



2025/2026 NIHL-Blackhawks Tournament Format



Most levels will participate in a format which features a two-game series: The winning teams of the two-game series will be determined by game points (2 pts/win, 1 pt /tie). If after the second game of the two-game series the two teams have 2 game points each, a third “mini-game”, consisting of only one period of level appropriate time, will be played immediately following the second game. This mini-game will NOT be a sudden-death format. As this mini game is a separate game from the second game of the two-game series, any penalties from that previous game do not carry over. If the mini-game ends in a tie, the sudden death overtime period(s) format will be played. The winners of each two-game series will advance to the championship games.

At the 10U National level the top three seeds will participate. The #1 seed will advance directly to the championship game. Once the 2nd and 3rd seeds have been determined, the two teams will play a single playdown game with the winner advancing to the championship game. This playdown game will be scheduled by the managers of the two teams and is to be played no later than Sunday, Feb. 8th. The home team is anticipated to be the higher seed team, unless other circumstances prevail. The cost for the ice slot and the referees is to be split between the two teams. The home team will schedule referees.

10U American and the 12U National level teams will play their two games of the two-game series on Saturday, Feb. 7th and Sunday, Feb. 8th. These two-game series will feature the #1 seed team vs. the #4 seed team and the #2 seed team vs. the #3 seed team.

The 14U National, 16U National, and 19U National level teams will play their two games of the two-game series on Friday, Feb. 6th and Saturday, Feb. 7th. These two-game series will feature the #1 seed team vs. the #4 seed team and the #2 seed team vs. the #3 seed team.

At the 12U American, 14U American, and 16/19U American levels the 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th seed teams will participate in a play-in game. These play-in games will be played on Thursday, Feb. 5th, and will involve the 3rd seeded team vs. the 6th seeded team and the 4th seeded team vs. the 5th seeded team. If the play-in game ends in a tie, the sudden death overtime period(s) format will be played. The winners of these play-in games will proceed to the first game of the two-game series, to be played on Saturday, Feb. 7th, with the lowest seeded winning team playing the #1 seed and the highest seeded winning team playing the #2 seed. The second game of the two-game series will be played on Sunday, Feb. 8th.

At the 12U American level, the top 4 teams from Tier I will be seeded as #1 - #4, while the top two seeds from Tier II will be seeded as #5 and #6.

At the 14U American level, the top 4 teams from Tier I will be seeded as #1 - #4, while the top two seeds from Tier II will be seeded as #5 and #6.

At the 16/19U American level, the top 3 teams from Tier I will be seeded as #1 - #3, while the top three seeds from Tier II will be seeded as #4 - #6.

The winners of the two-games series at all levels will advance to the championship games held on Saturday, Feb. 28th and Sunday Feb 1st.