

## **Calendar 2011 – 2012**

### **1. Objective of this paper**

The purpose of this paper is to seek Management Board approval to the Calendar for the season 2011 - 2012.

### **2. Background**

This season is a challenge in terms of planning a Calendar for the following reasons:

- It is most likely that both the women's and men's teams will be playing in an Olympic Qualifying Tournament during the season (in February or March or April)
- The date and venue for each team will not be confirmed until end NOVEMBER 2011.
- High Performance (HP) players will not be available for a significant period during the season and we therefore need to schedule the higher priority competitions around their availability

### **3. Approach taken to building the Calendar**

The Calendar outlined below has been built following consultation with a number of stakeholders including the National Coaches, High Performance Director, Competition Chairs (sub groups) and Branch Fixture Secretaries. The process of consultation and parties involved is detailed below in section 8.

The Calendar has been built based on a number of Guiding Principles detailed below in section 4.

It was recognised early that we would need 3 Calendars – one for each of the possible OQT dates. However, we agreed we need to 'anchor' all non senior competitions to the same date irrespective of which Calendar and also, where possible, hold to the same date for certain key senior competitions, e.g. Irish Senior Cup Final.

The three Calendars are identical prior to Christmas and diverge after Christmas to reflect the build up and OQT blocked dates for each of the 3 tournaments. Once the OQT dates are known for the Irish teams, the Calendar for the second half of the season for men and women (if in different OQT's) will be communicated to all. The Calendars have been structured to facilitate 'lift and drop' of dates for senior team competitions to minimise any confusion.

A number of considerations and constraints have been taken into account when developing the Calendars and these are also outlined below (section 5).

#### **4. Guiding Principles for Developing the Calendar**

1. The IHA Calendar does not need to be the same for women and men, given that the OQT for the each team is likely to fall on a different date. However, where possible, keep key events together, e.g. ISC Finals, IHL Finals
2. No Senior (Premier /Division 1 level) IHA Outdoor competition will be scheduled in January
3. IHA Indoor Competition to be scheduled to occur in December & January
4. Plan Indoor Pools on Saturday and Sunday to help achieve an Outdoor mid-season break for senior (Premier/Division 1 level) athletes
5. Include JAG and senior regional training Sunday dates, plus block Sunday training in the diary to avoid Branches inadvertently scheduling club competitions on these dates and thus helping to prevent clashes
6. No more than 20 IHA competition matches to occur over one weekend due to restrictions in number of umpires available (Can't run multiple IHA competition early rounds together)
7. The IHA Club Calendar to be finished by 22 May 2012 latest

#### **5. Calendar(s) 2011 - 2011**

The 3 Calendars are enclosed as separate appendices to this document and are best viewed in colour.

Once approved by the Management Board, the Calendars and this document will be available to all via the website and sent out to the Branches.

This will ensure the entire hockey community has visibility to the Calendar, the process used to develop and agree the Calendar and the key challenges, considerations and constraints that needed to be accounted for.

**IT SHOULD BE NOTED HOWEVER, THAT THE CALENDAR REMAIN SUBJECT TO CHANGE.** The website should always be used to reference the latest Calendar.

The stakeholders involved in finalising the Calendar, recognise that communication throughout the season is going to be key to the smooth running of all competitions, given the flexibility that is demanded around the OQT's and no doubt the likelihood of some bad weather thrown in! The channels are now open to ensure this communication happens.

Finally, it is recommended that this process of consultation across all stakeholders is bought into and developed further when building the annual Calendar. It is through this process that we can seek to address wider issues of over-playing and injury, Long Term Player Development (LTPD), conflicting priorities for players, etc.

