



**Hockey
Ireland**

Junior Age Grade International Player Welfare Guidance



DOCUMENT OVERVIEW



This Player Welfare Guidance is aimed to better guide coaches, players, parents and administrators regards optimal management of youth hockey players. Like with other high performance resources, Hockey Ireland encourage our provincial partners, clubs and schools to collaborate in its design and delivery. It is important to note that while the focus of this Hockey Ireland document is international players, much of the below advises regards all levels of under 18 year old youth hockey in Ireland.

HOCKEY IRELAND JUNIOR AGE GROUP

HOCKEY IRELAND PATHWAY FURTHER INSIGHT

-  Since 2014, 8% of U18 Hockey Ireland boys players have gone on to represent the senior teams
-  15% of U18 Hockey Ireland girls players have gone on to represent the senior teams
-  Over 90% of current Hockey Ireland Senior International players played in U18 Hockey Ireland programmes
-  On average U18 Hockey Ireland international players play > 75 matches per calendar year
-  Approximately 20% of U18 Hockey Ireland international players will experience injuries that result in time away from hockey




DESIRED OUTCOMES FROM AN IMPROVED PLAYER WELFARE MODEL

-  Youth international players become more likely to reach their performance potential and represent Hockey Ireland at senior international level.
-  Youth international players are more often available for selection for school, club and province (less injuries via better alignment nationwide).
-  School, club and provincial coaches are in agreement upon player development.
-  Hockey Ireland to lead proactively regards player welfare adherence and communicate effectively and consistently in this regard.

REQUIRED CRITICAL SUCCESS CHANGES IN JUNIOR AGE GRADE PLAYER WELFARE: MAKING THE DIFFERENCE AND HOW?

-  A high-performance mindset needs to be adopted by coaches across schools, clubs and provinces that have identified international players playing within their squads.
-  Avoidance of a 'four-way pull' on our identified Junior Age Grade international players between school, club, provincial and national programme requirements.
-  Improved collaborative planning, communication and implementation from all parties, with adherence to National programme annual plans for identified Junior Age Grade international players.
-  Identified windows of access to players for school, club, provincial and national programmes.
-  Reduction of Saturday morning School premier fixtures where possible, with a view that school fixtures across Ireland seek to move solely to midweek. This will provide alignment nationwide and allow better overall programming for identified players. Hockey Ireland are aware of the differences in school structures across provinces and understand that this will take time to achieve.
-  All Interprovincial players get 5 days enforced recovery from any organised hockey activities post the end of the Interprovincial tournament.
-  Junior Age Grade international players get three weeks enforced recover from any organised hockey activities post the end of season international commitments.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE AGREED AND ADHERED TO WITHIN THE IRISH HOCKEY COMMUNITY?

-  Consistent weekly structures, whereby all schools and clubs play on pre agreed days that optimise youth international players development potential.
-  Youth international players can only play for one team in their club.
-  All youth international players need one day per week that does not involve hockey related activity.

- 🎯 Ideally, youth international players only play one match per day (a hierarchy in this decision making is listed below). Additionally, if an U18 international player plays two matches in two days, the next day should involve rest and recovery interventions. Consistent communication between schools coaches and club coaches to avoid players playing two matches in one day.
- 🎯 Any youth player (international or not) is advised to play no more than 70 matches per calendar year
- 🎯 Youth international players are advised not to participate competitively in other sports where possible. Hockey Ireland are in support of transferable skill development from other sports, yet the annual National programmes prescribed to players will not typically accommodate other competitive sporting endeavours

TRAINING



RECOVERY



COACH

GUIDANCE REGARDS 'OPTIMAL SEASONAL PLANNING' FOR A HOCKEY IRELAND U18 PLAYER

	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October
National	*	*	*	*								
Provincial												
Club												
School												

Table 1: An ideal hockey season for a Hockey Ireland U18 player
Please note in table 1

- Throughout the months of November to April there would also be 'pre agreed' National Training days (such as a weekend when no club fixtures are scheduled).
- Throughout the months of August & September, there would be 'pre agreed' Provincial training days.

