

Subject: Program Updates and Infrastructure Changes – 2025-26 Season

Dear Cougar/GSE Families,

We'd like to take a moment to share some important updates regarding our year-round programming and infrastructure changes. You may have already noticed a shift in our spring programming, including the absence of Memorial Tournament teams this year.

Why These Changes?

Over the past few seasons, we've observed a significant decline in regular season practice attendance. After extensive research, we've found that the increasingly year-round nature of hockey—with little to no breaks—has contributed heavily to this trend. Our goal is to create a more sustainable balance between hockey, school, and family life.

Eliminating Memorial Weekend tournaments was our first step toward alleviating some of this pressure.

New CAHA Rules Impacting Tier 1 and Tier 2 Teams

Beginning this season, CAHA is implementing new rules that affect Tier 1 and Tier 2 team structures:

- Clubs assigned Tier 1 status may only field **one AA team at 14U and older**.
- New districting rules may affect how Tier 2 teams are formed statewide.

As this is the inaugural season under these new rules, there is still a lot of uncertainty surrounding the Tier 2 landscape. These uncertainties influenced how we structured our teams this year.

Key Changes for 2025-26 Season

To improve attendance and provide more clarity:

- We'll be releasing a **club-wide schedule** that includes **holiday blackouts**.
- A **club-wide out-of-area tournament** (on a **non-holiday weekend**) is planned to replace a holiday tournament.
- We are aiming to strike a healthy balance between competition and time off.

A **sample schedule** may include:

- Out-of-area tournament in **late September**
- Holiday break/blackout around **Christmas and New Year's**

Upcoming Jamborees (Mandatory Participation)

To streamline seeding and team allocation for the season:

- **All NorCal Travel Teams + 12AA** will participate in the **NorCal Jamboree in San Jose over Labor Day Weekend**
- **NorCal 14AA and 16AA teams** will attend a mandatory Jamboree **the following weekend**

Practice & Season Start

- **Summer PDP will be skipped**
- **Regular season practices will begin July 14 or 21**
- We understand many families may take vacations in July and August, but starting early gives teams more time to gel before the mandatory jamborees

New Event: The Cupertino Cup

We're excited to launch the **inaugural Cupertino Cup**, taking place over a week in August (exact dates TBD). Here's how it works:

- Coaches will draft teams from our club members by age group
- Each team will be assigned either **Blue or Silver**
- Points earned throughout the week will determine the overall winning "club" (Blue vs Silver)
- This event will take place during regular practice and game slots

A Word About Tryouts

As we begin tryouts, it's worth remembering that not long ago, only **one team per age group** was selected—leaving many players without a team despite high registration numbers. Today, we're proud to offer more opportunities to more players. **Being selected for any travel team is a privilege and something to be celebrated**, regardless of the level.

We are grateful for your trust and support as we continue working to help your children grow both on and off the ice. Thank you for being a part of our community.

Best of luck at tryouts,

Chris Hathaway

Founder, Cougar/GSE Hockey Clubs