



## Stratford Hockey Club Selection Policy

### **Our Mission:**

Our mission is to provide a competitive experience that inspires excellence, promotes good health, develops character, and builds strong relationships that strengthen both our club and our community. We recognize the wide range of abilities and commitment levels among our members, and we strive to offer ability-appropriate coaching and competition within the constraints of time and resources.

### **Our Environment:**

We are committed to creating an environment that is fair, safe, and welcoming to everyone, providing a sports experience that celebrates both personal and team achievements. We aim to develop self-confidence and the skills that improve each player's game, while ensuring that the environment is enjoyable and equitable for all.

### **Player Development:**

We seek to place players with similar goals and abilities together, maximizing their enjoyment and development. This commitment begins with our Player Selection Process.

### **Our Philosophy:**

While competition and the desire to win are important elements of sport, when the spirit of good sportsmanship is sacrificed in pursuit of victory at all costs, something special is lost. To maintain this balance, we are dedicated to creating an atmosphere where we:

- Develop our members' ability to compete to the best of their potential. If each individual performs their best, results will naturally follow.
- Foster sportsmanship, fair play, pride, and a sense of achievement.
- Ensure respect for all participants—teammates, coaches, volunteers, opponents, referees, and officials.
- Provide a competitive experience that is both enjoyable and rewarding for everyone involved.
- Encourage a deep understanding of the importance of being a positive role model at all ages, contributing to the ongoing improvement of the club's culture.

### **Selection Process:**

As a team sport, our selection process must reflect the diversity of positions, team spirit, and the level of opposition. In line with our 'one club, one team' vision, there may be times when the needs of the club take priority over a team's or an individual player's needs, and vice versa. However, in most situations, players will be selected based on their qualities and how they contribute to the team.

Our goal is to create environments where players can develop and apply the right techniques in the right situations, even under pressure.

We are committed to developing players who can read the game effectively and take individual responsibility, both on and off the ball. We encourage players to make good decisions and to help their teammates do the same.

The game is fast and dynamic, and we aim to build teams that play collectively to succeed.

### **Our Approach to Selection:**

The ultimate goal of our player selection process is to provide players with the best possible experience in an environment where they can grow both as players and as people. Our aim is to maintain a consistent, fair, and transparent process that identifies the most suitable level of play for each player at a given time. This helps place them on the right team, aligned with their abilities, ambitions, commitment, and availability, while also considering the needs of the club and its teams.

Players—especially juniors—develop physically, emotionally, and mentally at different rates, which must be considered when assigning players to teams. Players who are placed on teams that exceed their current technical abilities, speed, or desired level of commitment may have a negative experience and could ultimately leave the sport. While players (and their parents) may initially be disappointed if they are not placed on the team they desire, this approach will foster long-term development, passion for the sport, and continued participation if they are placed with others of similar abilities.

Our approach to player selection is designed to inspire excellence and foster development in a way that aligns with our club's vision. We are committed to creating a supportive environment for the entire community, ensuring fairness and opportunity for all players.

### **Merit based selection criteria – coach led with captain's input will be based on:**

- A player's individual qualities
- As well as the positional needs of the team
- In certain instances, the broader needs of other teams and the club may take priority.
- Hockey performance, contribution and ability
- Fitness and commitment to the team
- Suitability to play for the (adult) team in the position required e.g., forward, midfield or defence.
- Team-work and discipline - in terms of work ethic, respect for teammates and umpires
- Development and willingness to learn

Initial input will come from the team captain or coach (where available) regarding the player's performance on game day. Additionally, a player's development and attitude during training sessions will also factor into the selection process.

We aim to inform players of their selection by 9:00 AM on Tuesday, after captains have met—either in person or over the phone—on Monday evening to discuss the selections.

Players should plan ahead and notify the captains of their availability, typically at the end of the last match, but no later than Sunday evening.

### **Things Can Get Tricky!**

Selection is a natural part of competitive sport, and we are working on developing a clear framework to track player progress. Ultimately, selection is based on opinion, but with the framework in place, we can provide a more transparent rationale for our decisions.

If a player is moved to a team below their regular level, we will always strive to communicate this in person (or with parents, where necessary), either face-to-face or over the phone. We aim to offer honest feedback based on key player qualities: Teamwork, Game Understanding, Skilled Actions, Physical Capabilities, and Mental Skills. This feedback will help clarify the reasons behind the decision and outline next steps.

**Please remember:** A lot of thought and time goes into every selection decision. Focus on what you can control — *yourself*.

- Reflect honestly on your performance.

- Avoid comparing yourself to others — each player has a unique blend of qualities, and players develop at different rates. Every game requires a different mix of skills.
- Don't focus on numbers. Improvement is not linear, and each game is an opportunity to develop as a well-rounded player.
- Learn to bounce back from setbacks — speed bumps are part of your growth.
- Accept feedback gracefully and show resilience.
- The captain/coach's decision is final

And remember: The club needs to field 6 men's sides, 3 women's teams, and a Badgers team each week. Play your part in developing *one club, one team*.

### **Gatekeepers:**

Our captains, coaches, and playing committee are the primary gatekeepers in a player's journey. Without them, competitive sport simply wouldn't happen. These gatekeepers are mainly VOLUNTEERS who work together—within the limits of their time—to build a consistent and accurate picture of our members, often investing significant hours.

The player selection process is thorough, and while it is important, we also want to ensure our gatekeepers are not under unnecessary pressure.

There's a lot going on behind the scenes that you may not see or hear. Much communication takes place among all the invested parties, and decisions are rarely made in isolation. Selection is based on opinion, and while we all have our perspectives, we now have a clear framework to guide our decisions with a rationale tied to our goals on the pitch.

### **Players:**

Please support our captains and coaches in the decisions they make. Take time to reflect on the context of the club, the team, and your personal development. Understand that ups and downs are a natural part of the process, and it's important to take personal responsibility for your progress.

If you have any questions about your development, feel free to ask the captain or coach. However, be prepared for an honest answer, as we are committed to transparency in our decisions.

### **New Players:**

Our club's ambition is to inspire and empower individuals to leverage the many benefits of sport, fostering character, strengthening our communities, and creating opportunities for excellence. We aim to not only create the right conditions for promoting the benefits of sport but also to connect with others who share the same vision. We are an open members' club, welcoming new players to experience the rewards of being part of a sports club and a team sport.

For new players, the Men's or Ladies Club Captain, in consultation with the coaches, will make the initial decisions regarding team selection. As a successful club with many junior players, for those aged 13 and over, the Junior Chairperson will collaborate with the Men's or Ladies Club Captains to make decisions on new junior players.

All new members will be treated equally to established members, with the understanding that selection can be fluid. This player selection process is designed to ensure fairness and transparency for all members.

If you want to discuss a selection decision after reflecting on it, please reach out to your Men's or Ladies' club captain. If you are still unhappy after that, feel free to contact the Playing Committee. Your Men's or Ladies' Club Captain will be able to pass on your details.