



ROCKIE TALK



SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT: A LITTLE Q & A WITH YOUR
BOARD



Bill Marsh Photography

A message from President Pierre Landry

I have made it clear from the start that my goal in this role is to build our hockey family and break down any walls. Every player matters and every parent has a voice. In this continued spirit of transparency, I wanted this January 2020 edition to reflect our board commitment to keeping accountable to you: our membership.

With busy lives and kids in multiple activities, I understand that accessibility and connection with your CMHA Board of Directors may be challenging. That is why I encourage you to take advantage of this newsletter platform so we can answer your questions - likely questions shared by other members of our hockey family.

On a similar note, I would like to touch on something. We have had a number of emails from parents who are apologetic for reaching out, as they do not want to be labelled as "that family" or as high maintenance or whiny and that they don't want to risk their child being

blacklisted in the future. I can tell you that your concerns matter and we want to hear from you. Please do not feel you will somehow be punished for speaking up or reaching out. I urge every to follow the proper communication protocols , but know that we are here to listen to you. At the end of the day, this board wants nothing more than to provide every child in this association a safe, fun and fair place to play. If this is not your experience, we are relying on you to let us know. Now, turn the page to see some of your questions ... and our answers.



-Pierre



Q: We have two kids in CMHA hockey and we would really like to see the association do much more to take hitting OUT of the game. We are tired of seeing good players hurt and big, ugly attacks rewarded. Let's clean up this great game once and for all, so kids are rewarded for talent and NOT for being violent goons.

A: Seven years ago, CMHA took the initiative to create the Rockies Hockey League (RHL), which became a fully sanctioned league three years ago. The RHL was designed to cater to families who wanted less travel, a less busy schedule and a non-checking league. The RHL is non-checking for all age groups, regardless of skill level, and is a great option for those not keen on body contact. Once in Atom, families can choose to go the Central Alberta Hockey League (CAHL) route, which tends to cater to a more competitive crowd, or the RHL route. Both are fantastic options.



Q: Can you explain the rationale for why goalies must declare their position in Atom when other positions don't declare until Pee Wee?

A: The thought when adopting this approach a number of years ago, was that CMHA was taking steps to develop goalies at a younger age and to ensure that we were competitive with other associations. We have not had any negative feedback and are happy to discuss further if the membership feels this is too young to be declaring as a goalie.

That said, should you declare as a goalie in the RHL, you can still play "out" assuming your team has two goalies. That option does not exist in CAHL. Also, should you child register as a goalie for a season and decide it's not for him/her, they are free to register as a player again the following season.



Q: I am VERY dissatisfied with how the teams were created this season because Cochrane B teams seem to be playing against higher tiered teams/towns. This is causing my son to lose his confidence and love for the game... which is the opposite of what I thought tiering was for. My son looks forward to tournaments each season, and after playing this year my son said "never make me come to another tournament", as his team lost all four games by 30-plus goals. This season, there are four "A" tier teams and three "B" tier teams. If some of the lower-skilled A players had been mixed with B, it may have made for stronger out of town play ... as a parent who has a child on B or C, I feel as though we were forgotten about this season.

The coaches, team manager and parents on our team are awesome this season, but to be honest I am not sad to see this season come to an end, and I hope to see next season being tired with more thought and consideration for ALL Cochrane Minor Hockey Players, not only "highest-levelled players".

A: In deciding on our tiering structure for Novice at the beginning of the season, we worked with Banff, Canmore and Cremona to see in which division(s) those associations thought their teams belonged (A, B or C). With 15 teams total in Novice, the goal was to have an even number of teams in each division; 5 A, 5 B and 5 C teams. The only team that declared as an A was Canmore, hence why Cochrane made the decision to have 4 A teams. The intent is always to have like-skilled players playing against each other. In addition, after the teams were made, we held a "tiering-day" to ensure that our divisions were balanced and at the time, it appeared they were.

Last season, we grouped the kids according to age group (minor and major) regardless of skill level. We heard, overwhelmingly, that we need to group the kids by skill level, not age, which was the approach we took this season.

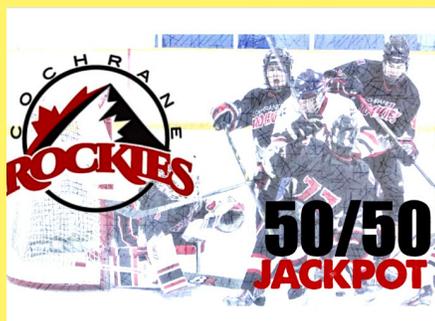


Q: I'm hearing that Atom may be in transition to half-ice, as Novice did. Is there any merit to this?

A: We are in regular contact with Hockey Alberta and have asked this question specifically; although Hockey Canada is contemplating some level of changes to Atom, it is mainly around standardizing the programs throughout the various hockey associations. There are currently no plans - that we are aware of - to go to half-ice in Atom.



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Q: In the Hockey Canada 'Intro to Hockey' model they allow full-ice games in Novice after Christmas. Why doesn't CMHA do this?

A: Hockey Canada does, in fact, allow full-ice after Christmas; however, it is important to understand the hierarchy within Hockey Canada. There are 13 branches under Hockey Canada (one for each province/territory). Each minor hockey association is mandated to follow the guidelines set forth by their respective branch. In our case, we are accountable to Hockey Alberta who have developed their own Intro to Hockey model, which DOES NOT allow any full-ice games in Novice.



Q: Why can't I get a release or refund if my child does not make the team they wanted?

A: Our fees are based on total number of registered kids, regardless of which stream. Should your child register for CAHL and be transitioned to the RHL, under normal circumstances, CMHA will not refund or release your child so they can go play "Rep" elsewhere. Many families disagree with our stance on this and choose to go through the appeal process with Hockey Alberta. Hockey Alberta seldom (if ever) overturns as they support the notion that kids should be playing in their home associations. Should we start releasing every player that didn't make the team they wanted, it would drastically skew our budget and subsequently your fees for upcoming seasons. In the Elite streams (AA and AAA) should you be released from a Cochrane team, you are permitted by Hockey Alberta to try-out for an elite team in another association (with the other association's permission). You are allowed to try out for a maximum of 2 teams/associations.



Q: There were a large number of kids transitioned from CAHL to RHL in Atom this year. If families want to play CAHL, why not add more CAHL teams?

Q: The answer is availability of ice, or lack thereof. CMHA is officially maxed out and as CAHL teams get more ice time (along with their increased fees), we didn't have the requisite amount of ice to field another CAHL team this season. That said, we hear you loud and clear that you want more CAHL teams. The solution is weekday morning ice. The reality is that we live in the second fastest growing community in Alberta and unless we choose to cap our registrations, morning ice may be the only feasible solution to our dilemma. It should be noted, that morning ice times (should we go down that path) will not be limited to CAHL teams, we will ALL get the opportunity to experience that ultra-Canadian 6 a.m. practice.

All jokes aside, morning ice is coming. It may or may not be next season, but it's coming!



Celebrating Hockey Heroes: Laurie Smith

Our CMHA is only intact because of the tenacious volunteerism of heroes like Laurie Smith. Check out the **Cochrane Eagle** this week for our January Volunteer of the Month featuring this fine supermom. Not only is she cheering on her REP Bantam goalie son and her ringette-playing daughter but Laurie dedicates a great deal of time to running evaluations as a parent volunteer with our contractor FUEL. Thank you Laurie!



Check out the Timberwolves Pee wee AA Good Deeds Cup video submission. Nice work! Click **HERE** to check it out.