

Dear Players and Families,

I am incredibly excited to be stepping into the role of Head Coach for the U18C team with the Kanata Girls' Hockey Association for the 2026–2027 season. It is a privilege to work with this age group, and I am very much looking forward to the year ahead.

KGHA has been a big part of my family's life. All three of my daughters have played in this association, and over the past nine years I've had the opportunity to serve as a head coach five times, along with several seasons as an assistant coach across different levels. This will be my first time leading a team at the U18 level, and I could not be more excited about the opportunity to work with such a motivated group of athletes.

I come into this season with a clear vision: we are here to grow, to compete, and to enjoy the game — together. I've had the privilege of being part of a U15 team that reached the provincial finals, and that experience reinforced something I strongly believe: strong team culture, player development, and consistent effort lead to success.

Our Team Identity

From day one, our identity will be built on:

- **Hard work**
- **A positive, team-first attitude**
- **Accountability**
- **Being hard to play against**

At the same time, I want families and players to know this: my experience as a coach has shown me that players respond best to positivity, optimism, and energy. It is absolutely possible to hold high standards, keep players accountable, and still create an environment where players have fun, feel supported, and enjoy coming to the rink. That is the balance I aim for.

I see myself as a partner in each player's development and as a partner with families. Open, respectful communication matters to me, and I want players to feel comfortable asking questions, learning from mistakes, and growing in confidence over the course of the season.

Early Season Focus

Optional practices will begin in late August, and our early focus will be **conditioning**. For the first six weeks, players can expect a minimum of two off-ice conditioning sessions per week. These sessions will focus on:

- Strength development
- Speed and acceleration
- Hill sprints and track work

By putting in this work off the ice, we can use our ice time to focus on skill development and team play.

On-Ice Development

At the beginning of the year, our on-ice focus will center on:

- Puck possession
- Making plays under pressure
- Passing and receiving with heads up
- Playing with our feet moving

Practices will emphasize continuous skating, high puck touches, and skill development. We want players who are confident with the puck and able to make smart decisions at speed.

As the season progresses, we will build layer by layer:

1. **Individual skills and habits**
2. **Team systems**
3. **Positional play**
4. **Special teams and tactics**

Up until December, if scheduling allows, we aim to use an elementary school gymnasium twice a week. These early season sessions will help us walk through:

- Positional play in all three zones
- Breakouts
- Penalty kill and power play structure
- Special teams concepts
- End-of-season set plays off draws

This type of off-ice learning helps players understand the game more deeply and brings clarity to what we are doing on the ice.

Expectations and Culture

In addition to coaching, I spent many years as a teacher in this community and now serve as a school principal. Those experiences shape how I lead. I value:

- Accountability
- Consistent effort
- Respect
- Attendance and commitment

Being part of this team means showing up — physically and mentally. We will challenge players, but we will also support them. Mistakes are part of learning, and growth comes from effort, attitude, and willingness to improve.

My goal is that every player leaves this season:

- A better hockey player
- A stronger competitor
- A more confident teammate

- And loving the game more than ever

I'm very excited to get started and to build something special together this season.

See you at the rink,

Francois (Frank) Belair
Head Coach, U18C
Kanata Girls' Hockey Association