



Kanata Minor Hockey Association (KMHA)

Welcome to the 2025-2026 Hockey Season! My name is Justin Nistico and I'm honored to have been chosen to be the Head Coach of the U14 AA Kanata Blazers.

I have been involved in Hockey in a variety of roles over the past 23 years. I have been lucky enough to have coached 10+ years at the JR A level both as a Head Coach and Assistant Coach role. I have also coached in the KMHA house league programs. I had the privilege of coaching for 6 weeks in Beijing, China as well as working with the same group when they traveled to Canada, and most recently the last two seasons with the U12 and U13 AA Blazers.

Philosophy

My coaching philosophy is to provide a safe environment to enable athletes to have fun, be competitive as a team, while learning the fundamental skills needed to compete, succeed and enjoy hockey at a high level for a long time. The goal is to get better everyday as a team and as individuals.

Rules for the team will be discussed at a parent meeting at the beginning of the season, however, here are a few basic ones:

- Hockey takes priority over all other activities
- Have fun and compete hard
- Listen, be respectful to everyone on and off the ice
- Arrive 30 minutes before practice (ready 10 minutes before ice time)
- Arrive an hour before games (ready 10 minutes before ice time)
- Everything we do is Team First

Practices will be high tempo, a lot of flow and high compete. There will be a lot of information with a lot of instruction for the athletes to learn and apply. My coaching style is fair but demanding and high intensity. I will never ask an athlete to do something I do not think they can do and I will be constantly coaching/correcting them with feedback both constructive and positive.

Evaluations and Try outs

I will be looking for strong skaters. Players that compete at all times (practices and games). Athletes that can play a team game (moves puck, supports linemates). High hockey IQ/hockey sense will also be evaluated as well as attitude/body language during drills and on bench. Highly focused players are required to play at this level. The evaluating will be based on performance on ice during practices/intersquad games and exhibition games. As well as off ice fitness testing. There will be all non-parent evaluators. The try out schedule is posted on the KMHA website (<http://kmha.ca>).



Off Ice/Fitness Evaluations

New to this year, my evaluation process will consist of off-ice testing. I'm a believer that the best hockey players are well rounded athletes and work just as hard off ice and away from the rink as they do at the rink. This will give me and the evaluators a better perspective of which players are committed to play competitive hockey. All of the exercises being evaluated are exercises that the athlete can do at home, outside or at a local school track with no extra money needed to invest.

The off-ice evaluation will consist of:

1. 1.5-mile run (7 laps around a standard soccer field)
 - Target: under 15 minutes
2. Shuttle Run 200 meters – two pylons distanced 20 meters apart. The player is to run from one pylon to the other and back five times
 - Target: as fast as possible
3. Push-ups – chest touching a fist distance from the ground
 - Target: minimum of 15 to complete, do as many as possible
4. Bodyweight Squats – legs shoulder length apart, make sure hands are on hips or stretched out in front of your chest and slowly bend knees until thighs are parallel to the ground
 - Target: minimum of 40, do as many as possible
5. Bodyweight planks – balancing on toes and forearms while holding the rest of your body off the ground and keeping your spine in a neutral position.
 - Target: minimum 75 seconds, hold as long as possible

A minimum target has been set in consultation with fitness instructors based on age-appropriate testing. The minimum targets are only set for players to have a goal to aspire towards. This off-ice testing will not be the only consideration for player selection. The fitness testing will be used to complement the on-ice hockey specific evaluations.

Season Plan

Our schedule will be very busy with high paced practices with a focus on individual skill and team tactics. The time commitment for all players and parents is roughly 4-5 times a week on average, comprising of 1-2 games, 2-3 practices. The team will be doing dryland once per week, schedule permitting as well as video review 3 times a month. Seeing that this is a competitive program all team scheduled events will be mandatory, with some exceptions that will be discussed at a parent meeting. Financial commitment per player will be approximately \$1,600- \$2,000 for the year (on top of the KMHA registration and tryout fees). We will be looking at fundraising/sponsorship to help assist with these costs.

The team will be participating in 4 tournaments over the course of the season (1 local and 3 away). There is a possibility of having 2 locals depending on tournament availability. If that happens then the team would only do 2 away.

I am extremely excited to get started and I understand the responsibilities that come with being a head coach in a competitive environment. I will give all my spare time to making sure that we have a successful season and making sure the athletes have fun, learn a lot, develop and most importantly accomplish the goals that they set forth. I will be looking for the same 100% commitment from each family and player to help have a successful season for everyone involved. See you all at the rink.

Justin Nistico
Head Coach
Kanata Blazers U14 AA