

## **Mount Pearl Blades U9: 2021-2022 Year End Report**

**Shannon Smith (Director - U9)**

### **Season Highlights**

- This year continued to bring some challenges to our U9 program due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions in place and the frequent adapting to changing rules.
- We decided to move to a 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 (2013 - major/2014 - minor) with very few exceptions.
- We introduced a snake draft where the technical 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.
- 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.
- 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.

### **Registration Numbers**

- This year we had 101 players registered for U9.
- Due to Covid-19 restrictions for numbers on the bench and masking rules we had 8 two-line teams (4 major/4minor) of 12-13 players each.

### **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.
- 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.
- Not all teams had a designated goalie. Goalie quick change equipment was a great help. There was also a goalie coach present each week for practice allowing players to try out the position which was a great benefit.

- Most teams had an opportunity to attend a jamboree this year. This was an enjoyable experience for everyone to get back to.
- We were able to host our own small jamboree which went quite successfully!
- We did experience a shutdown for a portion of this year, however, we were able to extend the season and also to offer a transition program for players moving to U11 next year. I would recommend doing this as soon as possible after the regular season is over and try not to overlap with the U9 invitational program as this caused a few issues with attendance.
- The U9 Invitational tournament returned this year. Players were selected and given 3 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.

### **Division Personnel**

- We had an excellent group of dedicated Volunteers this year, many thanks to all!!
- Head coaches Adam Pennel, Jarred Thomas, Carl Penny, Shannon Warren, Ken Chan, Ron Power, Bobby Sullivan, Chuck Reid and Dennis Power.
  - Coaches were very engaged, worked extremely well with each other and were eager to learn. Much positive feedback was given here.
- Team managers Ashlee St. Croix, Krista Mulrooney, Jennifer MacIntyre, Jennifer Gibbons, Jen Fallon, Denise Green, Amy Vail, Sara Evans, Karen Power, and Pam Stone, thank you so much for all your hard work!
- Coaches for U9 Invitational team Adam Pennell, Jarrod Thomas and Shannon Warren. Team manager Ashlee St. Croix. Thanks for pulling everything together in such a short time.

### **Recommendations**

- Recommend continuing major/minor system of grouping teams.
- Goalie recruitment heading into U11 will need to be a focus. For U9 games, implementing a scheduled goalie system may help for teams without a designated goalie.
- Setting 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.
- Recommended to bring in unbiased evaluation personnel to assist with moving any players between major and minor divisions if necessary.
- Implement expectation that if a player moves up to the major division they should be able to play on the “A” line. If they are playing on the “B” line they should stay with their own age group.

- Any new players that start out with the younger age group should be considered to move up after Christmas and take part in any full ice play later in the season.
- Limit friend requests for this reason as well. We allowed one request per player that must be double ended (both players must request each other). This should be clearly communicated before team selection occurs.
- If we resume with a 3-line format it is recommended to use half ice during games as a development zone, with planned, supervised drills. One coach should be responsible for this area.

Once again a HUGE Thank You to players, parents, and all Volunteers for a successful and enjoyable season of hockey! Go Blades!

Shannon Smith, MPMHA U9 Director