

Dear Members,

This year it has been my pleasure to serve on the Board and fulfill the role of U7 Coordinator.

This season Hockey Canada and the Pacific Coast Amateur Hockey Association introduced some significant changes to the U6 and U7 programs. The biggest change was that U6 and U7 kids would be playing together, as would the U8 and U9 kids. This new model recommended that like-skilled players be grouped together into major or minor teams to maximize puck touches.

Given teams would be established based on player skill rather than age, this was the first time U6 and U7 kids would have to attend evaluations. These evaluations were facilitated by external service providers, who were also responsible for scoring the players based on standardized criteria provided by the Association. Although these evaluations were generally successful, feedback suggests these evaluations should have included competitive drills and scrimmages. Instead, these evaluations focused on player skills alone. This feedback has been well received, and practice plans for future evaluations will be adjusted accordingly to incorporate competitive drills and scrimmages.

Teams were established and balanced using the scores from the evaluations. The U7 group subsequently comprised of one major team and five minor teams. As the season progressed, it became apparent that evaluation scores do not always give a true reflection of a player's actual ability. This is particularly true in the case of a skilled player who starts out a little cold because they've enjoyed a bit too much sun, and not had the benefit of playing hockey throughout the off-season. These players will get back up to speed given time but may nevertheless find themselves in the "incorrect" team from a balancing perspective. Additional measures should be put in place to address this in the future.

A real highlight this season has been the quality of the on-ice volunteers. Parent feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and this bodes well for next season's U7 group given most of this year's coaches will be staying in U7 for another year.

We have also had six individuals volunteering for the first time as team managers. These managers did a fantastic job coordinating individual team activities throughout the season. I thank them for their assistance, and also every other parent or guardian who has volunteered their time for the good of the players. This association cannot function without volunteers, and on behalf of the Board, I thank you all for your invaluable contribution this year.

The Association was also able to provide free weekly extra development sessions to all players who expressed interest. These sessions were run by external service providers. Paid extra development sessions were also provided and were generally well attended. The Board is in ongoing discussions with development coordinators and external service providers to see how the overall quality of these sessions can be improved.

Finally, I must applaud the players themselves. This was the first time they have been involved in competitive matchups against other associations, and feedback suggests the U7 group was incredibly competitive. More importantly, it appears the kids had a great time this season making new friends, reconnecting with old ones, and learning about the game we love.

Again, I thank you all for the fabulous season that was, and I look forward to seeing you around the rink again next year.

Your truly,

Warren Scrooby

CMHA U7 Coordinator