## 6. Considerations

1. The dates for the OQT's for men and women's teams are:
  - February 15 – 26 India
  - March 14 – 25 Belgium
  - April 25 – May 6 Japan
2. The annual Calendar is usually agreed in May, so that planning can take place at IHA and branch level. As we won't know which OQT the Irish teams are in until November we need to have 3 versions of the Calendar for senior level competition to reflect the scheduling of the OQT's.
3. HP player restrictions need to be factored into the Calendar as supplied by the National Coaches.
4. The highest priority Competitions will be scheduled around HP player availability. The competitions are prioritised as follows:

Tier	Competitions	Comment
1	FIH, EHF Nations & Club, HP closed training days	No Tier 2 (IHA competitions) scheduled at same time
2	IHL, ISC Senior, U21/U18 Interpro's*	Never clashes with another competition from Tier 1 or Tier 2 *Interpro's only Tier 2 if participants agree to team preparation guidelines, otherwise Tier 3
3	Branch League	May schedule to clash with Tier 1, but acknowledged without HP players or some teams. Can't schedule on same weekend as Tier 2
4	Branch Cup(s)	May schedule to clash with Tier 1, but acknowledged without HP players or some teams. Can't schedule on same weekend as Tier 2. May schedule on same weekend as Tier 3

5. HP player availability restrictions will mean that for IHA outdoor club competitions the women will have availability for up to 5 provincial league dates and the men will have up to 11. These dates are clear in each calendar.
6. HP players will not be able to participate in Indoor due to national training demands
7. HP players will not participate in any competition year
8. The Senior & U21 scheduling needs to ensure that the national coaches can be in attendance. This may mean the men's and women's events will need to be held on different dates.

## **7. Decisions / Guidelines / 'Rules' for the operation of the Calendar**

The following rules and guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Calendars:

### ***Irish Hockey League***

- At the request of the National Coaches, Sunday will not be an option for IHL games
- Round 2 is scheduled on the same weekend as the Intervarsities. IHL to schedule any university sides (UCD) against a home province team that weekend. The match will then be deferred to Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> November. IHL to liaise with the Branch fixture Secretary for this date for the 2 teams (they will then need to re-fix any provincial league match from that date)
- The April Calendar runs the risk of having to re-arrange the Wildcard or Finals date, given we could see a team in both events
- Under the April Calendar, the Finals weekend leaves no rest for returning HP players. This may need to be reviewed once qualifiers are known.

### ***Irish Senior Cup***

- The scheduling of the semi-final and final over the same weekend will be retained for another year. A poll of the 8 clubs that played this year is currently being conducted, however, there are not enough dates to schedule separately (initial wider feedback would suggest the format was successful despite negativity going into the event. This was highlighted by large crowds and the success of the RTE coverage)
- The men's EHL teams will receive a bye into Round 2 of the ISC for this year only – **if scheduled for EHF on 8<sup>th</sup> October**. This means that if either team is scheduled for EHL on the 8<sup>th</sup> October, no back matches will be required. Note, 8 of the 24 teams entered receive a bye

### ***Branch Competitions for Senior Teams (Premier/Division 1)***

- Branches can schedule provincial competitions on IHA dates (blue and pink blocks), only if both teams are not in the competition (IHL and Indoor) or have exited the competition (ISC).
- Branches have been requested to ensure as many provincial league matches are played prior to Christmas as possible to avoid the usual congestion at the back end of the season. The target is 8 to 10 matches played prior to Christmas.
- Under the February and March OQT Calendars, provincial leagues must finish by 1<sup>st</sup> April. Under the April Calendar, provincial league to finish by 5<sup>th</sup> May latest.
- Branches are aware of the limited availability of HP players for provincial competition this season (up to 5 dates for women and up to 11 for the men). HP training date information is available to aid the scheduling of branch competitions.
- Branches are encouraged to create a mid season break for senior (Premier /Division 1) players to adhere to best practice around training and rest. Avoiding scheduling of provincial leagues on the Indoor block (in whole or part) will satisfy this requirement
- Junior national training (JAG) dates are shown, which are typically Sunday's. Note it is a European Year for U16's but not U18's. Branches arranging provincial league/cup matches on these dates will

not have access to the JAG players should they chose to put fixtures on these dates. This will prevent players having to choose between club and country which happens frequently.

