



“Top Prospects” Program

Introduction

In its efforts to continually raise the level of team handball in the United States, USA Team Handball will introduce an Olympic Development initiative - **The “Top Prospects Program” or TPP (former Futures)** in 2011. Through “Top Prospects Program”, USA Team Handball will recruit, evaluate, identify, and retain talented young athletes, both girls and boys, with the potential to become future Olympic level performers.

Mission and Vision

The **mission** of the Top Prospects Program is to regionally develop the best athletes for the purpose of identifying talented “future” Olympic level players, and to strengthen the competitive level of team handball throughout the United States.

The **vision** for the Top Prospects Program is to use its regional sites as exemplary training grounds for most promising athletes, coaches, as well as officials of the new generation through application of the best curriculum as well as best training and coaching practices.

Goals and Objectives

The **goal** of the Top Prospects Program is to develop, based on games’ characteristics, its future trends, and current sport science knowledge, new type of athletes equipped with a set of technical, tactical, cognitive, psychological, conditioning skills prerequisite to successfully compete on highest international level per respective age groups.

The ultimate **objective** of the Top Prospects Program is to match aforementioned skill set with unique American cultural composition and character traits to arrive at original “style” of play handball that can be with time implemented across the country and our National Teams. Graduates from the Top Prospect Program will be prepared to take on more rigorous training regimen, fulfill more complex functions and responsibilities required to achieve and sustain high performance competitive level for their gender specific National Teams.

Gender and Age Categories

The Top Prospects Program is intended for all 4 age groups, listed below, that are aligned with USATH Athlete Development Pipeline Model (attached). However, based on 2011 budget, primary consideration for funding will be given to Youth and Cadet categories:

Gender & AGE	MINIS	HOPES	CADET	YOUTH
GIRLS	12 & younger	14 & younger	16 & younger	18 & younger
BOYS	12 & younger	14 & younger	17 & younger	19 & younger

Organizational and Functional Structure

Each of the Top Prospects Program Sites will be independently organized, run and staffed with a Site Director and Head Coach. Engaging an assistant coach will be optional based on feasibility and local circumstances. Respective site Directors will report directly to the Top Prospects Program National Manager or Designee who will report directly to USA Team Handball Technical Director. Each approved, new and existing, TP site will receive apportioned base financial support for its operations, per approved annual budget and eligibility criteria set by the USATH. Additional funding, if desired and/or needed, must be site-generated.

To qualify for the base funding, each Top Prospects new and existing site must meet the following minimum criteria (A) and agree to fulfill the following requirements (B):

A. Top Prospects Program Minimum Criteria:

- Identify, engage, retain Site Manager to oversee site's operations in cooperation with TP National Program Manager and who will attend annually scheduled training for site managers;
- Identify, engage, retain a Head Coach who will become USATH certified (Level 2) within 24 months of program's inception and attend annually scheduled training for Head Coaches;
- Identify, engage, retain at least 16 players, per selected age group per gender, who will become USATH members, annually;
- Identify, engage, retain an Assistant Coach who will become USATH certified (Level 1,) within 12 months of program's inception, for groups larger than 20 players, per age/gender group, to maintain instructors to participants ratio of 1:20.

B. Top Prospects Program Minimum Requirements:

- Agree to implement USATH approved Top Prospects curriculum including rules changes for competitions per respective age groups and individualized practice sessions for goalkeepers, either during team practices or as separate units;
- Provide seasonal list of all athletes engaged in the TPP, including their personal information; (please see USATH TPP Application attached)
- Provide seasonal training schedule (dates & times, location) reflecting practice requirements per age group and competition schedule, including in-house scrimmages and official matches (dates, times, locations, opponents);
- Agree to provide additional support for athletes named to the USATH National Team Pools;
- Agree to participate in HS/Top Prospect National Championships with at least one team, annually, per USATH calendar.

