



1 September 2010

Re: The 2012 Youth Olympic Winter Games

Just a quick update about the 2012 Youth Olympics scheduled to be held from January 13 to 22, 2012 in Innsbruck, Austria and especially the Ice Hockey Skills Challenge that will be included in this event.

The Ice Hockey program at the Youth Olympic Winter Games will consist of two separate activities held in both Male and Female categories. The first is a tournament program consisting of five U16 Male National Teams and five U18 Female National Teams.

Austria, as the host nation will be awarded one male team and one female team to participate in each of the tournaments. The remaining eight teams will be awarded to the top eight nations, whose joint Men's and Women's 2011 IIHF World Rankings qualifies them for participation in the tournament program. Each qualified nation will be allowed to select only one team to participate in either the Men's or Women's tournament. Going by our World Rankings, NZ will not be eligible to enter either of these tournaments unfortunately.

The second ice hockey event will be an Ice Hockey Skills Challenge that will form the individual program. The Skills Challenge will consist of a series of individual skill tests that have been designed by the IIHF. This program will consist of the top 15 male and 15 female athletes who have qualified from a global qualification program.

The players that will be eligible for competing in the 2012 Skills Challenge are **male athletes born in 1996** and **female athletes born in 1994**; from nations not competing in the teams tournament competition. This is great news for us, as we will have a real chance to get athletes there!

To qualify, the following steps are in place:

Stage One-

Between 1 October 2010 and 31 Jan 2011, Auckland, Canterbury and Southern will need to run their own local competition to find their very best two male players born in 1996 and the very best two best female players born in 1994.

Stage Two-

February 2011- Two female and two male athletes from each region will compete at The New Zealand National Skills Challenge to held on Sunday afternoon 27 February 2011 in Christchurch. The one best male and one best

female in New Zealand will win the opportunity to go to Vierumaki, Finland to compete against all the other national association winners.

Stage Three-

July 2011- All National Association winners will compete during the 2011 Ice Hockey Development Camp in Finland July 2011. The 15 top male and 15 top female athletes will qualify to participate in the 2012 Youth Olympic Winter Games.

Stage Four (If Qualifying)-

January 2012- Our qualifying athlete(s) will be sent to compete in the 2012 Youth Olympic Winter Games in Innsbruck, Austria, 13-22 January, where Olympic Gold, Silver and Bronze medals will be awarded.

Wouldn't it be fantastic if NZ could have an athlete competing in the Youth Winter Olympic Games with the chance of winning a Gold Medal in ice hockey?

We will be confirming New Zealand's participation in the Global Skills Competition at the IIHF Semi Annual Congress in mid-September 2010 and will receive two Skills Challenge Tool Kits to help us to operate the challenge here in NZ.

So now is the time for all of young athletes to start practising their skills and getting specific advice from their coaches to help them excel when it comes time to be tested.

A New Zealand Skills Challenge package has been sent to each Club in NZ. All of your clubs should have this information and should be able to help you work on your skills.

More information will follow in the coming months. In the meantime, keep practising and keep working!!! Who knows, Gold just might be the new Black!

Sincerely

Jeff Bonazzo
National Coaching Coordinator