



## **Halifax Hawks Recreation Report 2024-2025**

I'm thrilled to say new players and coaches joined us across every level in recreation this year! Overall, the season was positive with few incidents, lots of growth, and plenty of social as well as athletic opportunities. Thanks go out to all directors, coaches, and volunteers that help build these programs for our community.

VP Notes: In the interest of expanding our reach, I'd like to have registration info available before the end of June and communicated to schools and radio stations in our area, as well as translated to Arabic. Lots of high school players are interested in junior coaching as an option for volunteer hours once the program has some scaffolding to it. Clearer direction is requested from HNS about how the association handles third-party reports to limit parent frustration and respect volunteer capacities.

Member Feedback: Earlier team selection would allow more teams to participate in fall tournaments; independent evaluators score by half-points 1-5 for better scope of player skill; concerns raised over safety priorities with referee calls at older levels (tolerating excessive contact); the same three infractions tend to pop up: dressing room attire, phone policy, proper gear fitting; limit friend requests – focus first on balancing teams, clarity of AP rules; better utilize third-week-of-the-month call-up practices to competitive teams; handle language and behaviour violations with a chart of consistent consequences and incident tracking at older levels.

Team Staff Suggestions: Tiered registration option to opt-in for practice ice/tournaments at U18C; one hour weekly pay-to-play ice for all high school players; Hockey 101 and Coaching 101 sessions for new families; resource pool for whole association: ice sale sites/development & gear sources/book recommendations etc in a shared document; increase community connections: walk/ride in parades? Dryland demo day?

Jo Andrea – VP Recreation  
Halifax Hawks MHA

### **No specific reporting from U11 & U13 directors.**

U15 – Barry Bowser: This season saw its fair share of challenges for U15C but overall was a great success. Both U15C had success over the season and finished with winning records. The Redhawks finished 2nd overall in the silver division falling 1 game shy of the championship while the Blackhawks won the Birthplace of Hockey tournament, the gold division championship as well as the city championship. A solid balancing process at the start of the season made it possible for me to create 2 equally balanced teams. A major hurdle that was brought up to me continuously throughout the season were parents whose players didn't

get all their friend requests. While I did the best I could at honouring friend requests, there were certain requests that I could not honour as I knew it would create too much of an imbalance between the 2 teams. Because of this, new friendships were made, and I saw players connect with new players that they had never played with before. I was also very happy with the amount of ice that the U15 Cs were given. I know it's very difficult to balance ice with so little around but the ability to have full ice practices made the biggest difference in how the Blackhawks improved over the season. While they were a middle of the pack team early on, their consistent practices allowed them to improve to a 10-0 record to end the season. While this season ended on a good note there were some barriers that I think needs to be addressed. 1. Our evaluation process didn't start until Thanksgiving weekend as that's when the U15 try-outs were complete. This only gave us 2 ice times to evaluate 30 players and create balanced teams. It seemed most other organisations already had their teams picked and were practicing together by Thanksgiving giving them a head start on the season. 2. Friend requests. Certain parents were not happy that their player did not get all the requests they had asked for regardless of how imbalanced the teams would be. This was a sore spot that parents kept approaching me about until at least January. I'm very seriously considering no friend requests in the future. This season I asked parents to send me their players top 2 requests, and I would do my best to ensure they were with 1 of them. Parents continued to send 4 plus players and basically wanted to hand pick their team based on previous seasons. 3. Goaltending was an issue before we started evaluations. Knowing that we only had 1 goalie per team and 1 of those goalies had commitment issues, I had to find an additional goalie who was no longer playing hockey. Because of the lack of goaltending there were at least a dozen times that we had to scramble to find a fill in, reschedule games and in 1 case, the Redhawks had to play a game without a goalie. 4. Clear and definitive rules from MMHL regarding use of affiliate players. This seems to change each season, and it seems like goalies are exempt most of the time but not in all cases. An issue the Redhawks were not happy about was a Sackville team suspended their own goalie due to conduct issues and were able to use a more skilled goalie from a gold division team to play in the semi-final game. This made a huge difference in the game and Sackville ended up shutting out the Redhawks. Though in the Silver division championship game, the original goalie that was suspended was back in nets. The optics were Sackville purposely used a more skilled goalie just to beat the Redhawks then switched back to their regular goaltender. The good news is most of the issues are somewhat minor and easy to deal with. If we can put some attention on any of these issues to try and make things even better for next season, I'm sure the parents would appreciate it.

**U18 – JL Fortier:** In U18 Rec, we had roughly 70 skaters and 6 goalies this year for the Hawks.

Groupings were initially created based on friend request and level of hockey played in 2023-2024. Initially, we had an open scrimmage for anyone interested on Thanksgiving weekend (Mike Hull and I refereed the game. Subsequently, from Monday to Wednesday of the following week each group had two balancing games.

Tim supplied the evaluators, and the results were recorded in an excel document. Jo Andrea put a lot of time into creating the spreadsheet, recording request and identifying previous levelled played by players, etc. After, the last balancing game the head coaches meet with Jo and I to discuss the results and final team rosters. It was very difficult to make changes because of the amount of friend request.

During the regular season, the Patriots were 14-6, the Golden Hawks 9-7-4, the Wolfpack 10-8-2, the Titan 4-13-3 and the Highlanders 1-16-3. We ended up with 1 team in Gold, 2 in Silver and 2 in Bronze.

In the playoffs, the Patriots just missed a semi-final spot in the gold division, the Golden Hawks made it to the semis in Silver before losing and the Wolfpack made it to the finals but lost a close game against the Sackville Leafs.

The bronze final was an all-Halifax match-up that saw the Titan win 4-1 against the Highlanders to capture the championship.

### Challenges

- There were several instances of player-to-player disrespect and some player to coach. A lot of comments were regarding player ability and some regarding the coach's knowledge of the game.
- Some use misogynistic and sexist language.
- Also, there were some challenges with affiliate players, as not everyone from U18 was interested in playing additional games. Sometimes, teams had to borrow from U15B, but this worked well, and players enjoyed being called up. The AP tracking spreadsheet really helped make sure players did not exceed the max number of games played.
- Some disrespect directed towards officials.

### Recommendations

- I would recommend switching to a 4- or 5-point scale for player evaluations to have a more accurate reflection of player ability.
- Use only reciprocal friend request that are required for drives or special circumstance to allow for more movement during balancing.
- Provide regular practice time for players and teams that are interested.
- Group players that want to play in tournaments, exhibition games and participate in off-ice events together.
- Create a list of players interested in being an affiliate for U18 Rec and U18AA.
- Develop a set of possible consequences for behaviour that violates the Hawks code of conduct.
- Track code of conduct violations