In addition to Top Prospects main sites with locally managed teams, the TP Program will feature recruiting, training, evaluation, selection, and competition opportunities for regionally identified prospective athletes who, due to their current residency location, may not have an access to established TP site. The program will be introduced in 2011, fully integrated into the model in 2012, and implemented in two (2) steps:

1. Regional on-line recruitment (January-April) and on-site weekend long regional tryouts (April-May). The TP National Manager or Assistant along with regional site

directors and coaches will develop and deploy strategy to attract top upside athletes to handball and register as candidates for further screening. Interested prospective athletes will use on-line system to register including their personal profiles and results of basic morphological info (height, weight, arm span, hand size) as well as physical testing (30m sprint, vertical jumping, and Cooper Test). The on-site tryouts will be exclusively handball specific and self-funded. Target age will be 15 for girls and 16 years old for boys. Possible locations include:

- Northeast: New Jersey, NY or Boston, MA
 - Southeast: Sarasota, FL or Atlanta, GA
 - Midwest: Lake Barrington or Chicago or Naperville, IL
 - Southwest: Houston, TX or TBD
 - West: Los Angeles, CA or Colorado Springs, Co, Denver, CO or Salt lake City, UT.
2. Top Prospects National Training Camp and AAU Junior Olympics (July) combined with selection of TP teams (U-15/16) for European Tour (August). Top 40-60 athletes, from all regions combined, will be invited to attend week long training camp and competing at AAU Junior Olympics. Top 16 athletes per gender in U-15/16 age group will be selected for the European Tour. The event is self-funded.
 3. Top Prospects European Tour (August). The trip is self-funded.

For the 2011/2012 season, starting after Labor Day, regional on-line recruitment will become on-going process with on-site regional tryouts moved into late fall and early winter (September-February) and complimented with mandatory regional training camp in early spring (April-May) for all athletes seeking selection for Top Prospects National Training Camp prior to the AAU Junior Olympics that will serve as a direct selection for the TP European Tour. In the new quad, 2012-2016, Top Prospects Program should add one additional mandatory regional training camp per year for players seeking selection to TP National Training Camp. Those weekend long consultations will play important role in tracking players' progress and providing additional HP instructions to the most aspiring and talented players in the pipeline.

Curriculum, Training & Competitions Guidelines & Requirements

Top Prospects curriculum is based on 6 months of instruction per season including 20 (for 1st year programs) to 30 (for 2nd and each subsequent year) standard training units, 20 mandatory and 10 optional but recommended, varying in length from 60 minutes for Minis to 90 minutes for Youth. The program is designed for young players 10 years old through 18 years old for girls and 19 years old for boys. Athletes' ages are determined as of December 31 of the previous year.

At minimum, it requires teams to meet 1-2 times a week for practices. The curriculum is a cutting age program aligned with USATH Athlete Development Pipeline Model, attached, providing comprehensive breakdown of skills that players should become proficient at the end of each developmental phase. All coaches working with Top Prospects athletes must not only be certified to teach this curriculum but implement it consistently as presented. Most important elements of the curriculum are already in place with additional materials (video illustrations for key technical and tactical skills and concepts) to become available in 2011 and 2012.

Please see, attached, set of 20 practices (for 1st year programs) with their key thematic and content areas as well as specific skill /concept targets per age group as primary implementation

reference for coaches. The template should be followed as presented but respective coaching staff has full flexibility in practice design to meet developmental objectives set for athletes and to expand the content based on actual number of practices, players' readiness and progress made. Coaches should contact Technical Director directly with any additional questions and for supplementary explanations.

In-house scrimmages, friendly local control games and official matches are in addition to training sessions. The mandatory rule changes for official games, ball size, recommended number of games and their lengths per age group are presented below:

Season	MINIS U-12	HOPES U-14	CADET U-16	YOUTH U-18
Number of games	6	8	10	10
Length of Games	2 x 15 minutes	2 x 20 minutes	2 x 25 minutes	2 x 30 minutes
Ball's size	#0 & 1	#1 & 2	#2	# 2 (W) & 3 (M)
Rule Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●Mandatory use of full-court "Man to Man" defense during entire match ●Substitutions allowed only when in possession of the ball (in offense) ●Should follow mini-handball guidelines & rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory use of half-court "Man to Man" defense during entire match ●Substitutions allowed only when in possession of the ball (in offense) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory use of half-court "Man to Man" defense during first half of each match, 2nd half – any zone but 6:0 ●Substitutions allowed only when in possession of the ball (in offense) 	None

