



SCHEDULE RELEASED

The making of the 2008 Nike Bauer International AAA Invite schedule was a process that actually began six months ago, and the final product is now released. It started as a blank canvas. It spans time and space, accounting for 781 games in a 57 hour window. Today it becomes the road map for 352 teams' journey to the Nike Bauer Championship.

Creating the schedule was a tedious manual process, not unlike putting together a giant jigsaw puzzle without a picture on the box to work from. Thirty eight (38) sheets of ice will be utilized in nineteen (19) different ice facilities around Chicago. Care was given to playing teams you do not normally see, 2007-08 rankings, logistics, travel considerations and any special requests noted on each team's application form. Twenty four (24) teams are attending the Chicago Blackhawks game on Friday night which required them finishing up their 2nd game in time to attend the event. Thirty (30) teams have coaches doing more than one team which required allowing time between games to get to as many as possible. I tried to make sure we had a minimum of three hours between any two games for one team. And finally, behind the scenes, I have assigned numbered seeds in all divisions as part of my projections.

As you know we have two separate divisions this year at the 1997, 1996, 1995, 1994 and U16 age levels and any system that uses a subjective poll to place teams will always take heat. There will always be some teams that did not get into the level they desire. The current system I used benefited teams that did well in their respective league, polls, and who have been on top consistently. However, it does penalize teams that may have improved drastically from last year. In other words if you do not start out highly ranked after last season (subjective or at best based on previous year) league standing & polls, then your chances of playing in the Nike Division were severely diminished. I did go back and look at the September 2008 tournaments to date to see if some teams have improved in their early events. I am sure most teams feel they have upgraded and improved for this coming year but so have many others.

For the record, my definition of parity is less concerned with lower seeds trying to play up with higher seeds than simply seeing if the margin of victory between the seeds can be decreased. Having more competitive games for all teams makes for a more entertaining tournament. It allows teams the opportunity to really compete. Again, that's a good thing. Parity means no games can be taken for granted in either division. Anybody can beat anybody. Nothing is better or does more to keep interest high in AAA hockey than evenly contested games. Anyone who thinks domination is good for all is wrong. I think we all like it when there's a bunch of teams capable of competing in an event. I think last year there was really no mystery before a lot of games started other than how wide the margin of victory would be. Now, everyone starts out 0-0 and doesn't have to feel out of the event if they drew the likes of a powerhouse team. Now one loss may mean very little, a loss before can be devastating to a team's chances of making the playoffs. Last year every game was a must-win - that is not parity; that's just scheduling.

After a very successful first year with this format we work extremely hard to make sure we have good match ups for all the teams involved once again.

This schedule is **FINAL**. While every coach and manager wants to ensure that their own schedule is ideal ~ there's no pleasing everybody.

Thanks
Kevin Mann

www.nikebauerinvite.com