

Mount Pearl Blades U7 Program – 2022/2023

Year-end Report Shannon Smith, MPMHA U7 Program Director 2022/2023

Season Highlights

▪ This season the Mount Pearl Blades U7 Program started on October 8th, 2022. The start was delayed due to a Mount Pearl city worker strike. We were also to have a Jamboree, in which over 100 of our registered players participated. We had 16 teams attend the Jamboree, 6 MP teams and 10 visiting teams from other associations. We were also able to send teams to attend 6 Jamborees of other associations, as well as send 7 teams to the TimBits U7 Jamboree at the Mary Brown's Centre.

* Registration numbers for U7 Division - Total Registered: 116

* Number of Teams/Groups

We had split our players into 4 groups this season. This was largely age based with a couple of exceptions for siblings to be grouped together and a few players moving to an older age group to even out numbers. The oldest age group of players formed 2 groups, while the first and second year players each had one group.

* League/Division review

The season went smoothly. We split the scheduled times halfway through the year this year in response to parent requests the year previous. This seemed favorable to parents this year with minimal negative feedback on the schedule. Next season we should tell parents which time slot they will have both before and after the Christmas break. This will need to be clearly communicated to parents at the parent meeting early in the year. We will also need to be clear that days we do not have hockey due to Glacier events and tournaments are taken into account. We did have a challenge making up time due to poor weather conditions on several weekends.

With respect to sending teams to visiting jamborees, players were assigned on a first come first serve basis, with preference given to players that had not previously attended a jamboree that year. Next year, I would recommend giving a due date to get in their form to attend and doing more of a random lottery draw. Several parents communicated they don't have access to emails at all times and this would also be a fair way to pick players. A team manager was appointed for each team traveling to the jamboree, who would be in charge of collecting money and jerseys. Expectations for signing up for a jamboree need to be clearly communicated at the parent meeting. Taking a spot and not attending may result in that player not getting a spot in future jamborees.

We were able to hold a "grab and go" breakfast and Santa picture this year at Christmas time. We received donations from many families within the program, which was very much appreciated. The players seemed to really enjoy it.

Our home jamboree went very smoothly, players had a great time and there was much positive feedback on the event. A huge thank you to all the coaches and coordinators who helped out and gave so much of their time!

Players got to skate through the puck on the last day of practice. Players moving to U9 next year received graduating certificates.

* Division Personnel review

Division coordinators: Ashley Heath, Gillian Pearson.

Head Coaches: Kirk Simms, Mike Kelly, Andrew Young and Steve Pearson coached throughout the season.

We also had a great group of many assistant coaches. Coaching large groups of very young children can be challenging and we were often able to have small groups out on the ice because we had a ton of coaches helping out. Special thanks to those who stepped in to help with other groups or took the lead when needed!

* Suggestions and Improvements for Next Season

- Schedule: One shift of scheduled times halfway through the season as was done this year. It would be helpful to give the schedule for the year to families so that they can plan activities outside of hockey easier.
- Program Development
 - Need for more opportunities for goalie development in this age group. Quick change gear is also missing parts and down to a couple of sets. May need a better storage/use solution here.
 - Do we concentrate on the basics enough? Trevor (TD) feels we are good at this but can we be doing better. This was a suggestion last year but I feel we still need to focus on this. Probably discuss at coaches meeting some things we really need to look at developing.
 - Graduating Players: Next year we also hope to continue to strengthen the programs for skaters preparing for U9.
- Coach Development:
 - Should be a focus for next year. Ensure coaches are moving along in certification, looking towards what they will need in the future.
 - Suggest a meeting with U7 coaches to discuss any need in this area they may have. Hopefully more on ice sessions will also be available.

Thanks to everyone for an awesome season. We look forward to seeing you in the fall!

Shannon Smith, MPMHA U7 Program Director