

## TASA U9 2021-22 Review

This past season certainly began with the hope that we were trending in the right direction in terms of getting “back to normal” and how hockey was pre-pandemic. Restrictions were a bit looser and there was light at the end of the tunnel.

Evaluations began On October 15<sup>th</sup> for our goalies which was run by Finn Goalie, and on October 16<sup>th</sup> for our skaters which was ran by our Technical Director, Kyle MacDonald. We had a total of 152 players registered to our U9 division this year. I was happy to see first time players joining TASA this year and beginning their hockey journey! This year saw us ice 2 Advancing Teams, 3 Intermediate Teams and 3 Developing Teams. Practices started in early November for all teams.

We had an excellent group of coaches and managers this year that helped guide our first year U9 players into the next level of hockey and of course continue to build on the skill level for our second year players. I can't thank you all enough for the effort you all put in this year!

For U9, the big news is the games! Finally, players get to play against other associations and get their first real experience with competition. For U9, games are played half ice as directed by Hockey Canada to allow players to develop in the best method possible. This allows for much more individual skill development, puck touches and more ice time as teams are split into smaller groups for games.

As mentioned above, we all had a great feeling to start the year as we were coming off the most bizarre year that the game has ever seen. Then, unfortunately, that light at the end of the tunnel turned out to be Omicron heading in our direction.

TASA certainly felt the brunt of Covid early in the Omicron wave as it was not long before all feeder schools had cases and case counts were growing. In early December we had to make some difficult decisions to protect our players and families and pause hockey for U7-U11. Unfortunately, this meant that most teams were only able to get 1 game in and some didn't have any. Hockey Nova Scotia along with Public Health soon after imposed restrictions that saw hockey all over the province pause.

Starting on January 5<sup>th</sup>, we began to practice again. This time with some major changes. We could only have cohorts of up to 10 players and they had to remain consistent. Obviously this meant games were not an option. This lasted up until February 12<sup>th</sup> when restrictions were eased and games could resume!

Once mid-February hit and hockey was up and running, we did take many steps forward to getting back to normal. Teams were playing games, many teams took part in full-ice exhibition games and many teams even played in a Tournament!

Through it all, as always, the kids were having fun playing the game they love with their friends. It can be easy as parents to get caught up with things like restrictions, but we just need to look to our kids for inspiration on how to cope. I sincerely hope this is behind us now and next year we can focus on a normal hockey season!

I would like to take a moment to thank everyone involved at the U9 level the past 2 years. There will be a new U9 VP next year but I will still be on the Executive. The past 2 years have been challenging and I have

enjoyed every minute of it! I have met so many nice families through the U9 division and I hope to see you all around the rink for years to come.

Sincerely,

Sheldon MacKinnon

TASA VP U9