

# **BMHA 2023/24 Year End U15 Director Report**

April 11, 2024

## **Team Reports**

### **U15A Sharks team year end report:**

Submitted by Brad Rempel and Cam Schmunk

Overall it was a fun and successful season. We had some challenges early, with having enough skaters to make a team, but with some "Recruiting" of some rural girls, we were able to have enough to make a team.

1. Our regular season League record was 10-7-3
2. In play offs we lost out in game 3 of the NW Division semi-final to the eventual North Champions
3. We won the Vermilion Tournament
4. We lost in the A side Championship of March Ice

Our overall record including tournaments, regular season, and playoffs was 21-11-3

We had two girls AP'd to the U15AA team, no games played. One player was invited to attend the last two practices of their season once playoffs were completed, and she fit in.

We had two girls AP'd to the U18AA team, one girl played one game and she fit in well.

Our players developed their individual skills, that allowed them to incorporate those skills within our team strategy / systems.

Our coaches worked well with each other.

Overall, it was a successful season.

Thank you to the Board for your work and support.

### **U15A Barons team year end report:**

Completed by Jennifer Burnett, Manager

The U15A Barons teams was coached by head coach Ryan Whyte along with assistants, Terry Burnett, TJ Zavlanos and Denis Lavertu. Managers were Jennifer Burnett and Jennier Whyte. The team had a total of 18 players with 17 skaters and 1 goalie.

This was a tournament/exhibition team so no league games. The team travelled to 8 tournaments including 1 at home. Only 7 exhibition games were played at home. The team won 2 "A" side finals, 2 "B" side finals and 1 "C" side final. They lost the "A" side final in 2 tournaments. So overall, the tournaments were a success.

The U15A Barons played Warman in the first round of provincials. They won game 1 in Warman but lost game 2 and the minigame which was played in Red Pheasant. Unfortunately, there was no available ice for a home game in town which wasn't ideal.

In total, we played 47 total games including provincials and the record ended up being 28 wins, 17 losses and 2 ties. We had some suspensions throughout the season which was challenging as the lines were always changing and no consistency. It was not easy to find exhibition games at the U15 level as can be seen by only having 7 home exhibition games. Once teams are in leagues and especially playoffs, they don't want to risk suspensions or injuries. Ideally, an A league would be so much better for planning and regular game play.

Overall, the players bonded well and had a competitive and fun season of hockey.

**U15 STEP team year end report:**

Completed by: Corey Mottus – Head Coach

Completed on: April 7, 2024

**Team Season Record:**

GP	W	L	T	OTL	GF	GA
46	25	19	1	1	247	173

Includes 5 tournaments (one home and 4 away, 4 hotel stays).

**Team S.T.E.P. Record:**

GP	W	L	T	OTL	GF	GA
18	13	1	0	1	123	52

**Successes:**

This was an amazing year for our players development, our successful record, and our team management. Utilizing four amazing, well-maintained facilities, Battleford Arena, Don Ross Arena, Access Communications Centre, and Saulteaux First Nation Arena, we were able to practice twice a week and see our players develop both their individual skills and their team-building skills. There were no behavioural issues as the players got along all season long and it was honestly a joy to watch this group of individuals develop into a strong team overall. I hope these skills aide all our players as they continue through their hockey careers.

The development of these skills in practice transitioned extremely well in our in-game play and resulted in a very successful record, both for the entire season and for our S.T.E.P. league standings. We won a D-final, a C-final, lost in our home tournament A-final, and won a skills competition and relegation final being awarded almost \$900 for the Boys & Girls Club (Hockey Program) in our final tournament. In league, we finished 3<sup>rd</sup> overall and lost in the second round to the 2<sup>nd</sup> overall team, a very respectable opponent. We were also the only team to push the 1<sup>st</sup> overall, undefeated, league champions into overtime. An amazing game that I hoped was a pre-cursor to a league final that was never to be.

All this development and success would not have been possible without the amazing team management and parental contributions. Our team manager, Reena Fauchon, went above and beyond to make sure our practices, exhibition, league, tournament, and playoff games, and hotel bookings were all organized well in advance. Our assistant coach, Codey Miller, came prepared to all practices and games he could attend, providing excellent drills, keen insights to our game play, and motivation when we need to come

from behind to win. Our volunteer parents, both on and off the bench, managed score clocks, game sheets, 50/50s, and jerseys making our home games and tournament fun for all. I felt extremely supported this year which allowed me to focus on planning practices and developing the team.

