



SYDNEY MASTERS HOCKEY ASSOCIATION (SMHA) incorporated 1988

COMPETITION RULES – 2025

1. COMPETITION PLAYING FEES

- 1.1 Competition playing fees for all teams for the Sydney Masters Hockey season will be invoiced by 15 March (for both preseason and main season competitions). The fees are to be paid in full before 30 April. The Competition Committee (with SMHA Board approval) reserves the right to impose what it deems as an appropriate penalty (loss of all points and / or a fine up to \$500 in total) if a Club/Team's fees for the season are not paid in full by the designated date.
- 1.2 In addition, a Club/Team that is deemed as unfinancial (on or after 15 May):
- Will not be awarded competition points until the outstanding fees are paid in full.
 - Will not be eligible to play in the finals series if they are unfinancial at the end of normal competition rounds. Their position in the final series will be taken by the next highest qualified financial team.
- 1.3 Club/Team coordinators must inform SMHA Competition Manager in writing (before the commencement of the season) of any player who is unfinancial with their club/team (from the previous season). This advice will be forwarded to Hockey NSW and the said player will be unable to play in SMHA competitions until such time as SMHA are advised that the player is no longer unfinancial.

2. ELIGIBILITY

- 2.1 Players are eligible to play (subject to any approvals by the Competition Committee) if they turn 34 years of age on or before 31 December 2025 with the following exceptions:
- **Sydney Cup Division** – players who are aged between 34 and 39 years of age and who are not playing in the Sydney Hockey Association Premier Divisions 1 – 3 (or equivalent level in any other Hockey Association league) are eligible to play in this Division, however,
 - A team can only register and play up to (5) five, 34–39 year old players in the season
 - All 34-39 year old players must be approved annually by the Competition Committee.

- The Competition Committee has the discretion to reject 34-39 year old players from playing in this Division.
- **Grand Masters Division** – players are only eligible to play in this Division if they are either -
 - 60 years of age on or before 31 December 2025 or
 - they have been approved (as Exempt Age players) in previous years or
 - Approved by the Competition Committee (if they are new players and/or less than 60 years of age on or before 31 December 2025).

Any team that abuses this policy will be subject to penalties (as outlined in Competition Rule 5.3) and any offending underage players may, at the discretion of the Competition Committee, be ruled out for the remainder of the season.

2.2 **Player Eligibility for Semi Finals, Preliminary Finals and Grand Finals:**

Players must be registered (and financial) and must have played in more than 50% of the games during the main season competition. The Competition Committee can allow dispensation in the event of special circumstances. Dispensation requests should be made in writing, and at least 14 days in advance of the commencement of the final's series. The request should provide any evidence that would support the dispensation. Examples of special circumstances include an injury or illness (supported by written medical evidence) and "one off" overseas, interstate or intrastate business commitments during the season, that has prevented a player from playing for an extended period during the season.

3. **REGISTRATIONS**

- 3.1 All teams must complete the required online web-based and 2025 Team Registration Form before the commencement of the main season for every year of competition. Clubs with more than one team must list players in their appropriate playing level Division and use the 2024 grading (as at 1 September 2024) for each player. A Club with 2 or more teams must list a minimum of eleven (11) players in each grade and all the listed players in the higher grades cannot play in a lower Division during the season.

Teams not submitting a correctly completed 2025 Team Registration Form on time will not be eligible to earn points in the competition until they have complied.

All new players for 2025 who have not previously been registered with the Sydney Masters Competition must provide some form of photo ID with their registration details which verifies their date of birth.

- 3.2 Clubs / Teams must ensure that before they take the field in any SMHA match that, all players and non-playing officials are registered and financial for the 2025 season with Sydney Masters Hockey Association (otherwise with Hockey Australia, Hockey NSW and their local Association / Club) for the current season. This is the stipulated adult registration fee and not only for the one off Masters State Championships attendance.
- 3.3 A player can only be registered with one team for a Club and can only play in matches for that Club only in the Sydney Masters Hockey competition along the following lines:

- Players registered for a “Premier League” team cannot play in any other Division,
- Players registered for a “Sydney Cup” team cannot play in any other lower Divisions but can play in the higher “Premier League”,
- Players registered for a “Masters Division team cannot play in any other lower Division but can play in any higher Division.
- Players registered for a “Senior Masters team” cannot play in any other lower Division but can play in any higher Division.
- Players registered for a “Grand Masters Division team” can play in any higher Division.

