

WILD ACADEMY

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To whom it may concern:

Please let me firstly introduce myself, my name is Chantelle, and I am the fundraiser for the Widnes Wild Academy.

You may not have heard of us before but that's okay because I am going to tell you all about us and the sport we love so much.



Widnes Wild Academy is a junior club for Ice Hockey, when you hear Ice Hockey people's first thought is 'NHL' and teams such as 'The Mighty Ducks'.

A lot of people from the UK don't know much about the sport at all and this is due to lack of exposure around Ice Hockey in the UK, and for some countries Ice Hockey is as popular as Football and Rugby are in the UK.

Ice Hockey is a hugely popular sport in territories like North America, Russia, and Europe. Ice Hockey is one of the world's most popular sports, specifically in the U.S and Canada where you have NHL (National Hockey League) which is the top league, otherwise known as **The Show**. It was founded in November 1917 in Montreal, Canada. The NHL has 31 teams with 24 of them coming from the U.S and the remaining coming from Canada.

Do you know . . . (Answers at the bottom).

- ? Who the original six teams are?
- ? What a puck is? – did you have to google it?
- ? What the Stanley cup is? – This is an easy guess.
- ? Do you know how thick the ice is?

Did you know . . .

- ✓ Players can lose up to 10lb during a game.
- ✓ Ice Hockey is the fastest team sport in the world.

In the UK the Ice Hockey league is known as EIHA (English Ice Hockey Association). The game consists of 6 players per team on the ice at one time, 5 of which are skaters and 1 netminder. In total, there are usually 20 players plus 2 netminders in a team and they are put into lines which take 45 seconds to 1-minute shifts rotating throughout the game. All players wear a full kit and a set of skates. The objective is to propel the puck past the goal line and into the guarded net.

Sounds simple enough right?

Ice hockey is the fastest team sport in the world and is played on a set of steel blades approx. 3mm thick, all players wear a full kit, so this adds extra weight, approx. 25lbs. Throw in the physicality of the game and it's not so simple after all.

1) Boston Bruins, Chicago Blackhawks, Detroit Red Wings, Montreal Canadiens, New York Rangers, Toronto Maple Leaf's. 2) A puck is a black disk made of rubber, the first was made from cow dung.3)A trophy awarded to the winner of the annual play – offs. 4) Optimal ice thickness is 40-50mm and has a concrete or sand base which 3mm of ice is built on top of, it is then painted white and marking added. The rest of the ice is then added on top.

WILD ACADEMY

Wild Academy is a junior Ice Hockey club based out of Planet Ice rink in Widnes. There have been a few attempts at creating a junior Ice Hockey team in Widnes since the rink opened, playing friendly games and entering some tournaments however in the past there has been no success in entering teams into the league.

Until now that is . . . let's take a trip down memory lane.

March 2017 saw the arrival of our new head coach Michael Gilbert, a young 19-year-old with some years of coaching experience as well as being an accomplished player himself. When Michael came to Widnes there was a very small number of players, 8 in total. In his first season with Widnes, Michael was able to progress the level of training and understanding of the game. He registered his first Academy team (u10's) into the league for the 2017-2018 season.

2018-2019 Season started with a change in age groups from the EIHA and so the once under u10's team now became u9's. This season Michael has successfully registered more age groups with the league, these being u9's, u13's and u15's.

By the **2019-2020 Season** the ages had changed once more, Michael had entered all age groups with the league and have all been competing since. During the pandemic the club was allowed to play games once the rinks had re-opened for sports, games were to be played between Planet Ice rinks only. We placed 2nd in the Planet Ice cup.

2021 - 2022 was a season we will never forget; this season saw our club win our first piece of silver wear. Our u10's team travelled to Sheffield for a tournament, playing clubs across the country. They came away with the cup. In the league season all teams competed too with two 2nd place finishes.

2022 -2023 this last season has been a spectacular year, all our teams have played amazingly and have provided some great games of Ice Hockey, as a club this has been our most successful year with the u12's winning the league and reaching nationals, u14's and u16's placing second in their retrospective leagues, our u18's finished mid table in a very strong league. U10's forming a strong campaign, however there is no league table for this age group. If there was, we would have sat at the top.

2023 -2024 A year of new beginnings. This season has seen us have to bounce back from losing some players due to an old club only 20 minutes away from us returning, causing us to lose some players due distance and other factors. However, even with these hurdles to overcome the 2023-2024 season has been a success and we have faced it head on. We have managed to still grow our numbers from last season, we have now created a strong affiliation with a junior club in Scotland providing our players with more opportunities.

Our other achievements this season are:

- We have added a second U18's team with one of them competing in the Division 1 league giving Widnes their first team in Division 1.
- Our U12's have made the nationals again for a second year in a row after finishing second in their league.
- We have had junior players play for the Widnes Wild Senior Men's team and other local teams. We have more and more of our Widnes home grown talent being invited down to take part in trials for the national teams.
- We have also had players representing our country playing abroad.
- In addition to this our player development has been thriving, and we have numerous players selected to play regional and national teams.



As well as all this, we have had so many brilliant performances from our amazing teams of players over the course of the season. We have lots of tournaments coming up over the summer for all to enjoy.

Our head coach has also thrived and progressed a lot during his time with the Academy, he has had many successful seasons as player, playing for Widnes Wild senior team. His hard work and dedication to developing his junior teams has been acknowledged and he has been selected to coach regional and national teams. This is a huge achievement and to add to this he is still young (26) with years ahead of him to develop himself and his academy even further.

Each season has seen a huge growth with the Academy, this being with training, coaching, player development and understanding of the sports. We have also seen our player numbers rise more and more, we currently have 84 players in the Academy with rising interest from players all over, we are currently offering trial dates for players to come and visit our club and see what we have to offer.

You should know our club mantra is **B.Y.B - BE YOUR BEST**.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Ice Hockey is a very expensive sport in the UK, ice time alone is a huge expense for clubs especially with the rising energy costs, add to this the cost of referee fees, ice hockey kit, registrations, and training courses.

Our coaches are volunteers, these are people who give up their free time multiple times a week to help progress the club and the children; they do this out of passion and wanting to help the players achieve their dreams and goals. Our committee and team managers are also volunteers.

The cost for a child to play Ice Hockey is high for parents, they have the cost of a full kit which if you investigate you will find is not cheap. They also must pay monthly subs; they travel to away games (sometimes 100-200 miles away return journey) which comes at a cost, this being fuel, meals and sometime overnight stays. They also pay for Jersey's and Merchandise.

Currently we do a lot of fundraising within the club to raise funds to pay referee fees etc. and with the costs rising yearly we are in need of some valuable help, this is where you come into play.

Most teams have numerous sponsors due to being established for a long time, however we are not as established as most teams and 2 years out of our 6 established were during a global pandemic, during this time businesses were understandably not in a position to help.

We are now looking for businesses to sponsor our Academy and help build a stable future for our players and club, to continue growing and developing the next generation of talent, and to promote Ice Hockey in the UK which can be done by sharing our social media accounts which you can find below. Different sponsorship packages are available to help our club, which businesses receive different benefits for.

If you are not able to provide sponsorship then donations would also be greatly appreciated, this can be monetary, tickets or goods that we can raffle during our senior games, which attracts big crowds from across the country.

Thank you for taking the time to read all about us.

If you would like further information then please reply to fundraiser@wildacademy.co.uk and cc mike.gilbert@wildacademy.co.uk into all emails.

Yours sincerely

Chantelle Head Fundraiser.

