

The 2022-2023 hockey season seen a big increase in registration in the U7 division from last season. 2021-2022 there were 74 kids registered to play U7 and this season there were 99 kids registered. This is partly due to the new U5 division, where we had many 4 year olds sign up. This program started in the middle of October and ran until the middle of February. There were 21 kids registered for this new program and they skated for 45 minutes once a week. Some positives of the new program is that there were many parents that were willing to get certified to go on the ice with their child. There was 1 helper per 2-3 kids on the ice. Some things that we will need to look into for next season as this program grows, is adding more push walkers for the beginning. Many of the 4 year olds needed them and there weren't enough. The program also seen a drop in kids that were showing up for practices mid-way through the season so the head coach feels that them having full ice wasn't necessary once attendance dropped.

Feedback from coaches in U7 was that they were impressed with the progress and improvement the players made this season. They were all happy with the head coaches and assistant coaches, like having weekend morning and minimal mid-week practices and felt that practicing with the same team all season helped them get to know all the kids on the ice and they would practice as one team. Some areas they feel could use improvement is that they feel U7 should get more ice times – at the start of the year they were getting every sat and sun and as the season went on they would often lose their ice times to the older divisions. Some coaches felt that possibly having kids practice with other teams would benefit the players in learning from other coaches and from other kids.

A survey was sent out to families at the end of the season to get feedback on things our members thought went well and areas they would like to see improved and changed. There were 30 families that filled out the survey. Everyone was very happy with their coaches/assistant coaches and on ice helpers and felt that their children improved in a fun and positive environment. The survey results were a mix of families being happy with ice times and some that felt it was too much, some families really enjoyed having the tournament at the end of the year and some wished it had been a bit earlier.

Positives from survey results:

- U5 program
- Jamboree being later in the season was great
- Having all 3rd year players on the ice together
- The smaller team sizes
- Practices, out of town tournament and year end tournament
- Keeping like skilled kids together
- Interest of the number of girls in the girls program
- Coaches providing fun drills
- Involvement from female coaches
- THE STRAIN was an excellent coach lol

Areas of improvement from our membership

- They would like to see even teams with the U5 program in place taking away the non-skaters
- Would like to see the girls getting an opportunity to practice and play games against the other U7 teams throughout the season
- Felt some coaches were involved with too many teams so the commitment to the U7 team wasn't there
- Would like to know the schedule farther in advance
- Would like to see league games being played in U7
- Would like to see all teams being rotated through for practices so they aren't always practicing with the same team.

- For the year end tournament and the issue with sharing dressing rooms – a suggestion was made to have the ice times back to back. That way by the time a team is off the ice the other team is ready to head on the ice and not in the dressing room getting changed while a team is trying to get undressed.
- Would like to see a tournament fund being started from the tournament fees to use for each team in the coming years.
- Would like to see coaches better able to help children with exceptionalities such as ADHD

As the U7 director, something that I would like to see for the next year is that every U7 team has a team manager. This will help parents start to learn the role as their kids move up divisions and things become busier. This will also take away from coaches having to book games and tournaments and they can focus on just coaching. I would also like to see our younger refs being booked to help them get more comfortable with the role. U7 is a great start for many of our young refs. Next seasons coaches meeting, things to discuss will be rotating teams possibly monthly to let kids learn from other coaches and kids and allow for more scrimmaging with other teams at the end of practice.

I want to send a huge thank you to our coaches, assistant coaches and on ice helpers – thank you for the commitment to becoming certified to be on the ice and mostly for your patience and time spent this winter helping each child on your team develop to the best of their individual ability. Thank you to the parents for your commitment taking your children to practices all winter long – U7 is a long season but it is the stepping stone to later success for each child.

Thanks again for a great 2022-2023 season.

Chantel Lapointe

U7 Director