

Definition of a Bubble A U14 Player

There are differing definitions of what a Bubble "A" U14 player is depending on who you ask. Many times this stems from the reference point being what Minnesota Hockey team designation the athlete last played on was. Unfortunately there is no constant using that as the basis for comparison, as each municipality is free to play at the level they designate with virtually no Minnesota Hockey oversight as to uniform skill requirements. Drastically different numbers of athletes and teams from one club to the next alters where players end up team wise. In addition, parent perception, and a coach's attachment to their club can create emotional obstacles as well. Finally there are a number of clubs at the Girls levels that have merged with one and sometimes two other associations in order to field teams at certain levels. That clouds the situation even further. In a nutshell, it is ESP Select Hockey's job, to help you select players who are at a target skill level, not players that are on certain teams. It is difficult to compare teams without a reference point. Unlike the boys levels where we list teams for comparison based on player numbers and total teams at a level and then use a percentage calculation as a fall back, we will simply use a couple of calculations for the girls levels and encourage prospective coaches to also look at the strength of their teams compared to teams they played this past season, how other teams in their own districts compare & even take a look at other districts in Minnesota by browsing the district websites for standings etc. Coaches can compare teams listed to their team by club size, win / loss records, & the outcomes of games with common opponents, & or head to head. All that information can be found on the Minnesota Hockey, District, & individual Club websites.

We respectfully ask you to take some care in assembling your team because unlike many off season game oriented leagues, ESP Hockey actually cares about parity between players and teams. You could say we are closer to fanatical about parity compared to most of our competitors. We have little interest in taking your money and dumping you into a league where the top team destroys the bottom team. Not only does that do a grave disservice to the players involved which is morally objectionable to us, but it's not a very astute business plan if you're looking for teams to return in subsequent seasons.

The first step in building a team that's competitive is to use a percentage calculation to even up the disparity between teams and associations. The key is finding your target top player as the starting point for the construction of your team. From there you can then work back 10-15 players' skill wise, to complete a team. The two percentage calculations are either 20% or 40%. The stature of an association as to the recent reputation of their girls program, and their successes in the most recent winter season will lead you to using one or the other. **Example:** Club with 29 U14's... fell into the bottom half of the district wins & losses... has two "B" teams and a total of 29 players should use the 20% calculation. So $29 \times 20\% = \text{Player \# 6}$ to start. Top 2-3 players on each "B" team are out & you'll then work back from there to get 9-11 skaters & the right goalie. A random mix of girls in a 10-15 player range "below" your top player will be a 3 on 3 team fit.

Tier 4: 11-17 total U14 girls in the Club (single team) & the team plays at the U14 B level, the 20% calculation finds us at the #2 or #3 player in the club as your starting point. In other words your sole "B" team pretty well intact top to bottom will be a good fit. However if the only squad is an "A" team (having merged with another club - or not) but is reasonably competitive at the "A" level you will want to use a 40% calculation which will be a better fit. **Example:** 13 players \times 40% gets us just beyond the first line on that team and evens out the skill compared to the club playing at "B".

Tier 3: 18-29 total U14's in the club (2 small teams) use the same calculations based on one "A" team and one "B" team with a total number of players between the two teams of say 24 players. **Example:** The 40% calculation gets us to the 10th player on that "A" team. But with 24 on two "B" teams use the 20% calculation to get you past the best 2 players on each "B" team (who are likely "A" players anyway).

Tier 2: 30-44 total U14's in the level (1 A & 1 or 2 B) \times 40% gets you to player #17 which means most of the top players on the two B teams are all eligible. If the teams struggled having spread themselves thin with 3 teams (with say 10 skaters per team) all the B players and maybe the least skilled player or 2 on the "A" team may be ok but win - loss records, common opponents, & head to head should allow you to tweak your team up or down if in those gray areas.

Tier 1: 45-60 total U14's in the club at the level with either 3 strong teams (1 "A" & 2 "B") or 4 total teams normally with 1 A & 3 B teams. **Example:** 60 players \times 40% gets you to the 24th player. Granted no players on the A team are eligible and the best 3 players on each of the 3 B teams may also be too skilled but a couple of 1st line B's from each team qualify to play as they are on the true ESP bubble based on our matrix. With all the second line players from each team available as well, the team should have uniform depth & will compete well in that way shift by shift in their 3 on 3 games.

The above Tiers address the relative strength of different sized & configured associations so parity in our leagues is achieved. Players & teams will now be able to execute by playing against a team and players that match them. Teams and or players that smother opponents or those being smothered don't develop ideal individual or team execution skills.

Girls Hockey is unique & ESP takes great pride in promoting the growth of "ladies exclusive" leagues instead of forcing them into 3 on 3 boys leagues, as some of our competitors have chosen to do. It's far more challenging to build girls only leagues but we believe it's the right thing to do as we continue to expand and evolve as an organization. Please use the ranking system on our team registration sheet & ESP Hockey will do a final check against opponent registration forms.