

## *Press Release*

# **First international pond hockey tournament at Lake Weissensee / Carinthia January 16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

The term “Pond Hockey” can be translated as “Teichhockey” in German – a phrase that evokes memories of carefree winter days in childhood for many. Back then, pond hockey was the essence of leisure, fun, and the pure joy of winter sports with like-minded people and friends. Spontaneous games on frozen ponds and lakes were a common part of winter life. Young and old alike, anyone who could stand on ice skates and had a hockey stick – whether handcrafted or received as a Christmas present – joined in. It was hockey as it used to be.

In Canada and Scandinavia, pond hockey tournaments with more than 100 teams have long been established. Similar tournaments are also very popular in Switzerland and South Tyrol. In 2026, this unique experience will become a reality in Austria for the first time.

Lake Weissensee in Carinthia is one of the few lakes in Central Europe that offers natural ice, providing the perfect setting for an event of this kind.

For the first international pond hockey tournament at Lake Weissensee, 20 playing fields measuring 30 x 18 meters will be prepared. 1,800 meters of wooden boards, 40 goals with a height of 25 cm, along with 60 referees and numerous volunteers, will ensure optimal playing conditions. Up to 96 teams can register for this Austrian premiere in January 2026.

Initial feedback from across Austria and neighboring countries already indicates significant interest. In addition to the main competition for adults, separate tournaments for children, youth, and women will also be held. The target group for this tournament is all hockey enthusiasts who are not active in one of the top three ice hockey leagues in their home country and who prioritize the fun of the game over competitive ambition.

“We particularly want to inspire active hobby hockey teams to participate,” says Christian Kresse, who himself has been an enthusiastic hockey player for many years and still laces up his skates once a week in winter. “Games will be played on small rinks – without body checking, without slap shots, and with simple equipment consisting of shin guards, gloves, elbow pads, and a helmet. Each game will be three against three outfield players. In total, each team can nominate up to nine players.”

“The Carinthian Ice Hockey Association will make a special effort to encourage many young ice hockey fans to participate,” emphasizes Michael Löschnig, President of the Carinthian Ice Hockey Association.

The two organizers, Christian Kresse and Gerhard Brüggler, expect over 900 players and more than 1,000 accompanying persons for the tournament at Lake Weissensee.

“The new ice hockey tournament will not only attract numerous guests to Lake Weissensee and the entire region in January, but it also serves as an ideal complement to the subsequent speed skating marathons

as part of the alternative Dutch 11-City Tour,” emphasizes Mayor Karoline Turnscek of the Weissensee municipality.

Registration for participation is now open at [www.pondhockey.at](http://www.pondhockey.at). The participation fee per team is €350.

In the first year, teams from Austria, South Tyrol, Slovenia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Germany, and Switzerland are expected to take part. Teams from America and Scandinavia are also being targeted.

“In the interest of sustainability, special attention will be paid to utilizing the existing infrastructure of the 11-City Tour, which takes place immediately after the Pond Hockey Tournament. For example, the tent city of the 11-City Tour will serve as both a changing area for the 96 teams and as a venue for the evening events,” explains Gerhard Brüggler, who brings his extensive experience from numerous successfully organized events to Weissensee.

The first Pond Hockey Tournament at Lake Weissensee is being organized by Christian Kresse and Gerhard Brüggler. The Carinthian Ice Hockey Association, under the leadership of its president Michael Löschnig, is the official partner for the sporting organization and execution of the event.

Organizers:

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Tournament Management:

- Carinthian Ice Hockey Association

**Further information and registration at: [www.pondhockey.at](http://www.pondhockey.at)**

Text and content: Christian Kresse, May 12th, 2025