TYPICAL AND IDEAL 'IN-SEASON' WEEKS IN THE CURRENT U18 PLAYER SEASONAL STRUCTURE

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
School			Match			Match	
Club						Match	
Provincial / National							
Strength & Conditioning							

Table 2: Typical current 'in-season' hockey week for an U18 'International player'

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
School			Match				
Club						Match	
Provincial / National							
Strength & Conditioning							

Table 3: Ideal 'in-season' hockey week for an U18 'International player'

- Please note tables 2 and 3 are only applicable to U18 players playing Division 1 club hockey in Ireland, meanwhile it is also important to note that differences exist between provinces and between genders.





	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
School			Match				
Club						Match	
Strength & Conditioning							

Table 4: An ideal in-season hockey week for an U18 'non International or provincial' club player




- Please note table 4 assumes this player is playing school and club, yet has no immediate ambition to play provincial or national hockey.





GUIDANCE REGARDS WEEKLY UNITS OF HOCKEY - FURTHER DETAILS

-  A player's week is considered in terms of units, with a unit defined as either a training session (pitch based or gym based) or a match
-  Three units of hockey (outside of Provincial / National training) are advised each week. These three units would be for school or club and include matches.
-  The recommendation is a maximum of six units of hockey pitch activity per week. Examples of how this could be broken down include 1) two school units; two club units; and two Provincial units 2) two school units; one club unit; three national units.
-  If six hockey pitch sessions per week are not reached – it should not be case that player's must 'make up' for lost training. It is vital for the players welfare that lines of communication are open between school, club, provincial and national coaches to ensure that a players load is correctly managed on a weekly basis. i.e if a National player has a match on a Saturday and a National camp in a Sunday then Monday should be an enforced rest day.

PROVINCIAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING - FURTHER DETAILS

-  In the weeks where Provincial / National squads play matches (and/or train twice a day or over a weekend), the combined number of units should reduce accordingly to not exceed six.
-  Prior to the 'Inter-Pro tournament', there should be a reduction to two units of hockey outside of Provincial training (for example, one school match / training and one club match / training). Meanwhile, during the week of 'Inter-Pro tournament' no hockey units with school or club are permitted. Post Inter-pro tournament, all provincial players get a mandatory 5 day 'no hockey' period.
-  Post 'Summer International series' a mandatory 3 week 'no hockey' period exists for all National players , with a gradual return to play programme co-ordinated by their Provincial and National staff

STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING PLANNING - FURTHER DETAILS

-  It is Hockey Ireland High Performance Units recommendation that all U18 players (international or not) should complete two gym based strength and conditioning sessions per week. Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit has actively engaged with schools and clubs regards strength and conditioning planning and such information is available in the High Performance section of the Hockey Ireland website . To optimise the players week and minimise travel and disruption, Hockey Ireland would encourage a player to utilise access to their school gym to complete their National S&C programme.
-  School 'formal Physical Education classes' can be counted towards these weekly units, yet they would need to be in line with the strength and conditioning guidance given by the Provincial / National Coaches.

HIERARCHY OF PRIORITY FOR A JUNIOR AGE GRADE PLAYER

Via the Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit, school and club coaches can be instructed regards an U18 players involvement in any given training session or match. Such decisions and direction will only be made with advance warning and should be considered a long term positive action with the players best interests at mind. A hierarchy of priority for identified National Junior Age Grade players is listed below:

- 1. NATIONAL (TRAINING OR MATCHES)**
- 2. PROVINCIAL (TRAINING OR MATCHES)**
- 3. CLUB (TRAINING OR MATCHES)**
- THIS REFERS TO PLAYERS PLAYING FOR EYHL 1 OR 2 TEAMS.
- 4. SCHOOL (TRAINING OR MATCHES)**

This is a guidance hierarchy for players. Hockey Ireland would recommend that there is constant communication between players, parents, school and club coaches regarding the right decision for the player.

