



Shooting for Inclusion

Photo courtesy of Canadian Amputee Hockey Committee

Hockey is for EveryBODY

By Erin O'Sullivan

When you think of the most popular sport in Canada, which one comes to mind?

Canada is known as a hockey nation coast to coast and it's no different for people with physical differences. Adaptive hockey represents a number of versions of the sport played on or off the ice to make for hockey teams for all.

The most well-known version of adaptive hockey is para ice hockey, which has a huge profile as a Paralympic sport and has existed for over 50 years. Although hockey has flourished in Canada since the late 1800s, the game of sledge hockey is relatively new to most Canadians, though no less fast-paced or exciting to watch.

But what about the other types of adaptive hockey? There are other popular versions of the great game being played in Ontario and across Canada.



AMPUTEE HOCKEY

Amputee hockey is for players with limb loss or limb mobility restrictions who want to experience the great Canadian sport regardless of age or ability on the ice.

"We're a cut above the wrist, I mean rest," smiles Canadian Amputee Hockey Committee (CAHC) President, Don Wade.

The CAHC boasts one of the strongest teams internationally, with five consecutive World Championship titles and shooting for another in 2020 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

CAHC hopes to continue to promote the sport for recreational purposes, increase participation for junior and senior levels and develop the National Team Program to represent Canada for years to come.

The CAHC encourages amputees to get involved today! Visit www.amputeehockey.com to find out more about how you can participate and play this great sport.



VOLT HOCKEY

Variety Ontario launched the first Volt Hockey League in Canada. Played in specially-designed hockey sport chair by those with a range of disabilities including cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, spina bifida, osteoporosis and dwarfism.

People with mobility issues rejoice over the use of this motorized vehicle, making the game fun and accessible for players of all levels and abilities.

To learn more about this growing accessible sport visit www.varietylvillage.ca/volt-hockey.



POWERCHAIR HOCKEY

Using an electric wheelchair to play hockey makes the game fast, accessible and fun for many players who love to shoot and score.

Powerchair hockey emerged by invention, with sticks being attached to electric wheelchairs to help those with severe mobility restrictions handle and maneuver the chair, stick and ball all at once. It has grown quickly as a sport played internationally with a growing number of teams dedicated to this great sport.

This game is played on a gym floor instead of ice and uses a plastic ball instead of a puck. Players with a limited range of movement are allowed to tape the plastic stick to their wheelchair. There are teams available at all levels, from competitive play to recreational fun.

Powerchair hockey is played by numerous clubs and teams. Check out the ParaSport® Ontario website to find a club near you – www.parasportontario.ca/clubs/power-chair-hockey.

And check out our Videos pages in this issue for a montage from PowerHockey Toronto showcasing this great adaptive sport.



BLIND/VISION IMPAIRED HOCKEY



The sound of blades cutting through the ice, sticks clashing and pucks being struck are familiar to any fan of hockey, but in blind/vision impaired hockey these are the sounds of the game that mean the most. Blind hockey is played by athletes who have varying levels of vision ranging from legally blind (approximately 10 per cent vision) to completely blind, using an adapted puck that makes noise and is bigger than a traditional puck.

The Canadian Blind Hockey Association provides sport and programming options to change the lives of children and youth with varying levels of vision impairment. Programming includes introductory or try-it sessions, development camps, regional and national competitions and support of the Canadian Blind Hockey Team.

The Toronto Ice Owls have been in existence since 1972, taking to the ice and playing games that are fun, fast and exciting to watch.

“For us, being vision impaired, we want people to know that hockey is for everybody,” says Wayne St. Denis, President of the club. The Ice Owls welcome people to come out and test the sport for themselves, enjoy a game, talk to the players and get to know if the sport is right for them.

Visit www.iceowls.ca to find out more or e-mail wayne.st.denis@gmail.com to learn more.

DEAF/HARD OF HEARING HOCKEY

For players with hearing loss, this game is fast, intense and breaking down barriers and stereotypes of what players with hearing loss can do. The game plays under a similar ruleset as traditional standing hockey with a much stronger reliance on visual elements of the game to keep skaters on track and aware of what's happening.

The game is growing and not exclusive to a specialized team. Many skaters with hearing loss compete on able-bodied teams as well, relying on hearing aids, visual cues and sometimes sign language interpreters to help them compete. A willingness to be inclusive and skate hard is really all it takes.

Ontario Deaf Hockey can be contacted through its social media channels.



SLEDGE HOCKEY

Sledge hockey has existed since the 1960s, invented by two Swedish players who wanted to play while recovering in a rehabilitation centre. The sport took off internationally, and joined the Paralympic Games at the Lillehammer Games in 1994.

Better sledges, sticks and dedicated athletes have propelled this sport forward in recent years.

Ontario has had a huge surge in participation, now with more clubs and training opportunities in the province than ever. Hopes are high for the women's team, which is looking to break barriers and be included in the Paralympic Games and represent Canada on the world stage.

More information on sledge hockey in Ontario can be found through the Ontario Sledge Hockey Association at www.ontariosledge.com.

Support and learn about upcoming opportunities with the Women's Para Ice Hockey Team by visiting www.canadianwomensledgehockey.com.

Interested in one of these sports or clubs? Visit www.parasportontario.ca/clubs to learn more about the adaptive sports and teams near you and get started on your own parasport path.