



**Annual report Director of Hockey, season 2020-2021
May 2021**

This is my first annual report, this report contains the steps I have taken at the start and during my role as Director of Hockey (DoH) in Avoca HC. My initial thoughts of the state of hockey in Avoca, the Club Hockey Development Plan (HDP), the implemented actions plus results and the vision for the future of hockey in Avoca HC.

Coming into the club I was blessed to have a club committee that was full of energy. This was not only apparent during the committee meetings but also on the side-line and the day-to-day business. In board member Dennis I had a person to spar with and bounce ideas off, which helped me to understand the direction of the club. Avoca Club members who have been around for long periods of time have also helped me out trying to find my feet and understand the dynamic of the club. All in all, the help of Avoca members has helped define my role as DoH, and made me understand the clubs DNA; we are now in full swing.

While working through the club I noticed the following: a lack of continuation of player development. With a noticeable gap in coaching knowledge and structure throughout the coaching setup. There was a waiting list of around 200 people. A highly motivated and thriving girls section, which was inspiring to see. However the lack of junior boys in the club was also noticeable, I also observed the drive of getting more senior players to join, which is a great accomplishment. During the season I was made aware that there is a very high rate of junior players (girls around 15-16yo) leaving the club. The lack of an under 18 section in the club means a gap between junior and senior section and with that the development of players aged 16 and 17. Although there is a club development plan in place, with long-term goals, the absence of a clubs mission and vision was another issue that needs addressing, in particular to align the club hockey development plan.

(Re-)Organising our coaching section of the club was and still is one of my priorities. This has taken off by establishing youth coordinators on each pitch looking after members and coaches. Acting in the first line of communications towards the parents.

The continuation of player development is a time-consuming undertaking, we ultimately need experienced coaches who are up to date with the latest development. Maintaining this level of coaching, after we establish this level, is what we are aiming for and be the natural next phase. The endless help of our experienced coordinators has not gone unnoticed. Both at pitch level as well as administration level.

Coach development

With the help of our club secretary we ensured all active coaches hold the required coaching qualifications and Child Protection/Safeguarding certification. We ran an Aspiring coaching course at the start of the season. 12 Aspiring coaches participated and 9 have taken up coaching since. During the pandemic we managed to organise a FUNDamental course at the club, run by Hockey Ireland, for 28 of our coaches and managers. This is only a first step to get everyone to their desired level, however all had come to a standstill during the covid pandemic. All Avoca coaches have been offered a contract for the duration of the season.

The club is offering Coaching pathways to any coach within the club. The enthusiasm to this pathway has been low. We keep encouraging coaches who want to make a career out of coaching to design their own pathway and the club will support them all the way.

Hockey Development Plan

One of my tasks is to develop a Hockey Development Plan. This plan has been presented to the committee for revision to be implemented at the start of next season, which is in-line with the goal set at the start of my appointment. This plan entails all hockey related matters from coaching to umpiring and managing the club to the development of hockey in the technical sense of the word. This plan will guide our decision-making process regards hockey related issues in our club and bring the level of hockey up to national standard.

Part of the overall HDP are the technical plans: Coaching Syllabus, competency skills (player + goalkeeper) and technical development plan. These are guides for each developer in Avoca to work with. We have a contract with thehockeyfactory.com, a site where one can find exercises, training and training schedules, each coach in Avoca has login rights and thus use of this database.

From 9 senior and 22 junior coaches in the previous season we went to 9 senior and 26 junior coaches, coaching 14 senior teams and 650 junior members. The junior section recorded 591 training session, a grand total of 851 coaching hours (counting up until April 2021).

Administration

Together with Al the club secretary we have now a smooth-running operation regards coaching and members administration. We are well prepared for any changes within our

club now that the club is getting bigger. With the Coordinators in place, coaching contracts signed, coaches' education levels up-to-date and an extensive coaching database will help us administer the club.

Senior

The biggest change in our senior section was the fusion of our first two teams (mens and womens teams). This was done to bring unity into club and teams, to aid the development of younger player and to give prospect to players to achieve the highest personal goals as well as player retention. In short we made the transition between the two top teams smoother. A ladies 6th team and a mens 5th team were added as well as an extra ladies Vets team.

Junior

The waiting list for our junior members was around 200. We tried to eliminate the list by using the unused hours in Newpark on a Friday. We gained more than 100 junior members by doing this. Next season all those new members will be incorporated in their own age group of the junior section. For next season we calculated the maximum number of players we can accommodate throughout each junior year group. We will also amalgamate the primary school children regardless of gender.

Numbers

We increased the number of junior members with 16% to 650 junior members, an increase of 106 new members.

The senior section (including the vets) has increased to 257 from 211, which is a gain of 18%. This resulted with the introduction of an extra Vets team as well as an additional ladies team.

The league season

For our ladies and mens 1st and 2nd we managed to appoint coaches with lots of experience and knowledge. We started the season in the middle of a pandemic and ended the season in this same pandemic. Although the senior teams started their seasons, they never finished because of the restrictions implemented by Sport Ireland.

The junior section had no games due to the restrictions.

Avoca camps

Both August and Halloween camps where a huge success. August Camp 71 Junior Camp participants and 42 in the Senior section. We organised 3 Halloween Camps; 2 Junior Camps 66 and 71 kids and a Senior Camp with 47 players. The camps where very well organised and feedback was well received. Thanks to Emma Meir and support. Our GK coach Brian organised several GK clinics and camps, which were very much received.

Covid-19 & Online hockey

During the lockdown we created videos with instructions for junior members which they were able to access online to keep our members active and occupied even through the Covid-19 pandemic. For the senior members we offered online hockey specific fitness classes.

Avoca Bursary Program

The Avoca bursary program is a sponsored program to help certain high level junior players to develop within our club with both financial and fundamental assistance. This was the first year the program was in place and 5 junior members got the benefit to become the first recipients of this funded scholarship.

Next season

For next season we are looking to improve our hockey at the developmental level as well as the top level. Better structured training and management are areas that will help to establish this. As would the level of coaching. There is a need of a balance between development and top.

Senior

Both 1st team coaches Noelle and Trevor are staying for next season. We are in the process of hiring/organising all other team coaches for next season. All teams should have a coach and manager if possible at the start of the season.

Junior

We will incorporate primary school kids into one section regardless of sex but based on age. We are going to have 2 top-teams in each secondary aged school teams. This means streaming in 6th class and selection from 1st year onward (see HDP). We are aiming that all teams, development as well as top teams, will have a dedicated coach for matches. We are working hard on establishing an Under 18 section in Avoca. We believe that it will help with the development of the 16/17 year olds, retain members and create an exciting prospect of U18 hockey in the club.

Coaching

Run Avoca aspiring coaching courses, HI Fundamental coaching course, HI Level 1 coaching course in Newpark and give the opportunity of coaches to attend Level 2 coaching course. Encourage the coaching pathway. Promote current aspiring coaches to Avoca level 1 coaches. This all in aid to increase the quality of coaching in Avoca.

This report does not just show what we have accomplished as a club but also the areas we need to work on in the future. Despite the covid pandemic we, as a club, in my opinion have managed very well. We were alert to the struggles and been able to function despite this pandemic.

All what has been accomplished during this difficult year is a true club effort. Committee, club volunteers, coordinators, board, managers, members and coaches all together have made this happen and I see those members as the heart and soul of the club.

My sincere thanks to everyone for their support.

Rudi Wortmann

May 2021