This hierarchy of priority will only be acted upon if programmes clash or if load management decisions need to be made. Extenuating circumstances may arise in instances like school cup finals, yet there should be no weekly clash between club and school commitments if an amended and improved seasonal structure is agreed. It is the player's discretion as to how they prioritise their units outside of Provincial/National sessions. This should be completed with constant communication between player, parents, and all relevant Coaches. Please note that club sessions should take priority over a school session that has been organised after 7pm on a weekday evening, or after 12.30pm on a Saturday. Where provinces have Saturday school games, it is recommended that the lines of communication between school and club coaches are in place from the start of the year regarding the right decision for the player. Where guidance is needed coaches should refer back to the hierarchy of priority for a National player.

MONITORING & REPORTING

- 🎯 Via a Hockey Ireland performance partner, all youth international players will be required to complete daily self reported well-being assessments and provide information regards training and match loading experienced.
- 🎯 All in the aim of improved player development, Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit National Coaches and relevant performance staff (i.e. Strength and Conditioning Coach) will have access to this data, and will provide regular feedback to the player and their school and club coaches.
- 🎯 School and club coaches will be asked by the Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit for their feedback upon player performance and relevant data findings as and when required.

Adaptation

Stress + Recovery = Adaptation







THE PLAYERS' ROLE IN THEIR OWN HOCKEY PLAYING WELFARE

- 🎯 Develop a deep understanding of your own body and mind and adhere to personal data collection requirements.
- 🎯 Be open with your parents / guardians and Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit regards your hockey commitments.
- 🎯 Honest and direct feedback to all the coaches involved in your hockey playing development.




A PARENTS ROLE IN PLAYER WELFARE




-  Take an interest in your child's sporting welfare and actively educate yourself on information that can help them achieve their potential.
-  Be positive in your approach to your child's hockey development and avoid a sole focus of winning.
-  When required be the link between your child and their relevant hockey coaches, with such conversations always being in the best interest of player development.
-  Compliance with the Hockey Ireland guideline training volumes outlined below.

A PROVINCIAL UNION, CLUB OR SCHOOLS COACHES ROLE IN PLAYER WELFARE

-  Develop a positive relationship with the relevant Hockey Ireland Junior Age Grade coaches and the Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit.
-  Be positive in your approach to international player development and avoid a sole focus of winning.
-  Early communication upon relevant hockey programme planning for your province, club or school.
-  Compliance with the Hockey Ireland guideline training volumes outlined below.

HOCKEY IRELAND HIGH PERFORMANCE UNIT'S ROLE PLAYER WELFARE

-  Develop a positive relationship with identified players' school, club and provincial coaches.
-  Early communication upon relevant international hockey programme planning.
-  Showcase a common sense approach to international player availability for province, club and school and make consideration for unforeseen extenuating circumstances.
-  Compliance with the Hockey Ireland guideline training volumes outlined below and in compliance with GDPR guidelines lead upon player welfare data collection and communication.




-  Host bi-yearly meetings to update all parties upon load management within a Irish hockey context and communicate the next steps in player welfare coordination.
-  Develop and collate information in relation to a National Injury Surveillance Database.
-  Provide a Player Welfare 'State of the Nation' report that includes detail relevant to youth hockey.

IMPLICATIONS FOR NON-COMPLIERS

As outlined above, improved player welfare sits with many Irish hockey stakeholders, yet the major emphasis is assigned to coaches and the player themselves. Without open and honest conversations occurring and trust being developed between player and coach, sub-optimal player development will be the outcome. Implications for non-compliers will not take the form of draconian measures, yet will instead involve Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit having no choice but to rest required players for training sessions or render players unavailable for competition selection.

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY ARE INJURED PLAYERS?

Essentially injured players are the responsibility of all their relevant coaches. However, an identified National Junior Age Grade player will be advised medically from Hockey Ireland downwards. Treatment planning, rest guidance and the need to play in selected matches should be advised by Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit, with the overall goal being player welfare and optimal international performances.

