

Atom/U11 Report for the 2020/2021 Season Submitted by Sarah Nolin, Division Manager

We went into the season knowing that there would be some real challenges due to the COVID Pandemic. I felt that we were well prepared (as could be) to pivot and to relay that information quickly to parents and players. The CVMHA COVID-19 Exposure Plan was clear and allowed to plan for a safe return with clarity for families.

I made contact with families early in September prior to having our schedule to prep them with time frames and to give them time to familiarize themselves with the new protocols, namely preparing their players for being in the dressing room on their own and practice getting their gear on and off on their own. In that same introductory email I made a call out for current or future safety people as well as managers. This gave me a good list to start with and allowed me to make the temporary teams with safeties already built in.

I made an additional email to all coaches that I knew of to test for interest. This allowed me to start the season with 12-14 solid committed coaches. I used those coaches to build our evaluation teams.

Player Evaluations:

We started the season with 62 players, I made evaluations teams of 15-16 players and had our first ice time on September 11th. It was a hustle the first 2 weeks to get all the COVID forms signed and meet each team for health checks and sign ins. It became apparent pretty quickly that having a 'door person' for sign ins was going to be necessary.

Managing parents during evaluations was a big job as well. Making sure that parents only dropped or tied skates and left was also a challenge! It was a bit of a grey area as to who was responsible for managing that part of things - the arena staff, the div manager, etc. In the end it fell to the division manager and took many in arena reminders and emails to make it clear that parents were not to be in the arena unless in a volunteer role.

We did 3 weeks of evaluation before we met to make teams. At this point the coaches had seen about 75% of the players. I felt rushed to get to making teams despite my goal of having teams set by Thanksgiving weekend. This is an area that I would change going forward; to make sure that all players are seen and to not rush the evaluation process.

We were told to make 4 teams, which would have our teams with an average of 17 players, with a cap at 18.

The making of teams went well. There was some concern leading up to the season about making teams fairly and that it be a transparent process. I decided early on that we would make the teams all together and use a draft like process. I made a spreadsheet of all the players and as a group we went through and agreed on an overall number (1 low - 4 high). I made cards for each player with a large poster page for each team. Each card noted number, position (if needed), 1st or second year, and whether a parent was a manager, safety or coach. We sorted the coaching groups first, managers, and then went started the rounds high to low. As each coach chose a player, I placed the player card on the posters and we could see the team coming together visually. Periodically we checked averages to make sure that the teams were equitable.

I felt that all coaches left feeling like they had equitable teams. Of course we had more players join throughout the year and that tends to sway the end results.

Season Format:

Because of our high team size we were only able to have one team on the ice at a time. This meant single ice time for most of the season. We had a brief blip where we could play games but for the most part it was practice only.

After the return to a modified phase 3, we returned to single ice times, with the whole team on the ice maintaining social distancing.

I was blessed with a group of incredible coaches that were innovative and diligent to keep the protocols in place and still run great practices.

There was some discussion about splitting the teams into smaller groups, but in the end we did not have the coaching bodies to split the teams or support a team A/B model.

The players received a fantastic year of development, this was especially beneficial to the many new players that we had. We should be off to a quick and solid start next year.

Recruiting Coaches and Management Team:

We didn't have any issues getting coaches this season at all. We had approx 3 people per team for coaching. We didn't have any issues recruiting managers for the most part either.

Year End Evaluations:

Year end evaluations were to be completed online this season through James. I am hopeful it was done and makes our whole evaluation process for next season more smooth for all involved. Paper copies weren't ideal if you had multiple kids to evaluate and multiple coaches to review and evaluate. Having this all in one place online for access is ideal.