U18 STEP Report

Submitted by Kelly Page

The 2022-2023 season was a very interesting hockey season for the U18 Step team. It all began with many questions and concerns and uncertainties. Once we knew what we had to work with, we were able to make some decisions and get the season started. We had a total of 21 skaters and 2 goalies. We were usually forced to sit 4 players every game. Some games, only 2 skaters sat because of suspensions, injuries, sickness or conflicting work schedules (the joys of coaching the oldest BMHA crew).

We had a rough start to the season with a 0 and 5 record. But over the next 11 games, we had 8 wins and 3 loses. Overall, we finished the season with 8 wins and 8 loses. We ended up in 7th place within our league standings out of 11 teams. The first round of playoffs had us up against Meadow Lake. They beat us (quite badly both games) and they ended up winning the league championship. Meadow had 2 very strong league teams and their top skaters from each team made up their provincial team. I believe for our Step League teams to be more competitive, we need to follow Meadow with Step teams and a combined provincial team. Our U18A team might have seen success this season but removing all the top players from Step proved to make it difficult to compete and see success (always tough to keep the kids motivated when we are always getting pumped).

Our team had really good attendance at practices, kids were quite committed. The only downfall from having 23 players on the ice was that it was very difficult to run systems. With the 23 player roster, it was extremely tough as we had all the weakest players on one team (who are usually distributed among at least 2 teams). My suggestion would be to have 2 or 3 Step League Teams and just a provincial team that begins to practice in December. This way our top players can play both provincial and step league teams.

We didn’t attend any tournaments this season because it would have been difficult to pick and choose which players would come to play. Our coaching staff consisted of Greg Cameron, Kelly Page, Mike Vanstone and Shane Tomanek, with Emi Holm as our wonderful manager. We were able to do a ‘Scoro-Board’ fundraiser for the team. How this fundraiser works: people purchase a square and the points for each team change each game. Each person has the chance to win 3 times per home game with the score of the game after the 1st, 2nd and 3rd periods. With this fundraiser, we were able to pay for the bus trip to Whitefish as well as practice jerseys, socks and team tape for the year.

Overall, the season turned out to be a good one (even with having to sit players each game). In the future, I don’t think any team should be in a situation where they have to sit players that have great attendance for practices and games. My suggestion is if this happens again, where players have to sit, then families should be reimbursed money because they pay fees thinking their child will play every game.

Thanks!