-  If a National Junior Age Grade player gets injured playing for Ireland, it is Hockey Ireland's responsibility (financially and logistically) to manage their rehab and return to play.
-  If a National Junior Age Grade player gets injured playing for their club or school, the responsibility to manage their rehab and return to play lies with them individually. However, Hockey Ireland would look to support this process financially and logistically where possible, all set within the individuals programme plan.
-  All National Junior Age Grade players will be asked to sign a Player Agreement, with this partnership outlining Hockey Ireland's responsibility to manage their rehab and return to play and relevant insurance implications.

WEEKLY LOAD GUIDANCE FOR COACHES (INCORPORATING VOLUME AND INTENSITY)

Managing identified National Junior Age Grade players weekly load is a collaborative effort amongst many stakeholders. To optimally do so, Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit advise that Coaches utilise colour coded themes to their training that take into account players required needs and demands for any given week. It is coaches discretion upon how to implement these themes, yet the proven science of load management utilising the Rate of Perceived Exertion and Training Load calculation methodology depicted below should not be ignored. Hockey Ireland High Performance Unit has actively engaged with schools and clubs regards strength and conditioning planning and such information is available in the High Performance section of the Hockey Ireland website.

RPE Chart	
Rate of Perceived Exertion	
10	Max Effort Activity Feels almost impossible to keep going Completely out of breath, unable to talk
9	Very Hard Activity Very difficult to maintain exercise intensity Can barely breathe, difficult to speak a single word
7-8	Vigorous Activity On the verge of becoming uncomfortable Short of breath, can speak a sentence
4-6	Moderate Activity Feels like you can exercise for hours Breathing heavily, can hold a short conversation
2-3	Light Activity Feels like you can maintain for hours Easy to breathe, can carry on a conversation
1	Very Light Activity Anything other than sleeping, watching TV, riding in a car, etc.

TRAINING LOAD & INJURY

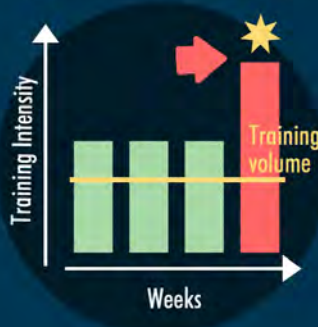
By Jones, Griffiths & Mellalieu, Sports Medicine 2016

Designed by @YLMSSportScience

**TRAINING LOAD
= SESSION RPE X
SESSION
DURATION
(MINS)**

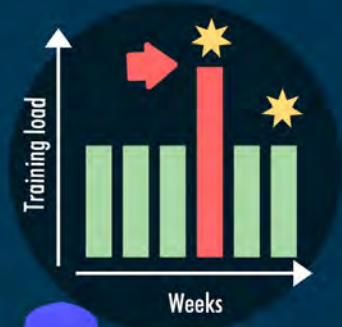
PERIODS OF TRAINING LOAD INTENSIFICATION

