

Halifax Hawks MHA – U9 Season End Report – 2024/25 season

Prepared by Halifax Hawks U9 Director – Rob Gough

Overview:

U9 had 115 skaters this season

U9 focuses on introduction, reviewing and refining our basic hockey skills while emphasizing fun.

- Section 1: On-ice Regular practice weekends
 - Section 2: Groups / Teams
 - Section 3: Goalies
 - Section 4: Games / Tournaments
 - Section 5: Coaches / volunteers
 - Section 6: Extra ice
 - Section 7: Recommendations
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Section 1: On-ice regular practice weekends

- U9 regular season practices were held Saturday and Sunday mornings and were led by Hawks Technical Director, Tim Boyce. Tim did a fantastic job coaching our coaches and leading us through our drill's week in and week out.
- With Tim's leadership I could see the development of skaters through the season. I attended some practices from each group through the season and from the start of the season to the end of season each skater progressed in their fundamental skill development and positional awareness
 - A side note is we had coaches step up and help lead the few practices Tim could not attend. **This** holds well for Hawks coaching pipeline
- Goalie notes are under Section 3: Goalies
- Before games began and for balance of season, we performed some scrimmages and drills to help develop player readiness for game

Section 2: Groups / Teams

- U9 has 3 groups with 2 teams per group
- Groups:
 - Developing x 2 teams
 - Intermediate x 2 teams
 - Advancing x 2 teams
- Each team participated in tournaments
- Each team participated in their game schedule
- Each acquired extra ice and requested additional ice times

Section 3: Goalies

- Each weekly practice ice time had goalies included. At the start of the season, I provided each team with a schedule to cycle their skaters through the goalie position. This was just a template and coaches could adjust. The goal was to engage, educate and create excitement in the position. Goalies always led the handshake after games and led us on the ice.
- We had fantastic goalie development and participation this season. A few skaters really took to the position and will likely play goalie full time. We also introduced a new process to the start of practice and had an on-ice volunteer work with goalies while the rest of the skaters did power skating.
 - A side note: Tim, U7 Director and I organized and ran two free goalie sessions in Nov. for U7 & U9 goalies only – we had 15 skaters from U9 participate and I could have had a few more. We ran out of gear – I had 15 sets loaned out.
- Goalie engagement is critical for the success of all teams at all levels. This season should have helped grow the goalie development pipeline
- Tim, U7 Director and I will be running 5 free goalie sessions for U7 & U9 skaters only over the Summer to support our young skaters interested in the position.

Section 4: Games and Tournaments

- Each team participated in at least two Tournaments
- 4 of the 6 teams ended the season at Sedmha – which was a lot of fun for the skaters

- Each team had their regular season schedule from MMHA
- Advancing teams scheduled exhibition games and utilized allowable limit of full ice game allotment
- Continue to encourage teams to schedule full ice exhibition games to help develop their skaters for U11. 1 to 1 ratio on games to practices when booking extra ice times

Section 5: Coaches and Volunteers

- Each team had a head coach and multiple assistant coaches
- Each team had a team manager
- Each team had Dressing Room Monitor
- Each team had additional on-ice helpers for practice
- We had 115 skaters in U9 this season and 71 people raised their hand to help out in some capacity. Amazing participation and support

Section 6: Extra Ice

- I secured additional ice times from Hawks Ice director throughout the season for the teams. We ran skill-based drills. I was also able to find unused ice and provide an hour to each group/team individually throughout the season. This was however very short notice and participation at some was great while others was light.
- The desire for extra ice comes from every coach and skater.
- If there is the opportunity to provide great notice of available ice times, I can make great use of this. I.e. Power skating, goalie development, team practice.

Section 7: Recommendations

- Extra Ice – skater development:
 - Extra hour of ice on Sunday morning time slot. I would like to increase this from 3hours to 4hours and have groups practice for 1hr 20min. U9 registration numbers continue to be high and effectively progressing all skaters through all drills in 50min can be challenging when there is 40 skaters in a group
 - Introduce an extra power skating session early in the season and scrimmage sessions later in the season

- A goalie session once a month through the season – U7 & U9 goalies only so they are around similar skill level
- The ice times from the city are challenging. However, if we can structure this out, our participation rate will be high
- Evaluations:
 - Process is fair for each skater and independent evaluators are professional.
 - Would increase scoring from 1-3 to 1-5
- Goalies:
 - Continue to cultivate goalies with process we created this season. Coaches will cycle skaters through the position at practice and those with a keen interest can play more games
- Coaching:
 - Would like to create a “Welcome to Coaching” process with U7 Director and Technical Director for new coaches and on-ice helpers. This would be to set up at the start of the season once teams are picked and have the coaches come and ask questions and we can communicate our expectations to help our skaters. Some coaches are experienced and will be good without this, but some are new and some may want to get out on the ice help but are unsure of expectations and skill level required. This would be a great way to be more inclusive and build our community while setting ourselves and ultimately our skaters up for success.

Overall, we had a successful U9 Season. I heard from many skaters at the end of the season "The season went so fast." I would reply "That is because you had fun." There were a lot of friendships made and smiles had this season all while progressing in our hockey skills.

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