U18 AA NorthWest Sharks Year End Review

Taking on the U18AA Sharks team sounded like it was going to be a challenge based on the previous history.

I started off by spending some time on the phone recruiting as many players as possible to tryout for the team. I was able to get enough girls out to have a tryout and was able to release a few to finalize my roster. My roster consisted of 13 - 07’s, 3 - 06’s and 2 - 05’s from the SW to the NE corner of our zone. We were hands down the youngest team in the league with many who had never played at the AA level.

We had a couple exhibition games with Lloydminster Steelers AA team to see where we were at. Both games were close and identified where we were at at what we needed to work on. We began practicing to prepare for regular season. Two practices a week are critical from the beginning of the season, right till the end. I found Trach to be beneficial to our U18's, both in the skating and the skills portions. The girls really enjoyed the Trach sessions.  We attended two tournaments early on, Emily Clarke’s in Saskatoon (October) and the Regina Rebels in Regina (November). We did ok, losing more than we but we were competitive and played with some of the top teams, one being a Calgary AAA team.

Our team quickly came together with many not knowing each other at the start of the season. We did some team building activities to get to know each other and they quickly gelled. There was very little to no drama, which was quickly nipped by our Captain and us Coaches. We had an excellent leadership group.

Our season went much better than expected from what I thought it may when I was told what the team was like previously. Many of our losses were marginal, usually by 1-2 goals. We played all players in the roles they fit best. We rarely shortened the bench, developing all the girls. We took some risks giving some an opportunity to play different positions, and maybe on PK or PP, but it went well. We ended up finishing the season with a record of: 5 wins, 18 losses, 2 ties which landed us 5th out of 6 in the North. We had wins against each team in the North Division except Western Prairie. We played Warman in the 1st Round of Playoffs. The first game went deep into double OT and the second game was another close game right till the end.

Our players learned a lot this season and so did we as Coaches. Overall, I would consider the season a very successful one, even with the record we had.  The players battled hard every game and played for each other and for the coaches. They were a team, won together, lost together, helped each other through lows and together celebrated the highs. The parents were awesome, everyone pitched in to do their part. It was a super fun group to be around. We finished up the season with some excess funds that were allocated for playoff transportation and lodging, however we didn’t get an opportunity to use it all. I decided rather than using it to buy year end gifts for the kids, that I wanted to take the players to an Oilers game. We took all 18 players and 3 Coaches to the game, many had never been to an NHL game so it was an unforgettable experience for them. The players stayed overnight in rooms together, went to West Ed Mall for some shopping the following day, then headed for home. It went perfectly, and the players were super appreciative of it.

At the end of the day, they all had a lot of fun while they learned, developed, and built relationships with teammates and coaches that will last a lifetime. I am confident a couple of our players will have a solid shot at making the AAA Sharks for the 2023/24 season. The rest of the team will be back for tryouts, with the exception of maybe one or two of the players who found this season to be too much commitment and our two players who graduated in the 22/23 season.

I am willing to let my name stand for Coaching the U18 AA NWSharks for the 2023/24 season if BMHA will consider me for the position. I am excited for the 2023/24 season and the opportunity to build off our accomplishments in the 2022/23 season.

Respectfully,

Brendan Kramer

Coach - U18 AA NW Sharks

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