to field weekly match squads.
 - o Whilst MHC does not allow teams to create a block to advancement, the club recognises that some teams may exist for largely social reasons and, as such, their composition may be subject to flexibility in relation to the selection principles.
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6. Weekly Selection

- Weekly selection of teams will be decided from the 1XI team downwards. Players and parents are expected to accept the need for the Club to put the requirements of our highest team first. Quality of selection within higher teams should not be compromised to assist lower teams.
- Match squads should be selected at the competition of training on Thursday evening, at which point the *weekly match squad* document should be fully updated by all teams.
- Players are to be informed by Friday morning at 11am **at the absolute latest**. It is assumed and expected that MHC players will be willing to play for whichever team they are selected for each week.

- It is recognised that changes within teams may be required at short notice, due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g. illness/injury).
- If circumstances occur during the week that lead to a team being short of players, Coaches should first seek to fill gaps from lower teams. Players should recognise that there are many reasons why they may be selected, and it does not mean that they are being considered for full selection to that team.
- If this is not possible players may be drawn down from higher teams, but only with approval from the Coach of the team that player is registered with.
- In order to facilitate this, Coaches are required to keep the *weekly match squad* document updated. This document is available to Coaches, Managers and Senior Committee members.
- If a player is asked to play with a different team for a week, the reason why must be clearly communicated to the player by the Coach. If they have any concerns, they should first communicate them to their Team Captain.
- No Coach from a lower team can refuse to allow their player to play 'up' for another team. Nor can they refuse to accept a player that is playing down from the team above.
- A player from a higher/lower team cannot take the place of a player on the team in question, unless the player is on a higher team and has not been selected for their own team that week.
- With exception of the 1XI, any player who plays for another team must get a minimum playing time in line with the other players on the team - unless they are also playing their own team's match, in which case they should only be used as substitutes for the players on the team in question.
- All players must be given a fair share of playing time at their own team's matches, with the minimum requirement being that all players should have playing time in each quarter.
- If numbers dictate, the lowest team will be selected on a rotation basis.
- If a team has too many players for a match, Adult paying members are expected to be given priority.
- In line with Leinster guidelines, the lowest team's match may be postponed should the other teams in the club be unable to field teams for that week otherwise.

7. Player Responsibility

- The MHC selection process vests a key responsibility on the player to demonstrate their case for selection. If a player has concerns about lack of opportunity to demonstrate their case for

selection in a particular team or in respect of a selection outcome, it is their responsibility to resolve this directly with the team Captain and Coach. In the event of unresolved dissatisfaction, the player should then take their concerns to the Club Captain for resolution.

- Attendance at training is considered a key factor in teamwork, so players should remember that this will be taken into consideration in relation to selection.
- Players are expected to be mindful of their season-long commitment to their team and club. As such players should seek to avoid planning leave or other major commitments through the hockey season that may substantially disrupt their availability and contribution, particularly if they are representing MHC in the higher competitive grades.
- It is the responsibility of the player to flag unavailability and to provide reasonable notice to their respective coach and/or manager (the more notice the better, minimum 1 week in advance).
- Players should recognise that availability and selection are **not the same thing**. Selection procedures can only begin once team management have accurate information on player availability. All fixture dates are freely available and should be distributed at the start of the season so there should be very few occasions where players are at short notice not available.
- Players are required to complete the team availability calendar circulated at the start of the season & ensure it's kept up-to-date, inform Coach of any changes in availability, respond promptly to all communication from Coach/Manager/Team Captain*.
- Players must at all times adhere to the MHC Code of Conduct.

**Failure to confirm availability in a timely manner, may result in missing out on selection for your team, or perhaps any team, for that weekend.*

8. Player Selection Grievance

Selection issues and grievances should be aired **openly and respectfully**, and resolved in accordance with this policy.

- If a player has a grievance in relation to the selection they should first approach the Captain of the team. The Captain will provide more clarity and advise whether it's an issue that should be raised with the team Coach.
- Unless absolutely necessary such communication should not be done via text message, as meaning can be misunderstood. Players have the responsibility to make efforts to communicate in-person, or through a phone call.

- If after doing this, the player feels that their concerns have not been given adequate consideration they should contact the Club Captain, by email at clubcaptain@muckrosshc.com.
 - Players should be aware that Team Captains will also communicate any unresolved issues to the Club Captain. They will also provide team updates to the Club Captain at a monthly Captains meeting.
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9. Schoolgirl Players

Players and their parents should remember that Senior hockey is a very different experience to Junior hockey, and that age and experience play a factor in selection. Schoolgirls are at the very start of what we hope is a long Senior hockey career with MHC. As such, they should be mindful that whatever team they are initially placed on is a starting point.

- In line with Leinster guidelines, and in the interest of player welfare, schoolgirls may **only partake in 5 units of hockey per week**. Units include training and matches, both with Club and School.
 - It is the responsibility of both parents and team management to ensure that schoolgirls are not being overplayed.
- The following training guidelines are recommended for schoolgirl players:
 - 3rd & 6th years: one night a week.
 - 4th & 5th years: one night a week, moving to two nights a week once/if the school hockey season finished before the Club season.
- Junior players are officially invited to move up to the Senior section once they are no longer eligible to play Junior hockey. In general, this means that players are contacted in advance of commencing 5th year in school.
- Junior players who are eligible to play Senior hockey but are still **also playing Junior hockey** are not invited to join Seniors teams, unless in exceptional circumstances. Exceptions require approval from both the team management in question and the Senior Committee.
- Schoolgirl players and their parents are expected to appreciate that teams cannot be reliant on schoolgirls, as many are also playing school hockey which can cause match conflicts. This can affect their selection to a team.

U18 Senior Team

The Club aims to avoid having teams where a large proportion are schoolgirl players. As previously referenced, this can cause match availability issues due to conflicts with school matches.

MHC also acknowledges that a social element is a significant factor for a lot of adult players, particularly teams outside of the higher competitive grades. It is important for the club that this

social side, which in turn fosters community, friendship and volunteerism throughout the club, is helped to grow on teams.

Considering the above, MHC reserves the right to create an u18 team, on a season-by-season basis, should it be in the best interests of the club and its players. For example, if the influx of schoolgirl players would create an imbalance across the Senior teams.

Such a team would be entered as a new team into the Leinster hockey leagues, and compete in a league as determined by Leinster hockey. New schoolgirl players would join this team, except in specific circumstances, e.g. a Coach requesting them for their team. Existing u18 players would be allowed to remain on their current Senior team.

10. Goalies

Goalies will be selected for teams starting with the 1XI. In the case that there are not enough goalies to facilitate teams, a lower team may not have an assigned goalie if a higher team does not.

Goalies should be mindful that selection can be very competitive. This may result in goalies being placed on a team that is lower than their standard. Consideration will be given to the goalies future development potential and selection will be decided by the Selection Committee.

Goalies will be assigned to one team, which they will give priority to each week. However, they may be asked to sub for various different teams throughout the season.

11. New Players

New players joining the club will start at a level in line with their previous playing level and experience, where possible. The club will err on the side of starting them on a lower team, to avoid new players being ultimately dropped from teams.

The long-term needs of the club must be considered and the club will avoid, where possible, replacing current members on teams with new players as it is important for the club to retain long-term players. In this instance the new player would play for the next team.

Players will be accommodated joining mid-season. However, to avoid disruption, such players will be expected to play with the team closest to their ability that has room for an additional player. This may result in these players playing for a lower standard than they have done so previously.

10. Related Documents

- Muckross Hockey Club of Conduct
- Roles and Responsibilities (Coaches / Managers / Team Captains)

- Weekly Match Squads
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