



Greater Victoria Minor Ball Hockey Association

Information for Parents

Welcome to the Victoria Vipers! This document will help you, as the parent of a Victoria Vipers player, understand what to expect throughout the ball hockey season.

First Things First: Ball Hockey for All

Victoria Vipers is a fair play league. Our top priority is providing a positive player experience with an emphasis on respect, sportsmanship and equality. Ball hockey is a competitive team sport, and that's part of what makes it fun. But it's only a positive experience if the spirit of competition is matched by an equal spirit of fair play. So, we expect all our players and everyone participating in the league on and off the floor (parents, coaches, volunteers and fans) to provide a positive, supportive, safe and welcoming environment for every player.

We also embrace diversity and inclusion, welcoming players of all genders, abilities and cultures from ages 5-19. We love that our league reflects our community and we're committed to building on that even more.

Our teams include players who compete up to the highest levels of the sport, as well as youth who have never even held a hockey stick until they stepped on the floor as a Viper. That diversity of skill levels, experience and ability is part of what makes this league so much fun, and it's rewarding to see players' skills and confidence develop throughout the season. As we build our teams each season, we do our best to ensure a good balance across each age division to keep the experience positive for everyone.

See also:

- [GVMBHA Player Code of Conduct](#)
- [GVMBHA Parent Code of Conduct](#)
- [GVMBHA Disciplinary and Suspension Policy](#)

Overview of the Ball Hockey Season

The general timeline for the Victoria Vipers Spring Season is:

- November 1: online registration opens (with early-bird registration rates available until December 15).
- January 15: registration closes. After this date players may be placed on a waitlist.
- February – March: player assessments, drafting of teams, and evaluation/balancing of teams.
- Mid-March: teams finalized. You can expect to be contacted by your team's head coach.
- Late March (if not earlier): April schedule released.
- April: season officially begins and the schedule for May is released mid-April. Team photos also happen in April.
- May: games, games and more games.
- June: league playoffs, with the finals usually the third weekend of the month.

- Late June/early July: the playoff champion team from each division has the opportunity to participate in the B.C. Provincial Championship tournament in the Lower Mainland. This usually is scheduled the last weekend of June. See below for more on the B.C. Provincial Championships.
- July: Western Challenge Cup (WCC) tournament held in mid-July. See below for more on WCC.

How Teams are Formed

Reflecting our focus on providing a positive experience for Vipers players of all ages and abilities, we try to balance teams as much as possible. This begins with our player assessments starting in early February. Your player will be invited to participate in a player assessment session for their age group. These typically are scrimmage style games, providing coaches the opportunity to assess skill levels.

Coaches then participate in a draft process in early March to select teams based on the assessments. Some team reassignments may take place early in the season if there is a significant imbalance between teams. We have clear rules for this draft process to ensure a fair and appropriate balance. We do not accommodate friend requests, and other special requests for team placement are accommodated in very limited circumstances.

Note that we do not do assessments for the Tykes division and we do not do drafts for the Tykes or Peanut divisions.

When and Where We Play

The schedule is only created once we have completed registration and the league has received confirmation of the available floor time from local facilities. The season runs from early April to the third weekend in June. You can expect to receive your team's April schedule in late March. We kick off the season with our Jamboree weekend, when all teams get to play in a series of short games with a focus on fun and team-building.

The league's goal is to provide a minimum of 12 games for every team over the season, and it can be as many as 16. But the final number depends on venue availability, the number of teams in each division, and total number of teams we have across the league.

You can expect to have one practice or game on a weekday evening each week, with games on Saturdays and Sundays. We typically schedule younger teams earlier in the evenings and weekend days, and then work our way through the age groups so the older teams play the latest.

