

2020-21 North West U18 AA Stars – Year End Report

It was a strange year for the U18 AA Stars as it was for everyone. I had two new assistant coaches helping me with the team this year, Derek Schmidt and Colin O'hara, both bringing a wealth of coaching experience to the team. Derek has been coaching minor hockey since his early twenties, spending 2 seasons with the AAA stars as an assistant plus numerous seasons with Bantam & Midget AA teams. Colin spent 8 years coaching Junior A hockey with spending 2 years as Head Coach & GM of the Nipawin Hawks of the SJHL and another 2 years with Salmon Arm Silverbacks of the BCHL. Our staff was rounded out with Al Grosjean as Manager and Darryl Brandle as Trainer.

With the pandemic protocols, it made for a different tryouts weekend than usual, though we still had 40 players register for tryouts. We had scrimmages on Saturday and Sunday. We cut down for a practice for Monday and had an inter-squad game on the Tuesday, after which we were down to our team of 2 goalies and 17 skaters.

We then practiced a lot, waiting for SHA to decide when and how we were going to start the season. It was finally decided that the league would create 2 bubbles of 6 teams and you would play each team in your bubble a home and home each weekend. We were able to play 2 exhibition games against the West Central team, beating them 8-2 at Home on October 17th and losing 5-3 in Unity on October 31st. Our first Regular Season games were set to start on November 7th and 8th but were cancelled due to the weather conditions. The following weekend we beat the West Central Wheat Kings 7-4 and 8-4. The weekend of November 21st and 22nd we played the Saskatoon Sabrecats, winning the first game 4-2 in Saskatoon, the second game was back in the Battlefords. Trailing 3-0 going into the 3rd period, our boys came storming back to win 5-3. The next week it was announced that they were stopping the league play. We were all hopefully that after the Christmas break we would get back to playing games but that never happened. We skated twice a week running skills sessions for players, they remained committed right down to the last skate on March 12th. But in reality, the imperfect season ended in November with a perfect record of 4-0, it was very disappointing to the players, coaches and parents because we had another strong team that had a season of possibilities taken away due to the pandemic.

I would like to recognize the following graduating players:

- #1 William Lehman – his 3rd year on the team**
- #7 Chantz Legaarden – Assistant Captain and 3rd year on the team**
- #8 Nate Crookedneck – 1st Year on the team**
- #11 Luke Kowerchuk – 2nd Year on the team**
- #12 Leo Senger - Assistant Captain and 3rd year on the team**
- #15 Ty Jack - Assistant Captain and 3rd year on the team**
- #19 Lee Burt – 3rd year AA and 1st on the team**
- #20 Cameron Becotte – Captain and 2nd year on the team**

I would like to thank my players, coaches and parents for being my hockey family for the season, their dedication and hard work is greatly appreciated. I would also like to thank BMHA and the communities that make up the AA Stars for all their support. Finally, I would like to thank my family, without their support I would not be able to dedicate so much time coaching the sport I love.

Lee Ulmer
Head Coach
North West U18 AA Stars