

## Mount Pearl Blades U9: 2022-2023 Year End Report

Dawn Walsh (Director - U9)

### Season Highlights

- We had a bit of a later start this year due to the strike in Mount Pearl. Evaluation weekend started Sept 22, 2023 weekend.
- We continued to split the U9 groups into the major/minor development system last season to ensure players were able to play within our own association in a two line system and have the best experience with the most development possible. This was mostly divided by age of the players as minor and major age groups were equal in numbers. Evaluators were used to evaluate players for teams this year and for selection of U9 selects.
- Schedules were rotated so that each team had equal opportunity to desirable time slots to the best of my ability. At times, due to many schedule changes at the end of the season, there may have been some changes out of my control.
- We introduced a snake draft where the technical director, last years U9 director and myself were present to assist. Head coaches selected the teams in this manner. Gameplay between our teams was excellent and teams appeared to be quite well matched. U9 did not use referees for games until the transition to U11 at the end of the season. Our technical director or coaches filled this role and players benefited greatly from in game instruction here.
- For Jamborees this year, we decided to split teams to include half minor/half major teams, while ensuring that every child had an opportunity to attend a jamboree. This was done due to feedback from major coaches that coached in U9 last year. While it was a fair amount of work to organize, it did go well. It made our teams more competitive at all jamborees and gave our minor/major players time to play together. A huge thank you to our U9 Jamboree Coordinator, Denise Riggs, for helping to organize and pull off 8 teams that attended away jamborees this year.
- Our Home jamboree hosted 7 home teams and 8 away teams and was a great success. We had many amazing volunteers help to make the day a huge success. To helping with decorations, photo booths, a hospitality room, pick ups/deliveries, loot bags, player of the game prizes, etc!! Thank you to everyone that helped out to prepare and pull off everything that day.
- Our technical director, Trevor Budgell, spent a lot of time with our program and a huge thanks goes out to him for all the time he put in developing our players as well as coaches. The U9 Development camp was a huge success with lots of positive feedback from families.
- Players were eager to help out with events this year such as the "Hockey with Heart" event to collect donations for local food banks and collecting toiletries for several organizations as well.

- This year we did a “Be Kind U9” kindness project where players could choose something that they would like to do to be kind to others. It was a great success with 7 out of the 8 U9 teams participating and teams chose many charities/fun activities.

### **Registration Numbers**

- This year we had 118 players registered for U9, 59 Major and 59 Minor.
- We had 4 minor teams and 4 major teams.

### **League/Division Review**

- The 2-line system of play was a great benefit to developing players allowing a maximum amount of ice time, however, offered its own challenges when teams had 12 players (11+1), 6 players on one shift was not ideal in the major division playing half ice.
- 4 on 4 gameplay was also recommended when it appeared to be more beneficial. This will continue next year. 6 players on a line of half-ice will be avoided whenever possible.
- The major/minor system offered newer and developing players a great experience allowing appropriate practice drills at the right skill level and more puck time during gameplay. It also allowed our strongest players the opportunity to play in a group with a tighter skill set where they could both improve skills and be offered more challenging gameplay. Trevor has been reviewing the major/minor system with feedback from past parents/coaches of the program.
- We had a huge year in U9 for goalie development!!! We were very fortunate to have many new goalies come forward. 7 total players devoted to playing goalie in major (moving to U11) and many minor players are devoting time to goalie and playing out as well. With uneven numbers of goalies, it was difficult to ensure even playing time for all goalies. A schedule was offered to teams to allow an even division of goalie time to the best of our ability, while allowing goalies to stay attached to a team for social events.
- All players had an opportunity to attend a jamboree this year.
- The U9 Invitational tournament was held April 20-23 this year. Players were selected via evaluation and coach feedback and given 5 hours of practice time as per guidelines for the program. Players had a fantastic time and a great experience!
- Our technical director was a fantastic resource helping focus on key developmental skills and following the HNL/Hockey Canada Guides to Play/Pathways for U9. We are developing a U9 Playbook for MPMHA in the coming months.

### **Division Personnel**

- We had a fabulous group of dedicated Volunteers this year, many thanks to all!!! We truly not run this program without every single one of you pitching in.
- Technical Director Trevor Budgell
- Head coaches: Andrew Young, Jordan Stagg, Steve Pearson, Steve Walsh, Adam Miller, Bobby Sullivan, David Gosse, Dan Burry and Adam Pennell. And many assistant coaches that were always there to lend a hand on/off the ice, with the boards/equipment or at jamborees.
  - All coaches were very engaged, worked extremely well with each other and were eager to learn. Much positive feedback was given here.

- Team managers: Stephanie Billard, Gill Buott, Cindy O'Brien, Ashlene Doyle, Stephanie Walsh, Jennifer MacIntyre, Sandie Cook, Deanne Cumby, Amanda Keough Sara Evans, thank you so much for all your hard work!
- We also had many dedicated junior coaches, time keepers and refs for the jamboree and end of the season.
- Coaches for U9 Invitational team Bobby Sullivan, David Gosse and Matthew Peddle. Team manager Cindy O'Brien. Thanks for your commitment to this teams and pulling off an amazing experience for the Selects team in such a short time frame!

### **Recommendations**

- Recommend continuing major/minor system of grouping teams.
- Goalie recruitment heading into U11 will need to be a focus for the minor group moving to major in the Fall.
- Continue to set a scheduled rotation of practice/game times so that teams are not stuck in an undesirable timeslot.
- This year we did not use official referees for games. Our technical director and coaches filled the role which resulted in better guidance to our players on ice learning the rules of the game and more calls resulting in safer gameplay. Recommend continuing with this next season.
- Continue to complete evaluations as we did this year to ensure fairness and even house league teams for the season. Using an evaluator for U9 selects seemed to be met with positive praise.
- There were slight changes made to how we use "call overs" this year when a team was short. Recommended next year that only C line players be called up to teams needing a player, then players on the team calling over will be moved up a line to get more experience playing on different lines to improve development. This will be outlined in the U9 playbook for next year.

Once again a HUGE Thank You to players, parents, the board/executive, our office staff, technical director and all Volunteers for a successful and enjoyable season of hockey! Go Blades!

Dawn Walsh, MPMHA U9 Director