

Sanctioned Ice Hockey at Moorestown High School

Introduction:

Since its inception in 2000, the Moorestown Quakers Ice Hockey Club (MQIHC) has supported youth ice hockey in Moorestown as an independent club team. One of the early goals envisioned by our club was to see ice hockey become an official, sanctioned sport at Moorestown High School (MHS) as many other sports have become. While there has been some discussion and a brief period of “affiliation” between MQIHC and MHS, ice hockey has no formal or sanctioned status as a sport in MHS. Some members of our club and community believe that getting ice hockey as an official, sanctioned sport at MHS would benefit MHS and more so our youth ice hockey players by affording those players the full rights, privileges and benefits of being a school-sponsored, sanctioned sport. The purpose of this document is to educate our members by providing a brief background and a status of ice hockey becoming an official sport at MHS.

Background:

The Moorestown Quakers Ice Hockey Club (MQIHC) is an independent, non-profit organization that supports youth ice hockey in Moorestown at the middle and high school levels. As a “club” team, MQIHC has not been part of MHS athletics nor are we sanctioned by the New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA – see <http://www.njsiaa.org>), the governing body for high school sports in New Jersey. Almost all sports at MHS are sanctioned by NJSIAA. In fact, NJSIAA currently governs 16 different boys and 15 different girls sports at the high school level in New Jersey for over 425 accredited public, private and parochial high schools. Ice Hockey is a NJSIAA sanctioned sport in New Jersey. As a club team at the high school level in south jersey, our club, like many other high schools in the area, are independent club teams that play in independent high school ice hockey leagues such as South Jersey High School Ice Hockey League (SJHSIHL – see <http://www.sjhshl.com>). In this league and others like it, non-NJSIAA-sanctioned teams compete. Likewise, NJSIAA-sanctioned teams compete within the body of schools accredited by the NJSIAA. The NJSIAA does not allow sanctioned teams to compete with independent teams outside of NJSIAA governance.

Current Status:

Our club leadership has had discussions with the various Moorestown Township Public School (MTPS – see <http://www.mtps.com>) Board Presidents and MTPS Superintendents over the last few years. The purpose of these discussions was to explore the possibility of ice hockey becoming an official sport in MHS.

NJSIAA rules do not allow accredited schools (such as MHS) to have any form of “affiliations” with independent, club sports teams for sports that are sanctioned under NJSIAA, such as ice hockey. Therefore, ice hockey in Moorestown currently remains independent from MHS.

Presently, there are two sports in the Moorestown community that have shown interest in becoming a sanctioned sport at MHS – our club for ice hockey and the Moorestown Rowing Club for crew (note that crew is not currently a sanctioned sport by NJSIAA). The MTPS Board and Superintendent have recently indicated a willingness to work with our club (to the degree they are permitted to by NJSIAA regulations if at all) and to acknowledge the potential interest for ice hockey becoming an official MHS sport. The current status of the local school budget challenges and the near-term uncertainty of future New Jersey state school budget funding assistance have made it impractical to add ice hockey (and crew) as sports at MHS primarily due to the financial burden they would bring for both the startup year and on-going operations. They have also indicated that they would not support a “pay to play” (the parents would fund the sport and not the school budget) scenario for these sports due to a variety of complexities. They have also indicated that ice hockey and crew would likely be looked at together as both organizations/sports are in the same situation in the same timeframe.

Future Possibilities:

The possibility of having “Moorestown” ice hockey become an official, sanctioned sport at MHS and in New Jersey is exciting. Many schools we compete against today are also interested in becoming NJSIAA- sanctioned.

There are a number of positive benefits to having ice hockey become a sport at MHS:

- Formal and informal recognition of team and player accomplishments within the school body – Varsity “letters,” awards, announcements, potential scholarships, etc.
- Potentially 100% funding of the sport by the school budget (and not the parents)
- Greater field of competition across the NJSIAA-accredited ice hockey schools state based on teams’ abilities
- Prestige for our school and players that compete in established and recognized channels for high school sports both on a state and nationwide level

- Provide a more concentrated practice and game schedule as a winter sport (unlike the six month fall/winter format we currently do). Skills and team work would improve with more practices and games per week
- Inclusion of ice hockey as a varsity sport on high school transcripts for college purposes

Some potential disadvantages or items to consider for ice hockey becoming an official MHS sport include:

- Inability to compete with other local, independent high schools (unless they too became sanctioned)
- Based on participating teams and conference and division organization in NJSIAA ice hockey, additional travel distance to away games and potentially limited fan attendance may be expected (this is not unlike other current MHS NJSIAA-sanctioned sports)
- MQIHC would relinquish complete and total control of high school ice hockey to MTPS/MHS (MQIHC would focus its efforts solely on supporting Middle School hockey as a “feeder” program into sanctioned high school ice hockey, not unlike we do today)
- Inability for non-MHS students/players from our greater community to participate on the teams
- Potential schedule conflicts with other winter MHS sports

Call to Action and Conclusion:

The road to becoming a sanctioned ice hockey team at MHS is neither short nor easy. The process begins with sufficient interest from within our club. Enough players and parents “coming up the ranks” need to understand and believe in the vision of becoming an official sport at MHS. Research, planning, potential financial support and enthusiasm at a minimum will be required to drive the ground swell required to lobby the MTPS Board to get ice hockey into MHS. The formation of a parent committee to work with the MQIHC and MTPS Boards would be needed to drive the process including but not limited to brainstorming ideas, preparing budgetary figures and drafting a proposal to present to the MTPS Board of Education. Many other sports have accomplished this “goal” over the years. Perhaps the time for Moorestown High School Ice Hockey is drawing near.

What do YOU think? We are interested to hear your thoughts, opinions and questions.

Send email to: mhsicehockey@moorestownquakes.com