

# Lakers Practice Scheduling Policies for 2004-05

In scheduling Laker teams for practice ice, I try to abide by the following considerations:

- The ice available is determined at the start of the season by our ice contracts with Lake Ave. I can occasionally pick up some extra ice at other facilities, but that's the exception, not the rule.
- We tend to have more ice at the start and end of the season, because high school and college seasons take up ice time in the Nov-Feb period, and the Learn-to-Skate program doesn't start up until October.
- Most practice slots at Lake Ave are only 50 minutes. A few slots on Sunday at 12:30 may last 1hr 20 min. For accounting purposes, I treat them all the same.
- The Leagues schedule all the games. In general (or at least, in the past), Westboro schedules their games first, without regard to other leagues, but they will try to schedule around any out-of-state tournaments you may be attending if you give them sufficient advance notice. Marlboro comes out with their schedule next, and they attempt to avoid conflicts with Westboro and other leagues. They are mostly successful, but not always. They have a very specific procedure for addressing any conflicts, all based on email communications. Team managers and coaches – check your email daily!!!
- In the early part of the season, when the first parity rounds are completing in mid-October, games schedules will change, and confusion will reign. I will try to get new practice schedules out ASAP after the post-parity game schedules come out, but there will inevitably be some conflicts during the last two weeks of October that coaches/managers will have to resolve.
- Team Pictures are also scheduled for mid-October. This may require some additional last-minute adjustments to the practice schedule.
- I schedule practice ice around all known game schedules and tournament plans, subject to a number of mandatory constraints:
  - Mites are off the ice by 8pm
  - Squirts are off the ice by 9pm
  - Peewees and Bantams are off the ice by 10pm. Since we have no practice ice that starts later than 9pm, that's not a real problem.
  - Per previous vote of the Lakers Board, Peewees will only be scheduled for 9pm ice as a last resort.
  - What this means, is that Mites will get most of the 7pm ice. Squirts and Peewees will float around, and, even though its late on a school night, Squirts will tend to get 8pm slots. Peewee's will get 8pm's and occasional 9pm's. Because we have no Midget teams this year, and only 3 Bantams teams, roughly 80% of all Bantam practices will be at 9pm.
  - The Learn-To-Skate Program gets the same three hours every weekend.
  - No team will practice more than once per day
  - Mosquito teams practice only once per week, usually on Saturday at 1pm, but that can change to avoid game conflicts.
  - All practice ice is used
  - I will track the number of 9pm's each team receives. The 9pm's will be evenly distributed between the Bantam teams over the long run - not necessarily over every schedule issued.
  - I will track the number of early hours (before 6pm on weeknights) each team receives. The early hours will be evenly distributed between all teams over the long run - not necessarily over every schedule issued.
  - The Beanpot Tournament and special Laker clinics (Checking, Goaltending, Power Skating, etc.) will take up some limited number of available ice hours that will not be available for regular team practices.
  - The Mite clinics don't count as practices, even though they use our regular practice ice. That's because the Board approved a new Mite development program where Mites play in only one league, and have extra clinics through the year.
- Where possible, I try to accomplish several other objectives:
  - No practices on game days.
  - If that's not possible, then no practices within 3 hours of a game.
  - All teams get at least one practice every 7-day period, more if we have sufficient ice
  - Teams will never share the ice with another team that is more than one age-level different (i.e. Mites will never share with Peewees or Bantams, etc.) Sometimes you will share with a team one age level higher or lower. This is a safety issue and some teams may luck into a "free" full-ice practice because there are no compatible teams without conflicts.
  - At the end of each scheduled period, the difference between the team with the most practices and the team with the least practices will not be more than one game (excepting the Mosquito teams)
  - If a coach tells me that his team has a large number of players on "Select" teams that play their games on Sunday afternoons, I will try to avoid scheduling that team for practice when it would conflict with the Select team game schedule. Note that the Outlaws, Northstars and other "select" teams are part of USAHockey, and are therefore supported by the Lakers. Metro Hockey is not affiliated in any way with USAHockey, so I will not be able to make any efforts to schedule around Metro games.
- By default, all practices are scheduled as split ice. However, if you let me know in advance, I can schedule a team for a full-ice practice. This means you will give up two half-ice practices to get one full-ice practice. Sometimes a team will get a full-ice practice because no other team can use the other half. In those cases, the full ice will still only count as a half-ice practice for the lucky team that gets it. This doesn't happen much, but it can happen on weekend days when we have 8 hours of practice ice with one or more teams out of town for a tournament.
- I will try to honor special requests and preferences from head coaches only, to avoid certain days or certain hours.
  - This is to make it easier on our head coaches to respect their work, family, and civic commitments.
  - Special requests are treated as "preferences" only, and it may not be possible to accommodate everyone, or anyone (especially in December when ice gets tight). Coaches should take advantage of their assistant coaches to run practices when they can't attend.

