

President's message

2021-22 Annual General Meeting

As we exited the 2020 – 2021 season, the BWA had just completed one of the most challenging and difficult seasons in our 25+ years. Covid 19 and the global pandemic was still present and was unclear what the 2021 – 2022 season would look like. The one thing that was certain, was that if the BWA had to offer similar programming in 2021 – 2022, we had an excellent template to follow from the 2020 – 2021 season. Through many discussions with returning and new BWA Executive members, we began to plan for the 2021 – 2022 season with the hope that it would be back to a more normal hockey season, but again we carried our motto forward from the 2020 – 2021 season of “we will figure it out” and got to work. The efforts of the entire BWA Executive team did not go unnoticed and I can express my thanks and the pride I have in the entire BWA Executive enough for their flexible, thoughtful and respectful approach to each and every facet of the 2021 - 2022 season.

Due to the strong relationships forged with our community partners through the 2020 – 2021 season, the BWA Executive heightened our collaboration and communication with the City of Barrie, Town of Innisfil, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and other minor sports associations which allowed us to plan for a normal season, while have the support to revert quickly back to our contingency plan of following the 2020 – 2021 season, if required, without having to gain acceptance from our partners.

The positive feedback coming out of the 2020 – 2021 season, along with the support and trust shown to the BWA Executive, by our membership, remained steadfast throughout the 2021 – 2022 season. This positivity allowed BWA Executive to feel confident that we had the best interests of the players in mind, throughout our planning process. We were able to offer a full compliment of FUNDamentals, Youth HL, Youth DS (Development Stream), Women’s HL and Competitive programs. While our registration numbers exceeded the 2020 – 2021 season, they still didn’t get back up to the 2019 – 2020 levels. That said, our registration rate was excellent and we were excited to see new players join the BWA and others return to our association after pausing for a year.

The BWA seasonal plan allowed for the continuation of “safety protocols” and “safe play” in the 2021 – 2022 season. With that, the vaccination requirements that became present and had to be implemented added some additional processes and verifications, along with some thoughtful decisions by all of our BWA members. The 2021 – 2022 season would not have been able to function without the continued support, trust and selfless efforts our volunteers. From our coaches and assistant coaches, to our managers and trainers, to our dressing room volunteers and game streamers, we extend a huge thank you to you all. Everything we asked of you, you assisted with and delivered. This was not easy, especially as the season went along and all of us grew weary of Covid 19, the masks, the protocols.....all of it! We extend a huge thank you for continued organization, resilience, communication and steadfastness during the ebbs and flows of this past season. Your efforts have commended not only by the BWA Executive and but especially by the players and parents you interacted with.

Our on and off ice officials also deserve a huge thanks. Across Ontario and throughout Canada, at every level in our sport there was a shortage of officials, regardless of it being Minor hockey, Female hockey or Junior hockey. While returning officials in some areas saw a decline in the 40 – 50% range and the BWA was faced with a similar decline in available officials. Our Director of Game Officials, along with his team of on and off ice officials to meet the challenge and demand of a normal season, full Sharkfest schedule, playoffs and our HL Championship Day. This group did all of this, while keeping the integrity

of the games they officiated to the highest level. We recognize your efforts every season, but highlight you with thanks for meeting the challenges of the 2021 – 2022 season under continued pressures and trying circumstances.

Each and every season, the BWA Executive extends thanks to all of our players and families, who participated in the programming. Coming out of the 2020 – 2021 season, there was a lot of uncertainty as to what the 2021 – 2022 season would look like. Would there be a season? Would it be more like the bubbles of the previous year? What would each player / family have to do, in order to participate? You trusted the BWA and showed up to each schedule event, practice and/or game, knowing full well that a cancellation, accommodation, entry protocol, vaccination passport or just about any change could be thrown at you, just to do off ice training or step on the ice. A lot was asked of you and you continued to bring energy, excitement and enthusiasm both on and off the ice. You are the reason the game is played and we are very fortunate to have a great group of Female athletes registered with the BWA.

As you will see, through the annual reports submitted by our BWA Executive members, there many things that the association and our members should be proud of as we complete our 2021 -2022 season. Here are just a few highlights:

- The BWA hosted the “First Shift” program enrolled 29 new players, fitting them from head to toe with hockey equipment and introducing them to the sport of Female hockey
- The BWA was able to deliver quality programming to all members of our association through FUNdamentals (2 teams), Youth HL (15 teams), Youth DS (2 teams), Women’s HL (4 teams), Youth Competitive & Jr. Sharks (18 teams)
- The SMGHL (Simcoe Muskoka Girls Hockey League) returned in 2021 – 2022 in collaboration with our regional partners - Orillia, North Simcoe, Collingwood and Huntsville, culminating in a return to our year end Championship Day, celebrating the season of our BWA and partner association Youth HL teams.
- Our BWA Competitive teams had a successful season with 4 teams qualifying for the OWHL playoffs in a unique and altered 2021 – 2022 playoff format and 13 teams qualifying for the OWHA Provincial Championships, with our U13AA team for earning a silver medal.
- Through good fiscal practices and proper program costing, the BWA was able to maintain financial stability through the 2021 – 2022, while still allowing for proper credits applied to players who did not receive the full allocated ice or programming allotments. This was done during another stop and start season, while maintaining our Office Manager and our physical office location.
- Although we were unsure if tournaments were going to be sanctioned in 2021-2022, we planned and prepared to host our 29th Sharkfest tournament in November 2021, which was are largest tournament ever.
- Our development programs continued for Competitive and HL players, along with our HL goalie development and our Competitive Goalie training reimbursement.
- We again we able to cover all 2021 tryouts with volunteer trainers at each tryout and we placed 100% of our teams with a female trainer on the bench, for all Competitive and HL teams.
- During a very difficult time for local businesses, we grew our BWA sponsorships and took part in some new fundraising initiatives.
- The BWA was the beneficiary of a grant from the OTF (Ontario Trillium Fund) and will have a formal announcement made in the coming months.

- Our Jr. Sharks U22AA team had an exciting season and qualified for the playoffs for the first time in the team's history and had a vast portion of their roster being Barrie and local players.
- Our registration system packages continued to be streamlined through our Registrar and the new RAMP portal, allowing for more ease of payments and functionality. Continued improvements have been made in the spring of 2022 that should be beneficial moving forward.
- Through diligent review of the ice schedule and continual conversations with our city partners, our unused ice in the 2021 – 2022 season was below 2.5% of our overall ice usage

I would personally like to extend my thanks to the current BWA Executive for their thoughtful and collaborative planning and work throughout the season. We were collectively faced with many obstacles again this season, due to the ongoing pandemic, changing protocols and uncertainties. Through it all, you put the best interests of the players first and as a result, we concluded another safe and successful season of Sharks hockey.

As I end my time as BWA President, I am both grateful and humbled to have had the support of the many BWA Executives and BWA membership. When I took over in this role from our Past President - Gary Reid, my goal was to make the BWA a little bit better than it was when I stepped into the role. I believe this was accomplished through listening, collaborating and the sometimes thankless and tireless work of our BWA volunteers on the Executive, Competitive and HL teams. I feel very good about where stability of the BWA and I wish our new President – Rob Emerson the very best, as the BWA enters its 31st season of female hockey. This sport has been part of my life since I was 4 years old and it has given me so much in my life. Thank you for trusting me and allowing me to assist in leading this wonderful association.....it has truly been a privilege and an honour.

We are all part of a great Sharks family – past, present and future. Continue to take care of each other and be kind to one another. Enjoy your summer and I can't wait for the start of another exciting Sharks season in 2022 – 2023.

Rob Whitehead
President – BWA