We are a regional league and use rinks across Greater Victoria, including:

- Pearkes Recreation Centre (Saanich)
- Archie Browning Sports Centre (Esquimalt)
- Eagle Ridge Community Centre (Langford)
- Juan de Fuca Arena (Colwood)
- The Q Centre (Colwood)
- Panorama Recreation Centre (North Saanich)
- Wurtele Arena (CFB Esquimalt)
- Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre (Victoria)

Scheduling is complex because floor time availability at most of our venues (except Eagle Ridge) is subject to the ice being removed, the timing of which varies from venue to venue. And, of course, we share these facilities with other community users. As a result, you can expect to play at any or all of the above facilities throughout the season. Tykes typically play in the same venue or venues each week.

Effective in the 2024 Spring Season, our league has updated its timing for games to align with B.C. Ball Hockey Association rules as follows:

- U8 and U10: 3 x 10 minutes stop-time* periods with a one-minute break between
- U12: 3 x 12 minutes stop-time* periods with a two-minute break between
- U14, U16 and U19: 3 x 15 minutes stop-time* periods with a two-minute break between

(*“Stop-time” means the clock is stopped during breaks in play. Under previous rules, for younger age groups we sometimes played “run-time” where the clock continued during breaks in play.)

The RAMP Team App

We manage our teams and scheduling through the RAMP Interactive platform. We recommend all parents download the free [RAMP Team app](#) (available for Apple and Android) as the best way to manage your player’s participation. The app allows you to access current schedules, confirm player attendance at each game and practice, and communicate via the chat function with coaches and the rest of the team.

Required Player Equipment

While ball hockey isn’t a full-contact sport, it is fast-paced and safety is a priority for us. Players must have all required equipment to be able to play in a game or practice. A list of all required equipment is [available on our website](#). Helmets or goalie masks must be worn by players at all times during games and practices on the floor and on the bench.

Because we know the cost of goalie equipment can be significantly higher than for other players, the league has an extensive supply of goalie equipment we can loan to goalies for the season. Your team’s coach can coordinate access to goalie equipment, or you can contact our league equipment manager by email at equipmentmanager@gvmbha.com.

Team Jerseys

For all divisions except Tykes (see below), each team in the division receives a different colour Victoria Vipers jersey with a few different size options, as well as goalie-specific jerseys. Your team manager will ensure you receive your jerseys as early as possible, and your team will be designated in RAMP by its age group and jersey colour (e.g. U12 Blue).

Team managers will assign numbers to players and, once assigned, jersey numbers should remain with the same players throughout the season. Jerseys do not need to be worn for practices but must be worn for all games.

No alterations should be made to the jerseys (e.g. adding name bars), and all jerseys must be returned to your team manager after the last game of the season. Players and parents are responsible for care and cleaning of the jerseys. There is a \$50 charge if a jersey is not returned at the end of the season.

Parents or teams may choose to purchase dri-fit Vipers t-shirts in their team colour for practices. Information on opportunities to do this will be shared with you early in the season, but purchasing shirts or any other branded merchandise is not mandatory.

For Tykes, instead of a jersey players receive a dri-fit shirt that they get to keep after the season.

A Note for Goalie Parents

In addition to offering equipment for goalies, we also recognize that goalies require support to develop a unique skill set. With that in mind, the league has also begun offering dedicated goalie clinics. Through a partnership with The Goalie Group, we offer a series of optional clinics throughout the Spring Season providing an opportunity for our netminders to get coaching specific to their needs. These clinics are offered at no additional cost and are open to all players registered as goalies, whether they play full-time or part-time in net. Details on clinics will be shared early in the season.

Parent Volunteers

The Greater Victoria Minor Ball Hockey Association is an entirely volunteer-run organization. We rely on parents to volunteer in the following roles to deliver a successful season for players:

- **Coaches:** being a coach can be a fun and rewarding experience, and we welcome both new and experienced coaches. See the [information online](#) for details on the application process.
- **Managers:** as a manager your role is to support players, coaches and parents by keeping the team organized and helping provide a positive experience for everyone. See the [manager information online](#) for more details. Coaches will seek one parent volunteer for each team who is willing to take on this role at the start of the season. Managers are supported by division coordinators for each age group.
- **Scorekeepers and Timekeepers:** the home team for each game needs volunteers for both these roles. Team managers will usually ask all parents to volunteer as a scorekeeper or timekeeper on a rotation throughout the season. Scorekeepers use the RAMP Gamesheets App to track goals and penalties. A guide on how to use the app [is available on our website](#). Timekeepers run the score clock. Guides for how to use the different score clocks in the different arenas under the Score Keeper & Time Keeper menu [on our website](#).