e.g. preseason & congested fixtures period



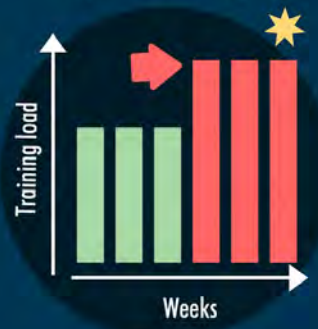
CHANGES IN ACUTE TRAINING LOAD

e.g. return to competition



ACCUMULATED TRAINING LOAD

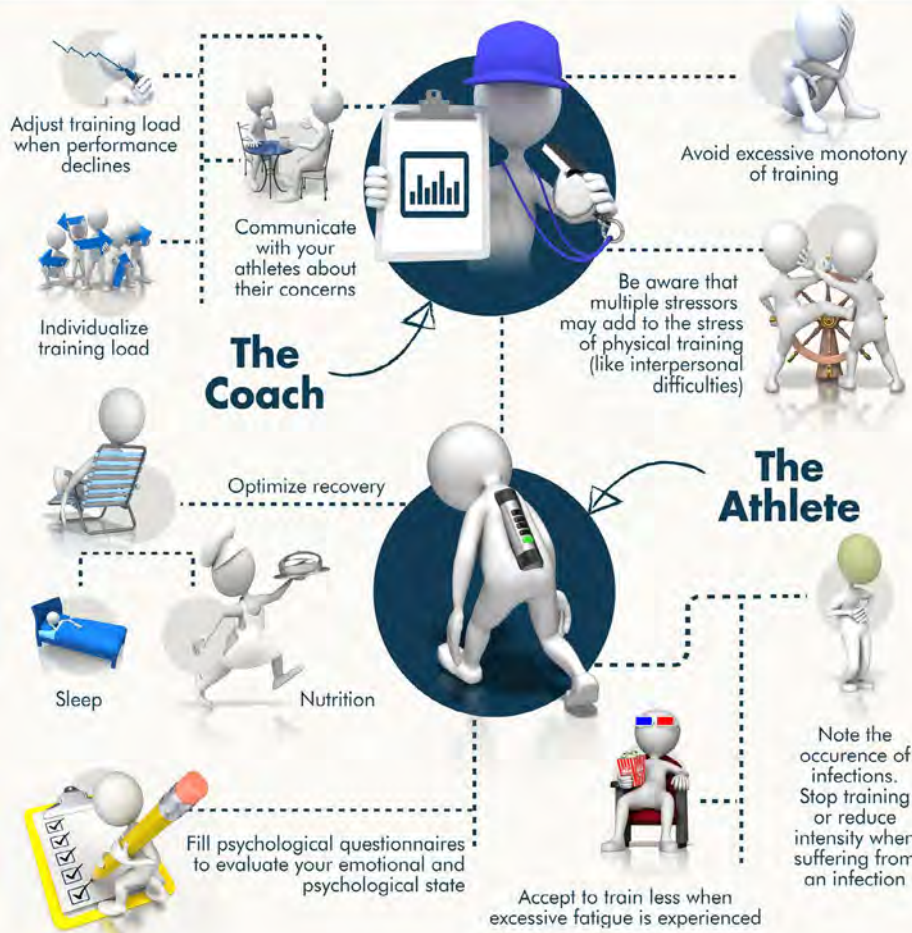
e.g. intensified training block



Easy Tips to prevent the **OVERTRAINING SYNDROME**

By Romain Meeusen & Kevin de Pauw, in Recovery for Performance in Sport, Human Kinetics, 2013

Designed by @YLMSSportScience



Theme	Red week	Orange week	Green week	Blue week
Planned Intensity for the week	Very Hard	Hard	Moderate	Light / Regeneration
Rate of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Guide	8-10	6-7	4-5	1-3

Table 5: Guidance regards weekly average rate of perceived exertion for a Junior Age Grade international.

