

Year End Review, VP Competitive

To all Chebucto Families,

With an end to the 2023/ 24 season comes an end to my 3rd year as VP Competitive. With the lessons learned in my previous 2 years in the role, I feel strongly that there was continued growth and that we are headed in the right direction as an association for things related to competitive hockey.

As this role has many duties and responsibilities, I wanted to touch on a few of the main areas that my position oversees throughout the season.

1. Tryouts/ Evaluation Process

This was the 3rd season for me overseeing tryouts and the evaluation process. Having learned lots from the past two seasons, the plan for the evaluation process was in place early, and I was able to adjust things, where necessary, to ensure that things would run better in the places that it was felt things could be changed. I was also able to keep the evaluation committee almost entirely intact, which was very important as the bulk of us had been doing this for the last 3 years, so we all knew what to expect. We also added in the VP Development to our committee, which helped immensely.

With no logistical issues like last season due to weather, things were able to be done primarily at the Forum and Civic, with some ice being used at the Lion's Rink to finish things up. This allowed for all evaluation committee members to be at one building, enabling us to work as a team to ensure things were getting done. It also allowed for minimal disruptions to the schedule, which helps all people involved.

We also, for the 2nd consecutive year, were able to include exhibition games as part of our evaluation process. While not perfect, these games against Sackville were very beneficial when we were making final roster decisions across all levels. We will be looking at this model again for the upcoming year, with hopes of making it a better evaluation tool for our overall evaluation process.

The one area that continues to be a challenge is volunteer numbers. In order for tryouts to work, there needs to be lots of people involved, whether it be on-ice for skills sessions, on benches, monitoring dressing rooms, or doing other administrative tasks. Having more people sign up to help in these areas makes all things that are a part of the evaluation process run smoother, which helps the entire association.

2. Team Configurations

Once the evaluation process was finished, we immediately began to discuss what things would look like across U11, U13, U15, and U18 with regards to teams and level of play. While this is not an easy task, the evaluation committee and myself looked at many different factors when coming to a decision that we felt was in the best interests of all of Chebucto, both at the competitive and recreational levels. This allowed us to have the best balance across the whole association, which is something that the executive was looking to do.

This resulted in one team at U18, four teams at U15, four teams at U13, and three at the U11 level. While there were challenges with this final configuration, some of which were expected, I feel that given the information we had to look at, things turned out the way we wanted.

Moving forward, we will continue to look at this process in an effort to ensure that we work towards achieving the right balance between growth, development, and competitiveness.

3. In-Season Play

Once the CMHL schedule got started, our teams were busy with games, and various tournaments, as they worked their way towards provincial qualifiers and playoffs later in the year. While all teams had fun and saw success throughout the year, here are some highlights from the 2023/ 24 season:

- U13B Green team won the 2023 Sackville Fall Face Off Tournament
- U13AA team was runner-up in the 2023 SPRMHA Early Bird Tournament
- U15AA team won the 2023 Advanced Savings Credit Union Cup
- U13B White team won the Civic Division at the 2024 SEDMHA tournament
- U13B White team was runner-up in the CMHL playoffs.
- U13AAA team won the 2024 Provincial title, and qualified for Atlantics

4. Feedback from Tryouts/ Evaluation Process

Obviously, tryouts can be a very stressful time for families, as players work their way through the process towards team placement. While it is not perfect, myself and the evaluation committee come up with a process, and we follow said process from start to finish, without any deviation.

We ensure that everything is implemented in the way it is intended to be, evaluation processes are followed, and decisions are made that are free from bias and involve no conflicts of interest. We debrief each year to recognize where things can be improved and work to improve them. Even with all of this, it will not be perfect.

Feedback from membership is welcomed, and sometimes necessary, but this needs to be done in a constructive manner, recognizing that we are all volunteers giving up our time to try and make this a fair and transparent process. Aggressive and abusive comments in rinks, via emails or through texts towards myself and evaluation committee members regarding the process, player placement, and team configurations are unwarranted and unnecessary.

We have a process in place for comments and concerns, using an ombudsperson, and this process needs to be followed in order to allow for this process to run smoothly, and properly. Hopefully this is something that improves in the future.

5. Moving Forward

The evaluation policy document will be revisited to look for areas that can be improved upon, and the feedback from evaluations will also be looked at as well. Ways in which to increase volunteer participation will be looked at, as well as many other aspects of competitive.

In closing, I want to thank all of the volunteers who helped during tryouts, both on and off ice, as tryouts do not happen without all of your help. Also, to the volunteers associated with individual competitive teams, be it coaches, managers, safety reps, these teams do not happen without you, so thank you for all of your efforts in making these teams a fun and welcoming environment for our players.

Stephen

Stephen
VP Competitive