

# Q and A 2026

Junior League

What is the thinking behind switching Provincials to a double-knockout? And will it be a true double knockout or single elimination after the first game?

This is about school league not junior league. But yes, it is a true double elim where every team will lose twice except 1<sup>st</sup> place.

This change was made to align with MHSAA standards for team sports as well as to align with the LTD for Ultimate.

# Please describe the structure of the program and its overall goals.

MODS Junior coaching staff strive to adhere to Ultimate Canada's Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model when facilitating junior programming and assessing outcomes. According to this model, the goal for our athletes includes:

- U14 – LTAD Stages: FUNdamentals (FUN) and Learn to Play (L2P)
  - Learn all fundamental movement skills and introduce basic Ultimate skills in a fun environment
  - Develop a basic understanding of Spirit of the Game
  - Introduce basic throwing and catching skills
  - Engage in small games that encourage teamwork and cooperation and basic decision making
  - Develop agility, balance, coordination

The emphasis at the U14 level is to develop skill and confidence (de-emphasize winning) in a safe and supportive environment.

# Please describe the structure of the program and its overall goals.

- U18 – LTAD Stage: Train to Play
  - Train athletes based on their physical, technical, tactical, mental, cognitive, and emotional development
  - Deepen understanding of SOTG (ex. Practice conflict resolution)
  - Develop and consolidate skills learned in previous stages
  - Learn position-specific strategies (both offense and defense)

The emphasis at the U18 level is to continue developing athletes both physically and mentally. Coaches aim to provide personalized expectations as games progress, based on each athlete's physical capacities and skill level. Athletes are working towards enjoyment of the game and more recreational participation in Ultimate (this is not the same as participating in the High Performance programs).

# How are the scrimmages organized? Are coaches assigned to each team?

- The first 2 sessions are typically reserved for general skill assessment, which may include drills or scrimmages. Once assessment is complete, depending on the program, structure is then determined.
- U14 – Athletes may be split according to age/skill to maximize use of available field space. Practice plans are then followed which identify a specific focus each week, including a warmup, drill, and time for scrimmage. The goal is to spend approximately 30 mins for warmup/drill and 30 mins for scrimmage.
- U18 – Athletes are assigned to teams, each with a dedicated coach. Those teams then stay together for the remainder of the season playing in a round robin type set up followed by a playoff in the last 2 weeks. Coaches may decide as appropriate to spend some time on team skill development, in which case 15-20 minutes may be reserved ahead of scrimmage (the goal however is to have 30-45 minutes of scrimmage each week). As the season progresses, coaches meet to discuss any observations and make adjustments to the program as necessary (i.e.. team adjustments due to injury or parity).

Note: The program has experienced issues with attendance due to weather and other outside factors in which case, teams are adjusted for numbers each week and gender rules are adjusted with feedback from the players and the discretion of the coaches to ensure fair play time.

How will coaches manage the different skill levels (2012-2015 is a large range, with players coming from diverse backgrounds and levels of experience)

- Coaches strive to provide a safe, inclusive, and fair space for athletes of all skill levels to continue Ultimate in the winter and have an opportunity play with other players from different schools and regions to grow the community spirit of ultimate.
- It is inevitable in these programs that athletes will come with varied experience levels and so coaches apply approaches including pairing up players/groups of players, of similar skill as much as possible. If athletes show higher skill for their age, they may be invited to become a 'leader' and help with warmups or drill demonstration.

It is challenging for middle schoolers to know where they should be on the field positionally, when to cut and what type of cut to make to get to flow. How will this program work to teach these positional skills?

Coaches endeavor to provide athletes with a combination of both structured and unstructured play (with some instruction) as this stage of development benefits from both. We hope to develop athlete physical literacy outcomes with this approach, however our goal is to avoid early over-specialization. For example, it can be difficult to provide U14 athletes with "set" decisions as you also want them to have the freedom of exploring the space on the field as much as possible. Giving them some instruction ex. "This is option 1 and this is option 2" during drills, is a starting point, and coaches then work to reinforce these skills during scrimmage (either individually with athletes on the sidelines, or in group settings during timeouts or pauses in play).

# How much time will be dedicated to working on defense skills?

The current 12-week program plan includes dedicated weeks for assessment, throwing/catching, offensive cutting/footwork, and defensive footwork and positioning. The needs of each group will dictate the material covered during practice, but this is generally the plan we follow (high-level):

- Defensive practice goals: to develop reaction, positioning, and ability to stay with an offensive player
- Practice 1: stance and agility (introduction of marking, drills will include focus on proper stance and practice shuffling)
- Practice 2: defensive reaction (will incorporate reactive drills with a focus on footwork)
- Practice 3: defensive positioning (will introduce downfield defense, some basic concepts of home/away, break/force, quadrants, etc.)

NOTE: Each session is only 1 hour, so we do our best to spend half the time working on skills and the other half applying them via scrimmaging. The main goal for this age group and program is to develop physical literacy while introducing the fundamentals of the game. High level/more advanced concepts are not typically covered.

# Overall

In a perfect world, we would have the participant numbers to run much smaller age groups. We are getting closer to this.

Long term goals: Junior programs will be U12, U14, U17, U24 \*subject to change

Would like to have full U18 league with set teams registering that not only come for games but that have practices as well.