**BMHA 2022/23 Year End U13 Director Report**

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**Team Reports**

**U13 Barons STEP team year end report:**

Challenges:

-BIGGEST challenge- too maybe kids on our roster. This resulted in having to sit kids for home and away games. And we only had about 7 home games. Lots of stress on a brand-new head coach who is new to town.

- not enough practice time- usually only had one ice time for practice a week

- only one goalie

- wide range of skill level

- some kids not showing up for practice. Coach would have liked to see a consistent practice schedule

Highlights:

- tournaments- lots of close games and even a few wins as we entered “C” level tournaments

- home tournament- parents did an awesome job. Great feedback and definitely a financial success

- winning first round of playoffs against St Walburg

**Barons U13A Year End Report:**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Team**  | **GP**  | **W**  | **L**  | **T**  | **PTS**  | **GF**  | **GA**  | **DIFF**  |
| [A Team](http://battlefordsminorhockey.ca/team/6483/0/3870/154528)  | 40  | 24  | 13  | 3  | 52  | 172  | 128  | 44  |

 7 tournaments (one home exhibition series, 4 with hotel stay, 2 without) , 9 exhibition games (5 home, 4 away) , 4 provincial games.

Successes:

We played very competitive hockey this season.  All our games were close, and we were able to hang with the top teams in other leagues and divisions (ie: NEAHL, Saskatoon).  At tournaments, we won an A side, B side and lost in the A final twice (both to the top teams in their divisions).

What this team did this season is nothing short of amazing!  We played in provincials against teams with 15 second year players only, compared to our mix of 19 half and half players.  Not one of our players had played in provincials before this season and they rose to the occasion.  We won our first round against Warman, and came close to winning against the provincial champions, Martensville, having to play a third minigame. With our population, registrations and the structure of BMHA, there will likely always be a mix of first- and second-year kids on this team.

Our team chemistry with the kids was good and the attitudes on the bench were positive.  Most of these kids had not played together before, but came together as a team quite well.

Creating our own schedule allowed for a nice hockey/life balance.  We aimed to have 1 weekend/month off from hockey, enabling families to participate in other winter activities and vacation.

Practices were constructive and valuable.  Having kids working at the same skill and commitment level created a practice environment where kids could develop and flourish and helped the coach plan well rounded, beneficial practices. There were many positive parent and player comments regarding the caliber of our practices.

We were fortunate to have amazing parent support with volunteering and fundraisers and managed to break even on our season.

Challenges:

Our roster size was very large and hard to manage for a representative team. The extra kids likely benefitted from practices. A recommended 3 lines (9-6-1) If players need to be added to the roster to make the numbers work, as was the case this year, it is imperative that BMHA or the coach, with BMHA's support, have a conversation at the outset with those families that are being added, to manage expectations.

Finding tournament and exhibition games was extensively time consuming.  An estimated 4 hours/day was spent during the first month of hockey contacting teams and creating a schedule.  Even after the initial schedule was made, an average of 10 hours/week was spent managing this team, between day-to-day operations, schedule changes, and bookings.  A spreadsheet was created to keep track of teams that were contacted for exhibition games and out of 32 teams, 8 games had been scheduled.  Some of these games were cancelled or postponed because they seem expendable to the other teams as "only" exhibition games.  We did end up with large gaps between games as they would get cancelled or moved and we only played 5 out of 8 allotted home games.  It is difficult at certain times in the season to find teams that are willing to play exhibition games (due to playoffs and intensive league schedules).

Playing the majority of our games in tournaments is both exciting and exhausting.  The cost to drive, stay in hotels, and eat while out of town is expensive.  Further to that, organizing hotel blocks, team rooms and team meals is a daunting task when there are so many tournaments.  We capped our tournament limit at 7 (we could have added a couple more) to try and make it manageable for our families.  We (parents and kids) did have a lot of fun at tournaments!

