



U18 Competitive – Cory Gibson, Director

The U18 AA 2024/25 season saw Hawks numbers just strong enough to support a full U18 AA roster. To help with the tryout process, we did accept a handful of players from other organizations looking to play competitive hockey, one of whom was successful in cracking the squad.

Once tryouts were completed, and the team was assembled, we took to the ice looking to improve on the previous season.

We had a mix of new and returning players as well as new and returning coaches.

Ben McDow maintained the reigns as head coach along with assistant Joey Ramsay. Ben Huisman and Liam Hunt were added as assistants to round out the coaching staff. The coaching staff did an excellent job through some challenging times keeping the team focused and competitive. It was a pleasure to chat with the coaches before and after games, discussing what they thought was working, what wasn't and to hear what they had planned to help the team improve.

We finished the season with a 12-14-2 record an improvement on the previous seasons showing. Not unlike last season, we often found ourselves competing with teams that had more second and third year returning players, leaving us at a physical disadvantage. Having that been said, as the season progressed, we found a way to compete and turn a slow start into a strong finish.

Looking forward to next season, it is hoped that we will have a robust number of players trying out which may allow us to have a second competitive team at this level. Making the switch to have one director for both competitive and recreation U18 may help us to better align schedules and allow for more free movement of players to join the competitive team for practices and games. This should allow for more development for those players seeking more ice time.

Picking up on previous suggestions I would recommend the following moving forward:

1. Introducing a more formal AP/Call Up program. Having players in place more formally, who take part in practices would help to create more continuity and cohesiveness on the team. One of the issues we had in securing call ups was scheduling. U18 AA often played on the same nights as U18 C limiting the number of players available. Having that been said, the U18 C Director and coaches were all very helpful and encouraging of their players to join our team whenever possible.
2. Once we get an accurate estimate of how many players that could potentially play at the competitive level, it may be prudent to reach out to neighbouring organizations who are not creating teams at the same level to ensure we have enough players to properly fill out the roster. Hopefully this won't be an issue, but as registration fluctuates, it may be something we need to look at.