

Review of U11 Tryouts and Social Media Posts - Report

For: The Board of the South Shore Minor Hockey Association (SSMHA)

From: The Dispute Resolution Committee (Paul McCallion, Chair)

On October 7, 2025 the President of the South Shore Minor Hockey Association (SSMHA) Darren Spitzig contacted Jeremy Stevens, Brad Murray, and myself, Paul McCallion and asked if we would review the U11 Tryouts, team and coach selection process, and the Social Media posts that followed. Spitzig advised that all available information would be provided to the three individuals that would form the Dispute Resolution Committee.

The three individuals involved in this review understand that minor hockey tryouts are run by a committed group of volunteers that put in a considerable amount of time and effort during several weeks of the this process. The Dispute Resolution Committee would like to acknowledge that all of these individuals are volunteering to ensure that young hockey players have an opportunity to play the sport they love.

In reviewing what happened with the SSMHA U11 tryouts this year the following was learned **(NOTE: the exact timeline of all these events was not easily determined as the Dispute Resolution Committee could not see time stamps on the text messages, are relying on the statements of individuals, and do not have access to all communications between all the parties involved):**

- The tryouts were concluding and SSMHA president contacted an individual - Coach A - and advised him that he was chosen to be the head coach of the U11 AA team as his son was guaranteed a spot on the team based on the evaluation scores.
- Coach A declined the position as he had other children playing at different levels and wanted to ensure that he could help coach with these other teams as well.
- The SSMHA president then contacted another individual - Coach B - and offered him the position of head coach as his son was guaranteed a spot on the team based on the evaluation scores.
- Coach B was given the opportunity to select the final three players from players ranked 13 to 18.
- Coach B made his selections and it was approved by the Risk Manager of SSMHA Shawn Patterson.

- Coach B said in his written statement that he discussed with the President of SSMHA about naming another person the head coach of the U11 AA team if the U11 AA team did not have a head coach. Coach B said that this was approved by the President of SSMHA
- Coach B and the SSMHA had further communications by both text messages and phone calls during this process (**NOTE: Copies of text messages were provided and written statements of the phone conversations were reviewed**)
- Coach B and the SSMHA president in one portion of the text messages had the following exchange:

Coach B – "I'm not having another miserable year. Hearing there is a shitstorm brewing".

SSMHA President - "Who did you hear that from? And miserable year in regards to what?"

Coach B — "Just with parents being miserable about coaching and do u foresee a shitstorm if I name XXXX (Coach C) HC (head coach) after tryouts?"

SSMHA President - "Yes don't do that we are looking into everything atm (at the moment) but it's gonna take some time everyone needs to hit pause".

- The Risk Manager was made aware of these messages and was concerned about what was potentially going to happen as the person Coach B wanted to name head coach was the father of a player that Coach B chose using the "Coaches Selection" policy and was ranked outside the top 15 players.
- The Risk Manager was concerned because the spirit of the "Coaches Selection" is that the chosen coach is going to remain as the Head Coach and not relinquish the position after making the player selections, especially to the parent of player that only made the team based on the use of the "Coaches Selection" policy.

Coach B and the SSMHA President had a series of phone calls and text messages where Coach B was informed that the U11 AA team was going to have a roster size of 16 players and 2 goalies and that the team was going to be comprised of the top 16 ranked players. Coach B was not happy with this and asked about the 17th ranked player. Coach B was then offered the U11 AA team with a roster of 17 players and 2 goalies. (**NOTE: the SSMHA Tryout policy stated that the U11 AA team would have a roster of 15 players and 2 goalies. Hockey Canada has a Roster Policy that states that minor hockey teams will have a maximum roster size of 18 players and 2 goalies. As the other two SSMHA**

U11 teams had already reached the maximum roster size, the U11 AA team had to be increased to 16 players and 2 goalies. SSMHA policy does not override Hockey Canada policy, so the U11 AA roster was being increased as adding an additional to one of the other U11 teams would not be allowed)

- In a further exchange of text messages between Coach B and the SSMHA President the following was included:

Coach B - "I don't ever want this to be personal between us, but I think for the greater good I in good conscience cannot take the team unless it was the team I picked".

SSMHA President - "thank you for your messages. The association has taken back the team. You will no longer be head coach and we will seek another coaching option".

- At this point the SSMHA President and the Risk Manager spoke with Coach A and offered him the head coach position with the roster being comprised of the top 16 ranked players from the U11 tryouts. Coach A accepted this and agreed to become the head coach of the U11 AA team for the 2025-2026 season.

Other relevant information to be included in this report:

- An email was sent out by the Division Coordinator that included names of players that should not have been part of the next phase of the tryout process. This was not done maliciously or nefariously and was simply an error on their part.
- A family requested to see their child's ranking and scores for the U11 tryouts and was allowed to see these as per SSMHA policy (**NOTE: there have been in excess of 20 such requests made by parents at various levels within SSMHA this year**).
- No official roster was released by SSMHA for any of the U11 teams while the head coach position was being finalized.

The Dispute Resolution Committee was formed as a result of several members of the SSMHA Membership emailing complaints to Hockey Nova Scotia and making posts on Facebook. Many of the posts included comments that are in clear violation of Hockey Nova Scotia's Social Media Policy. Other individuals of the SSMHA Membership shared these posts on Facebook contributing to further breaches of the Social Media Policy.

What was noted by the Dispute Resolution Committee was that some of the information being shared was not complete and accurate, specifically to the head coach being fired by the association. As shown above, Coach B was not fired and decided to walk away from the position. Coach B may not have been happy with what was being communicated between him and the SSMHA President, but at no point can it be shown that Coach B was fired.

Coach A, who has been subject to derogatory comments online, played no part in what went on with Coach B, the communication between Coach B and the SSMHA President, or the U11 AA team selection.

The family that requested to see their child's ranking and evaluation scores followed SSMHA policy and were not involved in any of the decisions made by the SSMHA President or Risk Manager.

The Dispute Resolution Committee also noted that:

- There was poor and conflicting communication from the SSMHA President with Coach B but it does not appear to the Committee that this was done with any malicious intent
- The U11 AA roster will not be changed at this time and that the top 16 players will remain in place with Coach A being the head coach.
- The SSMHA President and Risk Manager made a decision to remove Coach B after he had rejected the roster for the U11 AA team being made up of the top 16 players. The decision to go with the top 16 players should have been made by the entire SSMHA Board as the series of events leading up to this decision had never been dealt with before, specifically an individual using the "Coaches Selections" to select a player that was not ranked in the top 15 and then wanting to make that player's father the coach.

The Dispute Resolution Committee recommends that the SSMHA Board rewrite their Tryout Policy and have it reviewed by Hockey Nova Scotia so that future disputes can be minimized.

The Dispute Resolution Committee has been advised by SSMHA that this matter has also been referred to Hockey Nova Scotia for review.

There will likely be further recommendations from the Committee and/or Hockey Nova Scotia regarding the Social Media posts being made by the SSMHA Membership. These posts have portrayed SSMHA Board Members, volunteers, and families as being corrupt and part of a conspiracy. Further posts made reference to children being victimized. The

language used by many of these online users are very concerning as they are portraying good people in a horrible fashion. The sharing of these posts has made the situation worse and many of these adults should have known better.

The Dispute Resolution Committee will likely be making further recommendations on sanctions that should be applied to all of these individuals, as online harassment and bullying should not be tolerated.

SUBMITTED to the Board on October 31, 2025.



Paul McCallion, Chair