The only specific exception to this rule is for goalkeepers – refer to Section 3.7 below for full details.

3.4 Players may play up in a higher grade team for their club only and subject to the following restrictions:

- A player registered in a “Sydney Cup” Division team may play up to six (6) games in “Premier League” Division and still be qualified in the Sydney Cup team. If the player plays another game (ie the 7th game) in Premier League they will be re-graded to “Premier League” Division.
- A player registered in a “Masters Division” team may play up to six (6) games in total in either “Premier League” or “Sydney Cup” and still be qualified in the Masters team. If the player plays another game (ie the 7th game) in a higher Division, they will be re-graded to the team in the Division in which they have played the seven (7) games or otherwise the team in the next highest Division.
- A player registered in a “Senior Masters Division” team may play up to six (6) games in total in either “Premier League, Sydney Cup, Masters League” and still be qualified in the Legends team. If the player plays another game (ie the 7th Game) in a higher Division, they will be re-graded to the team in the Division in which they have played the seven (7) games or otherwise the team in the next highest Division.
- A player registered in a “Grand Masters Division” team may play up to six (6) games in total in either “Premier League, Sydney Cup, Masters League, Legends Division” and still be qualified in the Grand Legends team. If the player plays another game (ie the 7th Game) in a higher Division, they will be re-graded to the team in the Division in which they have played the seven (7) games or otherwise the team in the next highest Division.

If a competition season is shortened (less games played than planned) the Competition Committee will review the restrictions on “games played up” once the reduction in the playing season is known.

Any requests for re-grading of players during the season must be made in writing to the Competition Committee (via the Competition Manager).

3.5 A Club/Team Co-ordinator can submit requests in writing to the Competition Manager in writing at competition@smhockey.com.au for registration of additional players or deletion of players (who have not played after initial registration) at any time during the season. On approval the player must also be added or deleted from the web-based team list. Clubs/Teams specifically need to be aware of the eligibility requirements for finals (refer to Section 2.2) for any late player registrations.

- 3.6 **Goalkeepers:** Goalkeepers **must wear a different colour playing shirt from all other players when playing in a Sydney Masters Hockey match (includes own team and opposition).**
- 3.7 In the event of the non-availability of a team's registered goalkeeper for any game the process for a temporary ("one off") substitute / replacement is:
- Utilise another goalkeeper from within own club and from a lower grade first.
 - If (a) is not possible and the team determines a goalkeeper is required (ie the team doesn't want to play with 11 field players), the team is required to obtain approval from the Competition Manager to use another goalkeeper from own club (first) or otherwise from another team in that Division or a lower Division. Requests for approval for a one off goalkeeper replacement should be sent by email to competition@smhockey.com.au within 24 hours (or as early as possible) prior to the game's scheduled start time.
 - In the case of a goalkeeper not making the game at late notice then the team will need to play with eleven (11) field players.
- 3.8 Teams can play with eleven (11) field players (or more than 7 up to 11) at any time during the game. No field player has any goalkeeping privileges.
- 3.9 **Club/Team playing Uniform:** All Clubs/Teams must register their full playing uniform (shirts – which should have unique player numbers and that shirt number must be registered on the individual player online SMHA profile, shorts and socks) for the approval of the Competition Committee when they first enter for the competition or when the uniform is changed. Upon approval teams must ensure that all players wear the same approved uniforms (with the same registered and allocated shirt number) during all Sydney Masters Hockey matches throughout the competition.

Where there is any possible conflict of colour between clubs /teams, the club / team (who already may have an alternate playing shirt) or who was admitted to the Division the latest will be required to provide an alternate playing uniform or otherwise as will be advised by the Competition Manager. Any teams wishing to change or amend their playing uniforms in any way must first send a formal request in writing to the Competition Manager for approval.

