

Hello U11 level players & parents,

Welcome to U11BB tryouts. My name is Brooks McMillan and I am honoured to have been selected to lead this team for the 2025/26 season.

I have coached in the KGHA for nearly a decade and my passion to develop young athletes remains as vibrant today as it did when I first started. I have led teams to the Provincial Championships, to the City Championships, and to countless tournament medals. But once this team is formed, the slate is wiped clean and none of that matters. For those successful in making this team, the next challenge is what we can accomplish together in 2025/26.

U11BB is a Tier 2 program, meaning it's the second highest competitive level offered within the KGHA for the U11 age group. Being a Tier 2 program, players will be held to higher standards; in terms of attendance, effort and work ethic, compete, and expectations. It's going to be a lot of hard work, but it's also going to be really fun at the same time.

Tryouts

While tryouts are a necessary evil of the process, I fully understand the stress and uneasiness that tryouts bring to both parents and players. Players – relax out there – have fun and try your best, that's all I ask for. Parents – relax out there – trust the process and support your players. Different players develop at different stages of their playing career and whether your player makes U11BB this season will not define who they are as a player, a person, or what their future accomplishments in hockey will be.

While skill is paramount, please know that effort matters, body language matters, listening matters, and focus matters. While myself and my evaluators will be zeroed in on skill, we'll be watching for all the aforementioned intangibles as well. Effort and coachability are extremely important to me. I will take a less-skilled player who works hard and is coachable, over a higher-ranked player that doesn't work hard or play both sides of the puck.

To be successful, we'll need players who work hard all the time, who want to and are willing to get better, and who are excellent teammates. Really, all those qualities are non-negotiable in a Tier 2 program. No one player is above the team, and everyone will be held to the same standard.

Feedback is available for players released at the final session only and can be requested to the Competitive VP (vpcompetitive@kgha.ca) after a 24-hour cooldown period beginning once the final tryout has ended.

I will hold a parent meeting during tryouts to introduce myself and to reiterate a lot of the information found within this letter. I operate on an open-door policy and encourage questions and open dialogue with parents. While I will make myself accessible to parents, please do not send me highlight reels of your player on social media. I am however always available for constructive discussions and to answer any questions you may have; we're in this together.

Coaching Philosophy

My coaching philosophy is simple - I want two basic things for every player: I want them to develop, and I want them to have fun. Those two things are what it's all about. If I had to elaborate, I really want five things from this season: I want every girl to have fun, to develop substantially as a hockey player, to develop substantially as a person, to develop as a coach, and for every girl to sign up to play hockey next year.

I will make every family two promises – I promise that your player will develop substantially this season, and I promise that they will have a fun and memorable season. I plan to run this season like a Tier 1 program and, if your player puts in the work, I guarantee you will see significant improvement and development of your player by Christmas.

We will win and we will learn. Mistakes will be encouraged. If mistakes are made while players are giving 100% effort, I have no issues. I expect that all players will be model teammates, and, in return, it will be a healthy, positive environment for players to build self-confidence, self-esteem, discipline, social skills, and hockey skills. I want the players to take pride in their team and be committed to the process. I want all players to be excited to come to the rink and motivated to compete once they get there. And really, minus the competing part, I want and expect the same from the parents as well.

Communication is key, as is setting clear expectations. I will ensure that all team expectations are established at the beginning of the season and reinforced as we progress. For this to work, families, coaches, and managers must communicate efficiently and effectively throughout the season. I pledge to maintain clear and consistent communication from my end all season long.

Commitment

Players can expect (on average) 4 touches of ice per week. We will supplement our on-ice program with some outside skating and skills instruction from a TBD vendor. The same applies to goaltending instruction. This instruction will take place during our already-scheduled ice allotments. Other outside development may be considered once we get a benchmark of the needs of this team moving forward.

There are two blackout periods during the competitive season – Christmas and March Break. Families are expected to schedule travel within these blackout periods. Travel immediately before or after March break directly affects Playoffs and Playdowns and will not be permitted.

The commitment level at Tier 2 hockey is non-negotiable. Priority will always be given to family and school but hockey, at this level, should follow closely behind. Illnesses are always excused. Otherwise, hockey takes priority over birthday parties, other sports, sibling tournaments, etc. If this is not palatable to families, we have a wonderful House League program where hockey does not need to be the #1 priority. Players will be given 2-3 wellness days for the entire season where they can miss hockey, no questions asked. Gametime will be forfeited for those who miss games and/or practices for unexcused absences, and we will establish those rules as a team once the season begins.

Tournaments

We will attend 4 tournaments and hopefully a 5th (OWHA Provincials). There will be 2 local tournaments including our own, and 2 away tournaments including Pink The Rink in Etobicoke.

Budget

Parents can expect a budget of approximately \$2,000 per player, over and above KGHA registration and tryout fees. The budget shall be agreed upon by the parent group prior to the commencement of the season and will be reviewed several times throughout the year. Our goal will be to do some fundraising to offset team costs. Specifics TBD and discussed once the team is formed.

Icetime & Positions

All players will receive equal icetime. There will be no PP or PK units. All players will get the opportunity to play in these situations. The coaching staff does own the last few minutes of meaningful games and will exercise every measure necessary to ensure success in these situations.

While we will aim to have 9 dedicated forwards and 6 dedicated defense, players may be encouraged to try different positions and may not finish the year at the position in which they started. Players will be encouraged to play the position that best suits the needs of the team, but that also supports their individual development.

Miscellaneous

We will operate this team under the KGHA '17 Strong' club model that the association seeks to observe. We can expect our players to receive U11AA opportunities when they are available, and we will likewise look to provide opportunities to B/C players capable of playing at a BB level when those opportunities present themselves. Good teammates and hard work will be rewarded above all else.

Please feel free to reach out to me anytime with questions or concerns. I coach by an open-door policy; all I ask is that the '24 Hour' rule is respected when appropriate. I wish all your players the best of luck at U11BB tryouts, and I look forward to an amazing season full of fun, development, and memories for those who are successful in making this team.



Brooks McMillan

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