

Dear Players, Parents, Coaches, and Volunteers,

From the hectic days of evaluations and rep tryouts to coordinating player placements with the recreation leagues, it has been a privilege to serve as your Division Director this year. Balancing the logistics of these divisions is a massive undertaking, but watching the players hit the ice with passion made every hour worth it.

Addressing This Season's Challenges

I want to speak directly to an issue that I know caused significant, justified frustration this year: recreation team balancing. As an association, we know the process this season was deeply flawed. We are not happy with how the teams ultimately balanced out, and we entirely validate the frustrations many families experienced.

In years past, fair team formation relied heavily on your Division Directors being rink-side, actively watching every single balancing game to assess player chemistry and skill in real time, while working closely with our coaches, whose on-ice input is absolutely essential. A truly equitable process also requires running an adequate number of evaluation games and actively rebalancing within the first few weeks of the season to quickly correct obvious disparities. It is my hope that moving forward, teams are balanced sooner, with enough games played to truly see a fair balance.

Team creation appeared to be detached and based primarily on rankings. The process was essentially finalized through data alone and left as-is for the season. It is important to have people in their roles supported for observing and input on balancing teams. Before the playoffs, some players were traded to other teams, and it was a hard move for those impacted this late in the season.

I am hoping that we move to a different system next season to ensure teams are truly balanced for the fairness of the kids who play the game.

Celebrating Our Players' Success and Resilience

Despite the structural hurdles in our recreation divisions and the intense competition in our rep flights, our athletes and coaches across both programs showed incredible grit and brought immense pride to the Hawks jersey.

- Our Rep Program: Our competitive teams proved they can run with the absolute best in the region, showcasing incredible depth and heart across our U13 cohort:
 - The U13 A1 Tier 1 Hawks tested themselves at the absolute highest, most grueling level of minor hockey in the province. Competing week in and week out against elite Tier 1 winter academies and top-flight programs, they locked down 7 wins and 3 ties in a demanding 22-game schedule, proving they belong on the ice with BC's best.
 - The U13 A2 Tier 2 Hawks battled through one of the most punishingly tight divisions in the league, where a mere four points separated 1st place all the way

down to 7th. They locked in 12 hard-fought wins, lit up the lamp with 92 goals scored.

- The U13 A3 Tier 3 Hawks ground out a fantastic 22-game regular season to secure a highly competitive Top-5 finish. They finished the year well above .500, playing high-tempo hockey to round out a stellar season.
- Our Recreation Program: While uneven balancing caused early frustration, our rec teams refused to quit. Two of our teams fought all the way to the final buzzer of the season to play for banners in their championship finals. Two additional teams made deep, exciting playoff runs, including one incredible division where a mere four points separated the fates of four different teams in a razor-thin race for second place.

The determination and sportsmanship our athletes displayed under every circumstance this winter was inspiring. Whether our players were fighting for a banner, grinding out a top rep finish, or focusing on personal development, their growth this year is something to be proud of.

A Special Thank You to Our Leadership & Coaches

The leadership on our benches defines the experience our kids have on the ice. I want to extend a massive, personal thank you to the following coaches for their incredible dedication, patience, and leadership throughout a challenging but rewarding season:

- U13 C1: Coach Brooks Raymond
- U12 C2: Coach Tim Fritz
- U13 C3: Coach Colin Kilpatrick
- U13 C4: Coach Brenden Appeldoorn
- U13 C5: Coach Roland Chanrouz
- U13 A1: Coach Travis Veldoen
- U13 A2: Coach Marcel Bruinsma
- U13 A3: Coach Rob McGowan

Additionally, I want to extend a special thank you to Jacquelyn Symington for her tireless work in her role as U13 Coordinator. The behind-the-scenes logistics of keeping this division moving are immense, and her efforts were deeply appreciated by myself, the coaches, and the families.

With Sincere Gratitude

To our managers and safety reps: thank you for stepping up, navigating the hurdles of this season, and keeping the focus entirely on the kids. You are the backbone of our hockey community.

To the parents and families: thank you for your early mornings, your rink coffee runs, your valuable feedback, and your unwavering support from the stands.

We are already taking the hard lessons from this winter to build a stronger, fairer association for the next. Have a safe, wonderful summer, and we look forward to seeing you back at the rink in the fall.

Warm regards,

Jon MacKinnon

U13 Division Director

Abbotsford Minor Hockey Association