4. CONDUCT OF GAMES

- 4.1 All playing venue specific rules are always to be observed and abided by all SMHA players and officials.
- 4.2 **Preseason and Main Season Game Playing Conditions - All Divisions:**
- 10 minutes warm up.
 - 2 x 30 minute halves.
 - 5 minutes break (Half Time).
 - There will be no time outs for substitutions or injuries.
 - Penalty strokes and penalty corners will be played out.
 - All games will finish 10 minutes before the designated starting time of the following match. Umpires will adjust the length of the second half of the game to meet this requirement, as necessary.
- 4.3 During all competition matches each team may play up to a maximum of 16 players in each game. As per FIH rules, of the eleven players on the pitch at any time, one MAY be a fully kitted goalkeeper (that is, teams can choose to

play with eleven (11) outfield players). Only fully kitted goalkeepers enjoy privileges.

4.4 Should a goalkeeper receive a temporary suspension of 5 minutes at any time during the game which forces him to leave the field, his team will be required to continue play with 10 field players during the suspension (i.e. no goalkeeping privileges). If the suspension is of a longer duration (i.e. more than 5 minute temporary suspension or a RED card) then the team can either play on with 10 players, none of whom have goalkeeping privileges, or replace the goalkeeper with another fully kitted one and remove one outfield player. The clock will not be stopped during this time.

4.5 All games must have both team's paper based match cards fully completed at the conclusion of the game. Each Team Co-ordinator also must have completed their online team list that can be viewed and also noted by the Competition Manager by 5.00pm on the day of the game or definitely prior to the game starting. Also please refer to **Section 7** for further important specific instructions and mandatory requirements. Players who do not show up for a game must be noted as DNP at the end of the game and prior to the match card sign off.

The Competition Committee reserves the right to penalise teams who do not provide a team list on the web-based system and the paper based match card prior to the commencement of a game. If a team fails three (3) times to complete a match card prior to a match starting they will be penalised by forfeiting the game to their opponents on the third (3rd) strike.

4.6 Any team that is unable to field a minimum of seven (7) eligible players within 10 minutes of the designated starting time for a game will be deemed to have FORFEITED the match. The opposition team will be awarded a 5-0 win. A match card must be completed and signed off by the umpires as per normal requirements. The team who receives the forfeit will have the game credited to players who were at the game and listed on the team match card. The forfeiting team will not have the game credited to any players. In addition, the forfeiting team may be penalised via a FINE that includes the opposition team's share of the pitch hire fee plus the Umpire fees for that game. (Currently \$300.00).

4.7 All Teams are required to provide for every match –

- i. **a minimum of one (preferably two) current qualified and accredited First Aid person(s)** (can be players and/or Club / team officials) who must be formally recorded with SMHA Competition Manager and listed with all other available SMHA First Aid qualified people at the commencement of every season.
- ii. **their own First Aid Kit** (suitably stocked with essential First Aid supplies that is similar to or the equivalent of a St John's Ambulance Sports First Aid Kit) that must be readily available and accessible from the team's bench / dugout.
- iii. **one approved match ball – namely a Standard Kookaburra yellow dimple** ball for Sydney Hockey Centre fields and Standard Kookaburra yellow or white dimple ball for any other fields that may be used by Sydney Masters Hockey Association.

4.8 **Final Series Games:**

- Up to 10 minutes warm up then,
- 2 x 30 minute periods and break as specified in 4.2 above.
- There will be time out for any suspensions or injuries.

If scores are tied at full time in the Grand Final, a penalty shootout competition as per FIH guidelines will be conducted to decide the winner. All other final series games (in the event of a draw at full time) will see the highest ranked team progress to the next finals round.

The shootout competition conditions are:

- (a) The shootout will be done as 1 v 1 between the attacker starting from the 23 and goalkeeper starting on the goal line, with each shootout attack to be made by a different field player. Teams will take turns at attacking, with the team going first being agreed by the captains or, failing agreement, determined by the umpire's coin toss.
- (b) The attacking time duration will be 8 seconds (Premier League and Sydney Cup) and 10 seconds (Masters Division, Senior Masters and Grand Masters Divisions) by an independent timekeeper.
- (c) The team with the most goals after both teams have had 5 shootouts will be the winner.
- (d) If scores are even after both teams have had 5 shootouts, the competition will continue using the same 5 field players in rotation. The order of players can be changed. The first team to have a higher number of goals after both teams have had the same number of shootouts will be the winner.