Often teams will also have a parent play music during their home games. While entirely optional, it adds to the fun for players and spectators. You can connect to the sound systems in the timekeeping box at most arenas where we play, but you will have to bring your own cables and adapters. Music can only be played during warmups, between periods and during breaks in play. Music must be family friendly and not include songs with any explicit or otherwise inappropriate content.

Dressing Room Etiquette

Player and parent conduct expectations apply in the dressing room just as they do at any other time. In addition, the following rules must be followed and will be enforced by coaches and team managers:

- There should always be at least two adults present if there are children in the dressing room
- Phones and cameras are not allowed to be out in the dressing room at any time

- Smoking, use of an e-cigarette or a vaporizer is not permitted in dressing rooms or in any of the arenas we use.

B.C. Provincial Championship Tournament

At the end of our season, the league champion team in each division will have the opportunity to represent the GVMBHA at the B.C. Provincial Championships in the Lower Mainland. This usually takes place the last week of June and may go into the July 1 long weekend.

Participation in the tournament is not mandatory, and your coach will canvas your team before the league playoffs to determine availability should your team win their division. If the division champion team is not able to attend, the second-place team will be offered the opportunity. Teams can substitute a small number of players for provincials if not all regular members of the team can attend.

The tournament is a great opportunity for players to represent the league and play in a competitive tournament. Particularly for teams at the Minor level and up, provincials is a higher level of competition and coaches have the latitude to assess their teams and make some roster changes to enable teams to compete against tiered teams that attend from other leagues.

While during our regular season we make it a priority to give all players equal access to playing time, at the more competitive provincial level coaches may opt to give some players more floor time than others. All players attending provincials, however, will have the opportunity to play.

The league pays registration costs for provincials and, where possible, will coordinate hotel block bookings to minimize the cost for families. However, families are responsible for all travel costs for the tournament.

Western Challenge Cup

The Western Challenge Cup (WCC) is an annual tournament providing an opportunity for skilled minor ball hockey players to compete at an elite level against other minor ball hockey associations from western Canada (BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba).

Victoria Vipers players will have the opportunity to try out for our WCC teams across five divisions (U11, U13, U15, U17 and U19). Coaches will select the players they feel are likely to produce the most competitive teams. Tryouts for WCC happen after the start of our Spring Season, so watch for more information once the season is underway.

The tournament usually takes place in mid-July and rotates between different host clubs. Players offered a spot on a Vipers WCC team must commit to additional practices and to travelling to the host city at their own expense. As with provincials, the league pays registration costs for WCC and, where possible, will coordinate hotel block bookings to minimize the cost for families.

Referees

All our games are officiated by a mix of senior and youth referees. All referees are certified by the BC Ball Hockey Association and attend a clinic annually to retain their certification.

Many of our youth referees are also Vipers players. If your player is interested in becoming a referee, [information is available on our website](#). Referees receive a per-game stipend and the league will reimburse youth referee certification clinic registration fees at the end of the season if they officiate at least three games.

All players, parents and coaches must treat all referees with respect at all times.

About Our Association

The Greater Victoria Minor Ball Hockey Association (GVMBHA) is a non-profit, volunteer-run organization. The GVMBHA is affiliated with the BC Ball Hockey Association and the Canadian Ball Hockey Association, with a mandate to govern minor ball hockey for the Greater Victoria Region. The GVMBHA's constitution and executive contact information are available online at VictoriaVipers.ca.

The association's primary communication channels are through email to members and via our website. We invite you to also follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) – and to share our content with your friends as a way to help us continue to grow the league.

If you have questions about any aspect of the league's operations, you are welcome to contact members of our executive at any time. Contact information is [available online](#).