### **Challenges:**

The biggest challenges faced this year were roster size and communications with officials. This year we had a roster of 20 players, 18 skaters (consisting of 11 second years and 7 first years) and 2 goalies (both first years). With both Hockey Saskatchewan and S.T.E.P. league rules allowing only 17 skaters to be dressed for any game, this size of a roster positioned me into a situation where I would have to sit one player for each game. This was not an issue in the first half of the season as one of our players was in his first year of playing hockey and it was determined, with the help of BMHA, that it would be unsafe to play him in a game situation until after an assessment in January. Luckily, when the player was ready for game play, there were only two games where I was required to sit players. The remaining games either had players unable to attend due to family commitments, illness, our sole suspension for the year or injuries.

The above noted injuries, unfortunately, occurred in our last league game where officiating in our home rink was, in my opinion, the leading cause. From our second exhibition game, where there were two hits from behind with missed calls, to our last league game, inconsistent officiating was a challenge. There was clearly a concerted effort to make head contacts a commonly called penalty in U15; however, more serious hits, such as those from behind, seemed to get a lower boarding minor penalty or no call at all. It was an open ice hit from behind with no call that injured our captain (and most valuable player) for the entire playoff run. I voiced my concern for all missed hits from behind only to get no response.

### **Suggestions:**

While sitting players for two games may not seem like a big issue, this is the second year I have had to manage a BMHA roster in excess of the league regulation size. As a developing, volunteer coach, my focus should be on practices to maximize skill development, not determining who plays and who sits as they do in the higher levels. I would recommend that BMHA consider putting a cap on the size of a roster if they wish to attract and keep volunteer coaches.

It was great to have a new hockey player join our roster this season and his skill development was as monumental as the boost he gave his teammates when they saw him fearlessly playing a U15 game. With U15 being full contact, however, this was a very serious safety concern. I would recommend that BMHA consider allowing for over-age players to develop at a lower, non-contact level to fully maximize player development and safety.

When it comes to communications relating to officiating, there needs to be two-way communication. I did my best to be calm and considerate on the bench this year, but when my players start getting injured and no calls are made, my emotions sometimes get the best of me. I have abided by BMHA, S.T.E.P., and Hockey Saskatchewan rules by waiting the appropriate 24 hours and only contacting those within my direct line of communication, but to receive no response is very disheartening. I recommend that all concerns raised by a coach, especially those relating to player safety, should be addressed, even if the response is a simple no.

Finally, I have a brother who is also coaching. In one of our discussions, he mentioned how his organization selects the teams for the next season in the spring, evaluating players at their peak performance, and providing coaches with the opportunity to provide players with summer dry-land

training programs. It would also allow for our players to potentially develop team chemistry if they knew who their teammates for next season would be. I recommend that BMHA consider this for future years as a way to maximize player development and teambuilding.

### **Director Summary**

This was my first year as BMHA U15 director and there was a lot of learning along the way.

When I was first voted in, I contacted many people and researched many different associations specifically looking for an A league as this was direction from the previous year's survey that parents wanted. Unfortunately, that does not exist for a team from the Battlefords. I did apply for the U15A Saskatoon city league but the application was denied. A survey was then sent to all parents of U15 players and the majority of parents still wanted an A team without a league that would just play exhibition and tournaments. So being a democracy, that is what was decided for the BMHA U15 division for the 2023-2024 season.

We brought in independent evaluators this year for the players wanting to try out for the U15A team. I feel like it was a success as they had no idea who the kids were and were only given jersey colours and numbers. They choose the best team based on positions. The evaluators did suggest we have coaches in places before the evaluations as it would be easier for them to work with the head coach at that time. He suggested sometimes the head coach might not have the best and most talented child, but he would be the best coach for the entire team of players as a whole.

The lack of coaches at the U15 level was a huge challenge this year as everyone I asked was not willing. After a lot of begging and pleading, thankfully someone finally stepped up to coach the U15 STEP team so the kids could have a season. But it wasn't an easy start to the year with the lack of coaches.

We had 2 very successful U15 tournaments the weekend of December 8-10. One was U15A with 4 teams and the other was a U15B tournament with 8 teams. We had many teams wanting to come and it filled up fast. I was able to coordinate the draws and game times and rinks and still give some ice time back to BMHA to use for other age divisions so there was no dead ice.

As everyone knows with body contact hockey, there are a lot of suspensions and injuries and U15 this year had its fair share. So there was a lot of those to deal with along with the help of the BMHA president.

Not everyone was happy with some of the decisions made for U15 this year. I came on the board wanting to bring transparency and fairness for all the players and I witnessed what happened the previous season and realized things needed to change. I was willing to answer any questions that arose. I knew I was never going to please everyone but I did try to make it the best year for all U15 players and coaches. As always, I have learned a lot this last year which will help guide the decisions for next year.

Jennifer Burnett

BMHA – U15 Director