4.9 **Lightning Safety Code.**

The following Lightning Safety Code applies to all games conducted by SMHA:

- (a) The 30 / 30 rule will apply which calls for play to be stopped when the lightning / thunder ratio reaches 30 seconds or less. i.e. the time between when the lightning is seen, and the thunder is heard is 30 seconds or less. This means that the lightning is 10 km away and the next strike has a "significant risk" of hitting the people who have seen the lightning and heard the thunder
- (b) Play should not commence until 30 minutes after the last lightning strike and thunder or upon the mutual agreement of appointed officials and team captains, relying on local knowledge but always ensuring the safety of all concerned.

4.10 **Shin Pad and Mouthguard Competition Safety Rule**

In all competition games, training sessions and representative championships etc. conducted by or participated in by Sydney Masters Hockey Association (SMHA), all players are recommended to wear shin pads and mouthguards. Any player who cannot or who does not wish to comply with this recommendation in full must complete the Player Agreement Waiver without which he will not be eligible to play.

5. CONDUCT OF THE COMPETITION

5.1 Teams will play competition round games as set out in the draw published by the SMHA. The result of the games will see points awarded as follows:
WIN = 3; DRAW = 1; LOSS = 0

5.2 If neither team appears for a scheduled game, no points will be awarded for the game. **Note** - prior notification to the SMHA Competition Manager to competition@smhockey.com.au must have been provided in writing otherwise the Competition Committee may impose a fine of up to \$300 per team. "Sharing" of points by agreement between the Clubs/Teams is not permitted under any circumstances.

5.3 Any team playing **UNREGISTERED, INCORRECTLY REGISTERED or NON APPROVED UNDERAGE players** will forfeit any points won in that game and these will be credited to their opponents together with a 5-0 score. In the event they lose the game, three points will be deducted from their accumulated total. The Competition Committee may also apply a fine to the infringing team of up to \$300 for any offence.

5.4 At the conclusion of the competition round games teams will be ranked on the following basis:

1st Rank - Number of Points earned

2nd Rank - Higher Goal difference

3rd Rank - Higher Number of Goals scored

4th Rank - Higher total points earned in games played between any / all teams equal on all of the above

5th Rank - Result of the most recent game between teams equal on all of the above

6th Rank - Result of the second most recent game etc.

7th Rank - Toss of coin with both Captains present

5.5 **Final Series:** At the end of the competition rounds there will be a final series of matches played as follows:-

In each Division – the four teams who have gained the most points will progress to the qualifying finals. In the event of teams finishing on the same number of points the final positions will be determined in accordance with Section 5.4

Qualifying Finals will be played based on 1 v 4 and 2 v 3

Grand Final will be played between the winner of the two qualifying finals.

5.6 **Incomplete Games during the Season**

If any scheduled games are not able to be completed in full for any reason (except for Competition Rules 4.6 and 5.2) relating to matters such as fields not accessible, damage to field, weather (includes lightning etc.), failure of lights etc. then the circumstances must be advised to the Competition Manager by each team within 24 hours of the game.

The Competition Manager will make every endeavor to arrange for any incomplete game to be re-scheduled to an alternative date during the season. If it is not possible to re-schedule to another time the game will be deemed a draw with one (1) point awarded to each team.

6. UMPIRES

- 6.1 All affiliated Clubs/Teams who participate in the annual competitions **MUST** provide accredited umpires on the following basis (1 umpire for 1-2 teams and 2 umpires from more than 2 teams).

Umpires will be appointed by SMHA Umpires Co-ordinator to games in all Divisions. If umpires do not appear each team is responsible for providing one from their playing roster

- 6.2 It is the Umpire's responsibility to ensure that they have viewed the Match Card for each team prior to commencement of each game. They are also responsible for ensuring that all player suspensions are correctly recorded after each game on the individual teams' match card.
- 6.3 It is the responsibility of the umpires to ensure each game is fully signed off on each team match card at the end of the game. This should be supported by the Team Co-ordinators from both teams. Refer to Section 7.
- 6.4 All umpires will wear SMHA specified colour shirts (that are provided) when umpiring that do not clash with the playing shirts of participating teams.