### ***Indoor***

- Indoor has been scheduled for Saturday's and Sunday's this season to create a stronger competition – rather than a 'once off'. Clubs are being encouraged to train and prepare in advance.
- The Indoor WG will provide the clubs that have entered Indoor to all Branch Fixture Secretaries in the first week of June.

### ***Senior & U21 s***

- HP players (those in OQT training squads) will not be available for selection – either senior or U21. These will be clearly communicated by the end of September.
- The U21 is will be played at Easter.
- Players playing in Euro club competition at Easter (Pegasus) and EHL (Cookstown, Banbridge if they make it beyond EHL Round 1 in October), will not be available for the U21 s. (These players will be assessed through IHL participation).
- Hermes players will not be available for the senior s under the February or March Calendar due to Euro club competition clash. These players will be assessed through IHL participation.
- It is intended that the boys Irish U18 team will participate in the U21 s, making up the fourth team, with the Irish team having first call on U18 players.

### ***All other Irish Cups (Junior, Trophy, Challenge)***

- The dates for all other Cup competitions are the same irrespective of OQT scheduling.

### ***Schoolboys & Schoolgirls competitions***

- The dates for Kate Russell, Schoolboys and John Waring are as indicated and the same irrespective of OQT scheduling.
- The Schoolboy competition is 3 weeks prior to the U16 & U18 s. HP Guidelines are in place with regard to overplaying during this period and these will be communicated to the schools to ensure players have fully recovered in time for the tournament.

### ***U16 & U18 s and Junior***

- All the dates are as indicated and the same irrespective of OQT scheduling.
- Note: these will now all run on a rotational basis.

## 8. Consultation Approach

The Calendar was built over a period of four months, taking drafts through iterations from input and agreement by all the parties below.

No.	Step	Stakeholders	By When
1	Develop a draft set of considerations and guiding principles	I Cooper	13-February complete
2	Review the considerations and guiding principles and finalise	I Cooper, D Passmore, G Muller P. Revington	15-February complete
3	Discuss an outline calendar in the context of the guiding principles and considerations	I Cooper, D Passmore, G Muller P. Revington	15-February complete
4	Take output from 2 and 3 above and create first draft Calendar	I Cooper	20-February complete
5	Review with Working Group leads for further input	I Cooper, WG Chairs (Cups, IHL, 's, Schools & Colleges)	13-March Complete
6	Create Draft 2 of the Calendar and circulate to HP & Competitions WG	I Cooper, HP team, Competition WG	20-March Complete
7	Send out meeting request to wider stakeholders group to hear proposed schedule and to give their input and feedback	Branch Fixture Secretaries, IHA Competition WG Chairs (Cups, IHL, 's, Schools & Colleges), HP team, Umpires, TO Representative, IHA Office	20-March Complete
8	Hold meeting with wider stakeholder group. Agree changes where possible, otherwise take on board for further consideration.	As above	16-April Complete
9	Final review of Draft 3 with IHA Competition WG chairs and all stakeholders and agree final proposal	I Cooper & IHA Competition Chairs & stakeholders 2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting	1-May Complete
10	Provide Calendar to Management Board for approval	I Cooper	Next Board following

The parties involved in the process, other than those named above were:

Paddy Deering	IHA Cup Competitions Chair
Paul O'Brien	IHA Indoor Competitions Chair
Hilary Hurley	IHA Schools & Colleges Competitions representative
Norma Gartside	IHA s Competitions Chair
Alan Morris	Ulster Men's Fixture Secretary
Ann Shields	Ulster Women's Fixture Secretary
Paula Shearan	Leinster Women's Fixture Secretary
Elaine Donohue	Leinster Women's Fixtures
Ruby Morrow	Leinster Men's Fixtures Secretary

Daphne Hall                    IHA Vice President

Angus Kirkland                IHA CEO

Joan Morgan                    IHA Office

Apologies were received from Munster Branch and Martin Canniffe, Technical Officers.

Many thanks to all of the above for their valuable contribution and also the time they gave throughout the process.