



Kanata Rangers U13AA

2022-23

Welcome to another season of Kanata Rangers hockey. My name is Mark O'Connor and I am excited to have the opportunity to coach the U13AA team this upcoming season.

Hockey Bio

I have played hockey my entire life, including as a goaltender at the Junior, CIS and Senior A levels. I have extended my love for hockey into coaching all ages and all levels for 28 years. I am a certified Hockey Canada Development 1 Coach and have experience as a Lead Instructor, running Hockey Camps and running my own Skill Development Sessions. My coaching experience includes coaching with West End, the Nepean Girls Association, National Capital High School, Ottawa 67s, Ottawa Selects, Kanata Rangers, and Ottawa West Golden Knights organizations. My involvement has included over 40 teams as a Head Coach and over 20 as an Assistant Coach. We are a hockey family, managing the commitments of four kids playing competitive hockey, so I do understand the demands our teams put on us as parents as well.

Coaching Philosophy

My philosophy of coaching is centered around the acquisition and refinement of the fundamental technical aspects of the game while introducing increasing levels of individual & team tactics and system play throughout the season. In line with the U13 Hockey Canada Development model, practices will have the goals of skill development, fun, and refining team play and strategy with practice time allotted approximately as follows: 45% technical skills, 25% individual tactics, 10% team tactics, 10% team play and 10% strategy.

The Tier 1 level of girls hockey is exciting as it represents the very best level girls can play at this age. My intention is to invest fully in the development of the girls both on and off the ice so that memories of their hockey careers are indeed very positive. I view this season as an introduction to a high performance athlete program that will be structured with high expectations and the intention that we are building and preparing for Tier 1 opportunities in coming years.

There will be a strong focus on developing a fun, positive and inclusive team culture where hard work and focus on ice and in fitness activities are valued. Regular attendance at all team events will be both expected and very important. As much as I enjoy providing opportunities for affiliates, if a player misses, they are missing an opportunity for focused repetition, and to work in their five person unit during our system drills.

Respect for the game, the opponent, the referees, the coaches, and, importantly, each other, will be constantly messaged. I believe that there are only two things within the sphere of control as players - attitude and work ethic. These will be our core values as players must appreciate the opportunity they have been provided with to play the sport they love with a close group of friends. Although we will certainly celebrate individual accomplishments, the emphasis will be on taking steps toward team growth and chemistry.

I value and develop effective and efficient skating as a focal point of individual skill sets and want all of my players to play a "200 foot" game with pace - I believe it is very difficult to defend against a ferocious

forecheck and a relentless backcheck. Puck movement, effective shooting and responsible positional play are all critical elements to success. Emphasis will be placed on the importance of playing as a 5 person unit, defining clearly the role of each player within that unit, as well as intelligent play without the puck.

We want to be seen as a team that is difficult to play against but under good emotional control, that can beat you with speed, skill, and tenacity. Players are asked to listen intently to the regular positive and constructive feedback they receive and attempt to apply that to better their own play and to impact favourably on team play.

Tryout Process

It is important that all players attend all tryouts scheduled. All players who sign up for tryouts will be guaranteed one ice time at the AA level. There will be several independent evaluators assisting my decision-making process that will be using the same objective criteria to evaluate on a large number of individual and team based parameters. I believe tryouts should strive for an equitable evaluation of the players who are a best fit for this team.

Focus of Evaluations and Season Player Development:

Puck distribution and movement- Does the player move the puck when they should? Do they make the best pass? Do they ensure they take care of and protect the puck? Do they make the smart and safe play when necessary? Is their head up when handling the puck? Are they accurate with their passes both on the forehand and on the backhand? Do those passes have some velocity?

Compete level and effort on the forecheck and backcheck - Do they effectively take away time and space from their opponents by pressing them into decisions they don't want to make? Do they disrupt the opponent's flow of their game? Can they change momentum with a puck steal, a great angling effort or puck pressure in the offensive or defensive zone? Are they aggressive with and without the puck? Do they compete hard and usually win one on one battles?

Skating - Are they proficient? Can they pivot and turn to be evasive with and without the puck? Are they quick and agile on their skates and use their edges to accelerate effectively both forwards and backwards? Are they regularly in an athletic stance and stable and strong on their skates? Can they create separation from their opponent with their speed? Can they use their skating as a weapon to reduce opportunities for their opponent by forcing the play?

Shot selection and release - Do they choose the right shot at the right moment? Do they get the puck off their stick quickly and accurately? Do they move their feet into shooting lanes to get the puck on net? Does their shot have velocity?

Intelligent use of the body to gain advantage- Are they able to puck protect against the boards? Can they lean on an opponent and keep the puck out wide? Do they use their agility and body positioning to win one on one battles? Can they nullify an opponent with a body check without compromising their positional play? Can they absorb and/or avoid contact to make an effective play?

Decision making and hockey IQ - Do they read situations well and show poise under pressure with and without the puck? Do they communicate with their teammates? Do they know how to play and position without the puck ("white ice") to create/limit opportunities?

Positioning - Does the player understand and employ proper positioning on the offensive and defensive side of the puck? Do they position themselves effectively to angle opponents and keep them to the outside of the ice?

Do they properly support the puck defensively and offensively? Do they read and react quickly to situations and show a desire to get to their proper position quickly? Do they show an overall game understanding?

Attitude - Are they a positive force in the dressing room, on the bench, and on the ice? Are they encouraging towards their teammates? Do they take constructive criticism and try to apply it or do they disregard coach instructions? Do they play individually or make selfish plays or take selfish penalties? Do they exude positive body language on and off the ice and persevere in tough drills and skills in practice and demonstrate resilience in the difficult moments of a game?

Team Commitments

Once we start our program in late August, please expect 4-6 team commitments/week; 2-4 practices or other team events and at least 2 games. Prior to trying out, please consider the expectation of regular and consistent commitment required to be a part of this team. This team should be the girl's sporting priority throughout the season. Players will also be expected to participate in fitness activities, which will usually be scheduled before certain practices each week to lessen the total number of commitments per week. Other team events will include team meetings, video sessions, and team building activities. I am acutely aware of the costs involved in a competitive program and I strive to make the season as affordable as possible; with an exciting and diverse program this year, we are also hoping to offset costs via fundraising and sponsorship. It is estimated that team fees will be between \$2000-2500.

Tournaments

My intention is to register in 5-6 tournaments and engage in several team building events. If we qualify for provincials, that would be an additional tournament in early April. It is still too early to register for any tournaments but **potential** tournaments might include some, but not all, of the following:

August - Team Building Weekend

September - Markham Starsfest

October - Etobicoke Pink the Rink

November - Kanata Rangers Sensplex

December - Peterborough Ice Kats

January - Scarborough New Year's Classic, Nepean Paint it Purple

February - Durham West Bolts and Hearts

Final Thoughts

I will continue to invest my time to ensure that this team and each player is connected to their coaches and is well prepared, continues to develop, and enjoys coming to the rink each and every day. As a united group, we can't help but be successful in reaching our goals.

I look forward to building relationships with this group as we travel the road to success together. I wish all of the players the best of luck in our tryouts.

Mark O'Connor
Head Coach
Kanata Rangers U13AA