7. RESULTS

- 7.1 All teams (Team Co-Ordinator's) are responsible for firstly checking their own Match Card is correct at the end of the game. This includes:

- Goals are allocated to the correct scorers.
- Cards (all suspensions) are allocated to the correct players with the correct card color and number received.
- The total team score is correct.
- Any players who did not play have DNP noted against their name.
- Also then consulting with Umpires and the other Team Co-ordinator to ensure that the information on the match cards is fully correct.
- Signing in the Team Co-Ordinator section on both match cards to accept correctness of the information on the match cards.

- 7.2 Match Umpires are responsible for checking both teams' Match Cards are correct and finalised at the end of the game. This includes:

- All suspension Cards (number and colour) have been allocated to the correct players.
- Any comments regarding Misconduct or injury are recorded.
- Team scores are correct.
- Team Co-ordinators review / update cards and complete their sign off.
- Signing in the Umpires section to indicate that the game Match Card is complete.

If the umpires are unable to complete the Match Cards sign off, then they need to contact the Competition Manager at competition@smhockey.com.au by 12:00 noon the next day stating:

- The reason why the Match Card could not be completed.
- The match result.
- The goal scorers.
- The cards given.

7.3 The Competition Committee reserves the right not to allocate points for any game for which a fully completed match card is not finalised at the end of a game as per Sections 7.1 and 7.2 and to fine teams, in the event of repeated offences (up to \$100 per offence).

8. PLAYER MISCONDUCT – SUSPENSIONS AND DISPUTES

8.1 SMHA will fully observe all suspension notices against any player, as it may be advised, from any other Hockey Association within Australia. Accordingly, any player under suspension will not be permitted to take part in any SMHA games until such suspension has been fully completed and notice provided in writing by the relevant Hockey Association.

8.2 An umpire of an SMHA match may temporarily suspend a player from the match by awarding a green or a yellow card and may permanently suspend a player from the match by awarding a red card. A green card carries a 2 minute temporary suspension. A yellow card may carry either a 5 minute or a 10 minute temporary suspension, as determined by the umpire.

Players who receive suspensions (temporary – green / yellow or permanent – red) in any SMHA game (this includes the formal preseason competition) will have this recorded against their name on the match card by the Officiating Umpires and verified by the Team Co-ordinator as in 7.1 and 7.2 above.

8.3 If a player is temporarily suspended the umpire must indicate / advise the player and (where applicable) the ground marshal and / or the technical officer the duration of any suspension. All suspensions (including time periods for yellow cards and reasons for red cards) must be marked on the match cards at the end of the game.

If a player is permanently suspended from a match by receiving a red card, the umpire awarding the card must:

- at the conclusion of the match, advise the suspended player or a representative of the suspended player's club of the reason for the suspension, including the specific charge against the player which has been entered on the match card;
- by 5:00pm on the following day immediately after the match, report the suspension (by telephone) to the SMHA Umpires Co-ordinator and
- by 5:00pm two days immediately after the match, submit a written report on the incident to the SMHA Competition Manager competition@smhockey.com.au.

8.4 The umpire's written report under 8.3 (c) must include:

- the suspended player's name, Club/Team and Division and the name of the opposing team,
- the date and place of the suspension;
- the reason for the suspension, including the rule invoked;