The affiliate system did not run smoothly this season and caused some issues.  Our team’s roster size was already very large, and we did not have a need to use AP’s, except for a goaltender. The AP process was not followed in many cases when teams were using our players and caused some confusion and frustration.  Having these guidelines clearly outlined may alleviate some of the misunderstandings in future seasons.

Suggestions:

There should be more preconditioning times available to the players. U13 only had 1 before AA tryouts, missed one following that because it wasn’t communicated by the director and then went right into A team tryouts. A minimum of 6 skates would be ideal.

At the beginning of preconditioning/tryouts, perspective coaches should be given a list of the players who wish to try out for the A or Provincial teams, so they know which players are trying out.  It would be advantageous to have the coach in place prior to tryouts so the coach can be involved in the try-out process, as they learn a lot from the kids while they are on the ice with them.  If the coach is not selected prior to the evaluation/ try out sessions, the perspective coaches should all be involved in the process.  They were not involved at all this season and some of the coaches weren’t familiar with some of the players trying out, making roster decisions difficult to make.

Since this team is considered a tournament team, allowing them to host a tournament would be helpful from both fundraising and travel perspectives.  The team this year was able to host a successful one-day exhibition series, but that ice was not given out until after the U13 STEP team had given ice back from their scheduled tournament.  That made planning our season and tournament a little difficult.  There were numerous teams interested in attending our U13A tournament and it could have been a very large, multiple day event.

If BMHA continues to have A teams, the organization should look at the fee structure and practice time.  Being that this is a tournament team, Monday practices are not advisable as the team was tired from tournaments on Mondays. Focus Goaltending also takes place on Mondays and practicing without a goalie is not ideal or beneficial for a team. Having some of the younger teams that don’t have goalies in Focus practice on Monday might be a solution.

As was the case this season, the regular registration fee should cover all fees and the A team should not pay the additional provincial premium fee, because they have no league, nor do they get extra practices.  In the future, only in the case that the A teams are in a league, should this fee structure be revisited.

Almost every team in BMHA used a practice to take team photos. If BMHA held “picture day(s)”, practice ice time would not have to be used and the photographer could set up once instead of setting up and taking down several times. Individual dressing room photos could be utilized and BMHA may be able to get a special price.

Overall, we had an exceptional season that should be deemed a success!  This team was a great experience for the kids and parents involved, and some of the growing pains were worthwhile putting up with, because of the benefits. There were some kids, that at the end of last year's season, were considering not joining hockey again, but are now looking forward to future seasons.  Keeping kids engaged, having fun and fired up for hockey is the goal.  This is more so true for the U13 division as the move to U15 is where there is generally a drop off.  Keeping kids in hockey is exactly what a team like this does and would be recommended in future seasons.

**Director Summary**

Although I joined the BMHA board in the U13 director position shortly after pre-conditioning was completed, I quickly met with the coaches and understood their positions and teams. The majority of the issues this year from the coaches’ side were complaints about limited practice time in town. Perhaps BMHA could better communicate to these coaches at the start of the year the premise of which these teams are developed, the alternative, and what they can expect. This might help mitigate some issues. Managers appear to have done a great job and the U13 home tournament ran with no issues and the tournament committee required my help with developing a draw and ice times, but was otherwise independent.

The biggest takeaway this year, and one that is always top of mind is player development. Two things are how much ice do we have, and what is the best way to use it.

In regards to coaching, without observing all practices, but observing some A level and lower, male and female, it appears more coaching development or mentoring would be of benefit to foster player development.

Evaluations continue to be an issue for a couple reasons. One, do we have credible evaluators who can identify skill in this type of setting. Countless times we see kids evaluated significantly higher than should be. However, a couple one-hour looks is all they get to evaluate and makes it difficult for these to be accurate. If we are going to hold coaches to these evaluations then we need to develop a better process to ensure they are accurate.

Overall, the year was a success, and with every experience comes an opportunity to learn and adjust. Failure to adjust and do better is likely to have the same result, impede further player development, and demonstrates a lack of evolution.

Ryon Haggard

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