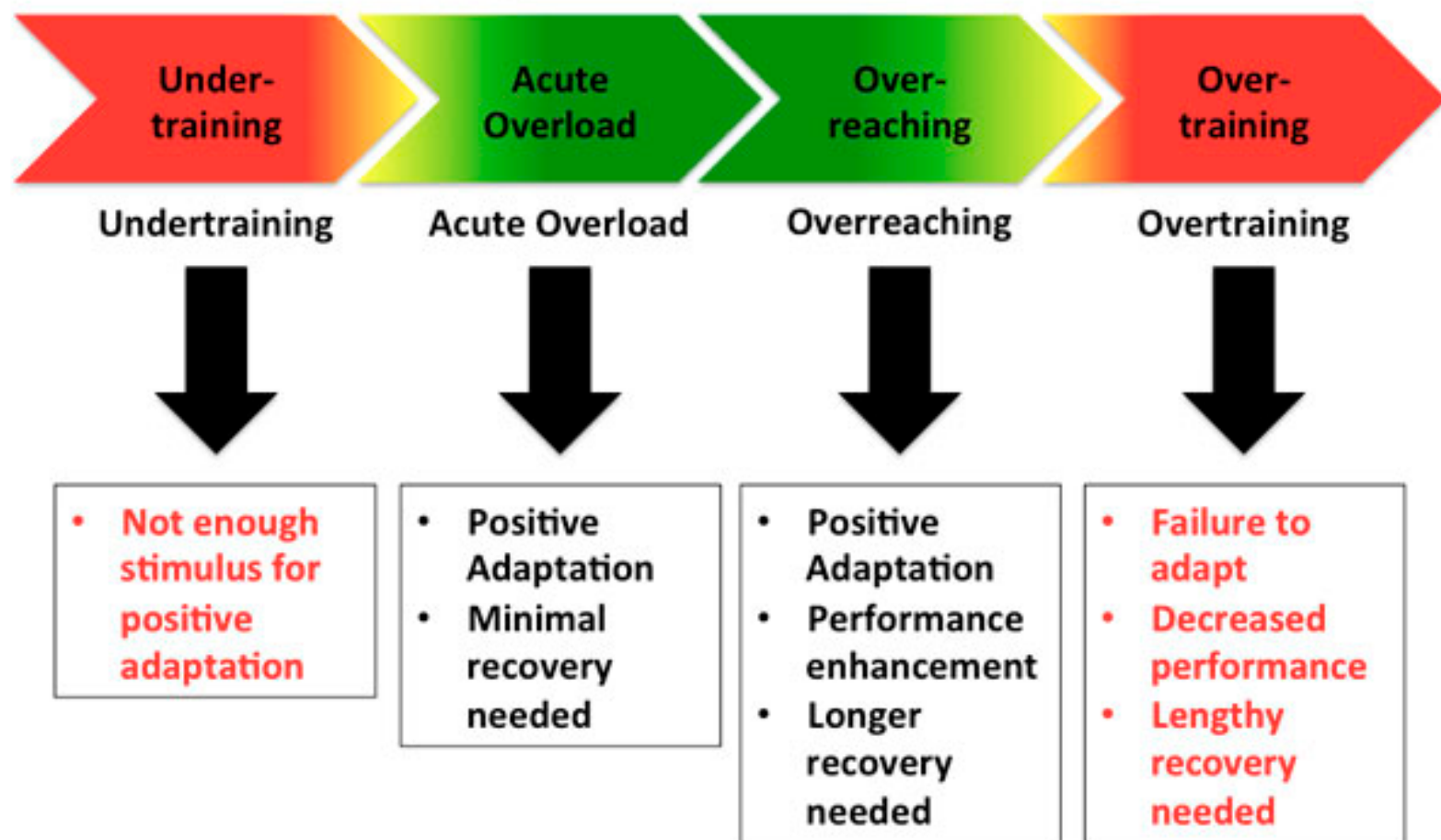
	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Game					Club	Option
Pitch session	Club - PM		CLB - PM			National training*
S&C - On field	Option		Option			
S&C - Gym based	Option	Option	Option	Option		
Recovery sessions	Swim	Sleep	Mobility	Sleep	Recovery Menu	Swim / Sleep
Other performance related requirements	Sleep		Nutrition	Massage	Nutrition	

Table 6: In-season guidance regards periodising a training week for a Junior Age Grade international.
*Possibly two field sessions at a National training day

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Game			School			Club	Option
Pitch session	School PM			Club - PM	School - AM		National training*
S&C - On field	Option			Option	Option		
S&C - Gym based	Option	Option		Option	Option		
Recovery sessions	Mobility	Swim	Sleep	Mobility	Sleep	Recovery Menu	Swim / Sleep
Other performance related requirements	Physio	Sleep		Nutrition	Massage	Nutrition	

Table 7: In-season guidance regards daily session selection for a Junior Age Grade international.
*Possibly two field sessions at a National training day

The Training Stimulus Continuum



WHAT NEXT?

Hockey Ireland are working in collaboration with the provinces to put a programme in place for players exiting a programme. This will ensure that all players who exit a National programme will return to a provincial programme and continue on the High Performance pathway.

If the Irish hockey community agrees to and delivers upon the much needed player welfare improvements outlined above, these identified players will more likely reach their performance potential and ultimately perform better and more consistently for our schools, clubs, provinces and national team.



QUESTIONS

Should you have any queries on this Junior Age Grade International Player Welfare Mandate please contact high.performance@hockey.ie.



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