- (d) an adequate description of the events leading up to the suspension; and
 - (e) any other matter that the umpire considers relevant to the suspension.
- 8.5 If an SMHA appointed umpire fails to meet the requirements of 8.3 and 8.4 the SMHA Umpire Co-ordinator and Competition Manager will determine whether the umpire should be directed to forfeit any fee for the relevant match.
- 9. SUSPENSIONS**
- 9.1 A player who receives suspensions in matches during a single season (includes both preseason and main season competitions), as well as finals matches, may be suspended by SMHA automatically, even if the player was playing in different Divisions or for different teams when the suspensions were issued.
- 9.2 Automatic suspensions will be determined on the following basis (subject to):
- (a) a player accrues two (2) demerit points when he receives a green card
 - (b) a player accrues five (5) demerit points when he receives a yellow card with a 5-minute suspension and ten (10) demerit points when he receives a yellow card with a 10 minute suspension;
 - (c) when the aggregate demerit points accrued by a player in any season reaches or first exceeds 15, the player will be automatically suspended for the next round or finals match;
 - (d) when the aggregate demerit points accrued by a player in any season reaches or first exceeds 25, the player will be automatically suspended again for the next round or finals match;
 - (e) when the aggregate demerit points accrued by a player in any season reaches or first exceeds 30, the player will be automatically suspended yet again for the next round or finals match; and
 - (f) The Competition Committee reserves the right to ban the player from taking the field in further games after accumulating 30 points.
- 9.3 The suspensions in Rule 9.2 will be varied as follows:
- (a) A player with 14 or fewer demerit points before the start of a final's series will have those points ignored for the purposes of assessing suspensions based on suspensions awarded in the finals; and
 - (b) The Competition Committee at its discretion can increase any suspension for continual offenders.
- 9.4 A player issued with a red card in any SMHA match is automatically suspended from playing until the Judiciary begins hearing the case against him (including any early guilty plea).
- 9.5 Should a player receive a RED Card (permanent suspension) in any SMHA game during the season (includes both preseason and main season competitions) or in the finals, their incident will be assessed for penalty by the appointed SMHA Judiciary.
- 9.6 **Judiciary:** Any reported misconduct will be adjudicated on by the SMHA Judiciary at its next meeting. In the event that a meeting of the Judiciary is not set down within a reasonable period following the date of the misconduct the Competition Committee (via the Sydney Masters Hockey Board) retains the power granted in the constitution to form a panel committee to adjudicate on the matter. In this case the composition of the Judiciary shall be as laid down by the Constitution.

9.7 Penalties that may be imposed by the Judiciary

The Chair of the Judiciary will determine:

- (a) the penalty to be imposed if a player is found guilty of any charge
- (b) when a suspension commences (including by backdating the commencement of a suspension to allow for any matches already missed); and
- (c) when a suspension ends by specifying a date.

The minimum penalties recommended by Sydney Masters Hockey Association (which should not be reduced except for an early guilty plea or unless there are exceptional circumstances) are:

Minimum Recommended Penalties

<u>Finding</u>	<u>Suspension</u>
Disputing an Umpire's decision	3 matches
Persistent and deliberate breaches of the rules of hockey	3 matches
Abusive conduct whilst a spectator	3 matches
Acts detrimental to Sydney Masters Hockey	3 matches
Inappropriate physical play	3 matches
Striking at another player with other than a hockey stick	6 matches
Abuse of an umpire	4 matches
or 6 matches if it is a second offence within 3 calendar years	
Deliberately striking another player with other than a hockey stick	6 matches
Striking at another player with a hockey stick	8 matches
Deliberately striking another player with a hockey stick	16 matches
or a lifetime ban if it is a second offence	
Assault of an umpire	2 year ban
or a lifetime ban if it is a second offence	

The period of suspension of a player who is found guilty of any charge will be increased if he made an early guilty plea to any charge in the previous 24 months. The increase will be equal to the difference between the recommended minimum penalty for that earlier offence and the actual penalty imposed on the player after that early guilty plea was made.

Suspensions will apply until the date by which the player will have been suspended from playing for the required number of matches.

In assessing match numbers:

- (a) the only matches relevant are the annual competition matches (includes preseason and main season) managed by Sydney Masters Hockey;
- (b) finals matches are included provided the player's team is playing in those finals and the player is otherwise eligible to play
- (c) only one game is to be counted towards a suspension in any round of matches; and
- (d) suspensions may extend into a subsequent Sydney Masters Hockey season if necessary to reach the required number of suspension matches.

All suspensions will be notified to Sydney Hockey and Hockey NSW and the player or person's own Association on the basis that they have the right to determine their own additional penalties if they so wish.

A spectator, coach or official who is suspended must not:

- (a) participate as a spectator, player, coach or official in any Sydney Masters Hockey match during the suspension; or
- (b) be at any ground where a Sydney Masters Hockey match is being played, or within the vicinity, during that time.

