



**Halifax Hawks Minor Hockey Association
U15 Annual Report 2022**

U15C – Raechelle Masuda, Director

Three teams were set up for the U15C this season with a goalie for each team for the majority of the season. There were differing opinions among the coaches how each team should be selected. There were many player and parent requests for players to play with their friends. A lot of players in U15C have been playing together for years and wanted to continue. There was some struggle to get all coaches on board with this during the balancing of the teams.

We struggled to find enough coaches and volunteers this season. Many coaches had already committed to other hockey teams before our evaluations even started. Waiting until tryouts are complete seems pointless. We only had one or two players join us after tryouts (the other opted not to play or got called back up to B) and none of the players that tried out attended the balancing sessions. Also, many other associations recreation teams begin practicing much earlier than ours, placing us at a disadvantage. Most recreation players at this age take the entire summer off from hockey to enjoy other sports, so often it is the first time they are back on the ice and could use the extra time to get back into the swing of hockey.

Before the season ended one team lost their goalie. The team had experienced no wins the entire season and the goalie became very discouraged. The players and coaches worked hard however the disruptions in the season due to Covid and the struggles to balance the teams at the beginning of the season took its toll on the team.

A player from U18C that needed additional development was not openly welcomed on 2 out of the 3 teams. Coaches had had experience with this player in the past and felt that if the association would not provide the additional help to this player, they could not coach the player. It should be noted that the 3rd team did welcome him onto their team, and Coach Mike Hull was instrumental in leading this effort. I personally witnessed the player thrive under Coach Mike's leadership and it was wonderful to watch him play a game that he loved with the support of a caring coach.

While the players all had fun this season, there were some struggles when they continued to lose every game. Morale was affected. Practices were not set up with this age group in mind at the beginning of the season. Parents were quite upset at the 7am Saturday morning practice. They rallied together writing the association their concerns. The association switched that practice to a Saturday afternoon practice. The Monday 5pm practice was also challenging for a lot of players and parents. Most parents were not off work early enough to bring their player to the rink through rush hour traffic off the peninsula. Many coaches were never able to make that time either.

Two of the Hawks U15C teams were placed in the Bronze division late in the season and the other in the Silver division. Their performance, despite the efforts of the players and coaches, was not great. Two of the three teams did not make it to the finals. One team was eliminated after their first game in the finals.

Recommendation's for 2022/2023 season: Practices should be back to back ideally mid-morning/early afternoon on the weekends. A lot of recreation hockey players have other commitments and other sports that are their priority. Players at this age still need development that is provided in practices. It is important that they can attend those practices. Continue to focus on players having fun however provide opportunities for the players to develop and compete against other associations. As the association goes forward, inclusion and accessibility are important. While coaches like Mike Hull are supportive, they can burn out quickly without much support. Neurodiverse players may need more than what a volunteer coach can provide. Perhaps a mentorship with older players to work one on one with certain players. Great opportunity for older players to volunteer. The next director should be better informed of the commitment of the position and set strong boundaries.

U15 Competitive – Ben Neaves, Director

U15 Teams have all finished their season with strong competitive results. Our two B teams finished 4th and 6th in an 11-team division. Both teams made it to the second round of playoffs and were competitive the entire year. Our A team finished 2nd in the regular season and lost in the semi-final of the playoffs. Our AA team finished 1st in the regular season and lost in the final of the provincials.

Most parents and players appear to have had a fun and enjoyable year and there were few challenges through the year.

For the last few years we have been able to have 2 B level teams. In doing so we have cut few players into C level hockey. Each year we have had a discussion around having one more competitive team or 2 less competitive team. I think we have made the correct decision each year in allowing more players to continue to develop. Each year we have teams that are more competitive than we first expected and allowing more kids to develop at the competitive level I believe has helped higher divisions. I would encourage the Hawks in the future to continue with as many competitive teams as possible.

For next year I would strongly encourage the TD and executive to have the Directors more involved in the season set up. Generally, our tryout ice times, flow charts and our regular season ice times are decided without involvement from the Directors. The directors generally have unique knowledge of the division and can help problem solve before issues come up. Also, they are the ones who face the bulk of the questions and requests from parents. I believe it does not look good on the association when the bulk of our answers are “not sure why it is that way” and “reach out the admin for solutions”. If directors are more involved, they will have ownership of the process and be able to help resolve issues before they get to our TD and Admin.

I have enjoyed my three year on the board. Good luck next year.