- If you get scheduled for a practice that conflicts with your expressed preferences, it means there was no other possible schedule that didn't violate at least one of the mandatory constraints.
- I will be much more sympathetic to your needs or gripes if you are willing to take some hours that others don't like. If you help solve my problems, I'll help solve yours. For example, if you'll take extra 9pm practices, I can avoid giving you 5pm slots.
- In general, I will try to put out a new schedule about once a month that covers approximately a one-month period. I will try to get this out at least one week (more, if possible) in advance to give you and your parents time to plan. If I schedule longer periods, or put the schedule out earlier, it just increases the leadtime for when you have to notify me of conflicts/preferences that you would like reflected.

Once all the conflicts and preferences have been identified, I use mathematical optimization software to find the schedule with the highest "satisfaction" level. The software helps ensure that all of the above factors are reflected in a way that gets everyone the best possible schedule. And it keeps me from making lots of dumb mistakes.

By far the best way to communicate preferences or tournament plans to me is by email ([jblowell@charter.net](mailto:jblowell@charter.net)). I check my email very frequently, and it gives me a record of what you want. The second best way is to call me on my cell phone (508-410-9155) or at home (508-835-2729), and leave a message if I'm not there. Be aware, when you use the phone, you are relying on my not-terribly-good memory for details.

When a new practice schedule comes out, I will distribute it through several channels:

- post it on the internet at [www.jblowell.com/Laker\\_Schedules.asp](http://www.jblowell.com/Laker_Schedules.asp), where you can view, download, or email schedules in any of several formats, including several that make updating your PDA or Microsoft Outlook calendar very fast. Note that the Lakers web site at [www.lakersyouthhockey.com](http://www.lakersyouthhockey.com) links directly to my schedule web site
- distribute it by email to everyone on the Practice Schedule Email Distribution list (Executive Board Members, Head Coaches, Team Managers, and anyone else requesting to be added to the list)
- distribute it at monthly Laker Business Meetings in hard-copy format if the timing of the meeting coincides reasonably well with the schedule release date

The schedule will be available in a number of different formats. Hopefully, at least one will meet your needs.

- simple list via Web browser
- Adobe Acrobat .pdf file
- Excel spreadsheet with a calendar showing all teams, and a list that can be sorted by team, date, or whatever,
- text file suitable for importing into Microsoft Outlook
- text file that can be converted to a Palm datebook archive file for downloading to your Palm-compatible PDA.
- "csv" file (comma separated values) that is easy to import into spreadsheets and many other software applications.
- text file simple list

You can use the web site to sign up for automatic email reminders for games and practices. This can also be used to send text messages to your cell phone.

If there's a format you'd like to see that this range of options can't accommodate, just ask. It will help if you have some documentation (or know where to find it) that describes the format in detail.

The various lists and files will include the scheduled games from both leagues and any tournaments I knew about when the practice ice schedule was prepared. Since these often change, please rely on your Team Manager for the most current information. I provide them mostly to help coaches who are trying to arrange ice swaps, and need to know when other teams have games that might make a swap impossible.

If you find a problem with a new schedule after it has been published, I would appreciate being informed (once again, email is best) so I can avoid making the same mistake twice if at all possible. Unless it is a widespread problem affecting most of our teams, it will probably not be possible to redo and reissue the schedule. That just compounds the confusion. Head Coaches and Team Managers should do their best to trade off the problem hour with another team who can better use it. That's why I distribute the practice and game schedules for all teams – it will help you identify teams to swap with. I will try to include phone numbers to make the job easier.

Don't forget to tell me about your tournament plans, at least a month in advance, if you want to be sure not to lose any practice ice!

Jon Lowell  
[jblowell@charter.net](mailto:jblowell@charter.net)  
 508-835-2729