9.8 **Protests, Complaints and Appeals:** Protests, Complaints or Appeals of any type must be in writing and received by the Competition Manager within forty eight (48) hours of the incident(s). A fee of \$250 must be paid at the time of any protest, complaint or appeal. No investigation will commence until this fee has been paid. The fee will be fully refunded if the protest or complaint is successful.

10. REPRESENTATIVE GUIDELINES

10.1 SMHA Representative Eligibility:

Players must be registered (and financial with their Team/Club) and have participated as a player in the SMHA Competition in the current season to be eligible for selection as a Sydney Masters Hockey Representative. All nominees must be in attendance and play on designated selection and training days (as required).

10.2 Players (from time to time and where required) who play Masters hockey for other Associations may be invited for selection in any Sydney representative team subject to the approval of the SMHA Board. This generally would happen strictly on a limited basis and mainly relate to senior players in the Over 65's plus age divisions. Similarly, this situation would apply to players who play grade hockey within Sydney or any other Association for the Over 34 age division.

10.3 A player who is suspended at the time of an NSW Championships is ineligible to represent SMHA

10.4 Any player registered and playing in the SMHA competition who is being considered, or has been selected in a Sydney Representative team, MUST seek SMHA Board approval to play for another association at an NSW Championship.

10.5 A player who is selected for any SMHA representative team who subsequently plays for another Masters Association in the same competition without the written consent of the SMHA Board shall be suspended from the SMHA competition for the balance of the season.

11. ANNUAL COMPETITION STRUCTURE

An important objective for the SMHA Board is to ensure that all teams in each Division remain as competitive as possible.

Therefore, prior to the commencement of each season the SMHA Competition Committee (with SMHA Board sign off) shall, determine the annual competition structure and the appropriate composition of Divisions including the relevant grading of all teams for the forthcoming competition.

11.1 GRADING OF TEAMS

The following methodology, process and considerations will be used by the Competition Committee and SMHA Board to determine the structure of the annual competition and the composition of teams for each Division.

At the conclusion of each season (and normally at the AGM or before 31 December), all clubs will be required to nominate the number of teams they intend to enter in the following season competitions (both preseason and main season) and into which Division they wish each team to compete.

Although there can be significant differences between the playing standards of each Division, unless there are extenuating circumstances, teams who finish first after the full round of matches in the previous season (Minor Premiers) and / or win the Premiership, will be considered for promotion to the next higher division and teams finishing last after the full round of matches in the previous season will be considered for relegation to the next lower division

Promotion and Relegation is not automatic and must be recommended by the Competition Committee and approved by the SMHA Board. Provisional gradings for the following season are assessed using the previous season's results. The final decision will also consider the club's / teams declared preferences and where there is a mismatch between an allocated grade and a club's preference then that club /team will be informed and invited to prepare a formal submission to the Competition Committee.

The Competition Committee also reserves the right to consider other teams throughout all Divisions for possible promotion or relegation. This would generally be on the basis of the previous seasons' results where it can be clearly demonstrated that any team is clearly superior (ie. has performed very strongly in line with the Minor Premiers) or uncompetitive (ie. has performed very poorly in line with the team who finishes last) in any Division.

The Competition Committee, with the sign off of the SMHA Board, also has the right to review teams in all Divisions in the event a new Division is established, and a re-balancing of teams is required based on any change in the structure of the competition – i.e. overall team numbers may be increased or decreased in any particular Division in the current and/or a future season.

There is no provision for two (2) teams from the same Club to be in the same Division unless approved by the Competition Committee.

In addition, the grading into a suitable Division for any new Clubs or additional teams from existing clubs will be determined by the Competition Committee (upon a formal written submission from the Club or new team – to include but not be restricted to player listing and history of players etc.).

New teams will generally be required to commence in the lowest unlimited age Division unless there are exceptional circumstances in which case Competition Committee, with SMHA Board approval, can be sought.

The decisions of the Competition Committee (with SMHA Board approval) in relation to the annual competition structure and the grading of all teams into the relevant playing Divisions are final.