

## 2020/2021 U7 Year End Report

U7 began the season with 74 registered players. This was a surprising increase of 9 players compared to last season. Players were randomly divided into three preconditioning groups and given three ice sessions with these groups. After all three skates, players were evaluated and split into 6 teams, based on skill level. All coaches were involved in the making of the teams. We were fortunate enough to have 11 coaches certified with their Coach I Certification and 3 other volunteers complete their Respect in Sport and other certifications to qualify them to be on the ice with players. All coaches and volunteers submitted their CRC.

We began this season by purchasing a second set of mini nets and another set of bumpers to be housed at the Don Ross. Access Communication Centre, Battleford Arena and the Don Ross Arena now have their own sets of bumper pads. Mini nets are housed at Don Ross and Battleford Arena. This investment in equipment will serve the younger age groups for years to come.

This season was extremely challenging due to the constant changes related to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the season was able to begin quite “normally”, things evolved quickly and restrictions made planning, playing and practicing near impossible. When BMHA decided to shut down any and all activities mid December, we had 14 registrants and two head coaches leave our association and programming. This resulted in a switch from six teams to five teams of 9-13 players and a new combination of coaches. When practices resumed early January, ice times were reduced from one hour to 45 mins in length and each team was given two ice slots to accommodate their team to skate in two groups of 8 or less. We also reduced spectating to one adult per skater and all participants and spectators were required to wear masks at all times as well as use the RAMP app to complete COVID screening pre practices.

Feedback from the coaches this season was that the smaller group sizes and lack of ability to play games, created an environment that fostered a high level of skill development. They recognized the rate at which their players were improving as being very fast. Although the kids felt they missed out on game play, they were able to come a long way this year in terms of technical skills. U7 Skill Reviews were completed by all the coaches for all remaining skaters in order to document where their skills were at and include some comments on how the season went. We hope these will come in handy next year when returning players are split into teams.

### Forecast/Recommendations:

Moving into the next season, 8 coaches and their children will be moving up to U9, leaving U7 in a position of requiring many new volunteers. All volunteers/coaches should be asked to submit an equipment request at the beginning of the season. Items could include pylons, cones, coaching tools, etc. BMHA would consider covering the costs of reasonable equipment requests. In hopes that COVID restrictions will relax by the beginning of next season, including the AAAs and North Stars in the U7 programming is something that I encourage to happen,

especially in the beginning of the season before those older teams enter playoffs. Fostering connections into the older age groups really motivates these little skaters and supports coaches. Next year, we also hope to have our coaching support put in place so that all our U7 coaches have mentors and resources.

Thanks to all the parents, grandparents & players for their patience this hockey season. The understanding and respect for rules and restrictions this season meant that we had no outbreaks and our kids were still allowed to skate. Thanks to the office staff & board members for all their hard work and dedication among all the changes that took place. Most of all thank you to the coaches, managers, and COVID reps who volunteered their time to make everyone's experience safe and fun!

Mallory Simmonds