Please see "Mandating Man-to-Man Defense" document, attached, for detailed explanation of required and optional rules changes taking effect on January 1, 2011 for Minis, Hopes, and Cadet age groups. Also, please notice that 2011 and beyond HS/Top Prospects National Championships will be contested according to new rule changes per respective age group. Rules modification will be subject to change from season to season, depending on needs and overall USATH strategic developmental vision.

Current Sites

1. Colorado Springs, CO, (Boys) – Kathy Rex
2. Los Angeles, CA, (Girls) – Julio Sainz
3. Denver, CO, (Girls) – Attila Agoston
4. Salt Lake City, UT, (Boys and Girls) – Mohamed Emira
5. Bozeman, MO, (Girls) – Dawn Allinger
6. New Jersey, NJ, (Girls) – Robert Michalik

2011 Proposed Expansion Sites

1. Salt Lake City, UT (1-2)
2. Chicago, IL (2)
3. Lake Barrington, IL (1-2)
4. Minneapolis, MN (1)

5. Houston, TX (1)
6. Fresno, CA (1)
7. New York City (2-3)
8. Sarasota, FL (1)
9. Los Angeles and/or San Diego, CA (1)
10. Atlanta, GA (1)

USATH Support for Top Prospects Program (TPP)

USATH support for the Top Prospects Program will encompass three (3) areas:

1. Budgetary, per HP budget approved by the USOC
2. Methodological
 - USATH approved curriculum
 - USATH instructional materials
 - USATH Coaching Education and Certification Program
3. Managerial and Logistic
 - USATH appointed Manager/Assistant to oversee and support all new and existing sites
 - USATH website for up-to-date information and promotion
 - USATH sanctioned HS/Top Prospects National Championships
 - USATH HP international and domestic competitions

2011 Competition Calendar and Top Prospects Opportunities for Selection to the USA Team Handball National Teams

	Girls	Boys
Jan.		
Feb.		Selection Camps for MYNT U-19, UNC and CS
March		
April		Pre-competition Training Consultation (1992 & younger), TBD PATHF Elite Youth Champs (VEN)
May		
June	Lake Barrington, IL – Top Prospects National Championships & Selection for Partille Cup (U-16 W/M), PATHF Cadet Champs (W), 06/10-12	
July	Partille Cup, SWE, (U-15/16 M/W), June 26 – July 10	
Aug.		Men’s Youth (U-19 born in 1992 and younger) World Championships (ARG) if qualified from PATHF
Sep.	Pre-competition Training Consultation (1996 & up) at TBD/TBA, pending approval PATHF Cadet Champs (MEX), 1 st week	Pre-competition Training Consultation (1996 & up) at TBD/TBA, pending approval PATHF Cadet Champs (MEX), last week
Oct.		
Nov.	Pre-competition Training Consultation (1991)	

	& younger) at TBD	
	PATHF Junior Women Div. 1 Championships, Guatemala	
Dec.	Top Prospects On-site Regional Tryouts, TBD	

Best Top Prospects athletes in each gender and age group will be eligible for respective USATH National Teams. Also, regionally selected most talented and advanced athletes will be invited to participate in additional domestic and international training and competition opportunities such as Partille Cup and/or Top Prospects National Training Camp and AAU Junior Olympics and Top Prospects European Tour(s) per calendar.

Budget

See attached Excel file for full details.

Attachments

1. USATH Athlete Development Pipeline Model (PDF)
2. Dedicated Practice Model – Principles and Implementation Guidelines (PDF)
3. Modern Handball – Game Characteristics and Implications for Training (PDF)
4. Mandating Man-to-Man Defense
5. Top Prospects Program – 1st Year Curriculum and Implementation Guidelines
6. USATH Guide to Handball – Elementary, Middle School, and High School (PDF)
7. USATH Top Prospects Program Application