**2023-24 KANATA BLAZERS U9 TIER 1**

I would like to take this time to welcome all prospective players and parents who are interested in playing for the 2023-24 Kanata Blazers U9 Tier 1 team and try to provide as much information as possible so you can make the best decision possible for your young player.

**COACHING PHILOSOPHY**

This will be my 7th season coaching in KMHA (U7/A/AA) and my second in a row being involved with the U9 Tier 1 team. I bring passion, enthusiasm and a knowledge of the uniqueness that comes with U9 Tier1 half ice hockey.

My coaching philosophy is based on 4 pillars: player development, respect, teamwork and fun. As this is the first year of competitive hockey for most of these players, there will be a focus on establishing the foundational behaviors, habits and skills both and on and off the ice that will make successful Blazers down the road.

At the center of this vision is sticking to a yearly plan that focuses on individual skills within an overall team concept while at the same time trying to ensure that each and every player leave this team a better player and a better teammate.

**COMMITMENT**

Playing competitive hockey will come with noticeably enhanced time and financial commitments from each player and their family versus U7 or U9 house league hockey. **PLEASE** ensure that you are fully aware of the commitment that this season will bring before you arrive for try outs!

Families should expect to be on the ice 4 nights per week for games and practices with an expectation that those players are at the rink no later than 30 mins before practice and 45 mins before games.

Parents should plan on contributing approximately $1200 - $1500 to the team budget, over and above their registration fees. Travel costs associated with out-of-town tournaments will not be covered in our team fees. Fundraising and sponsorship will be a key area of focus to keep costs as low as possible for all parties and is directly tied to the level of engagement of those involved.

**TEAM SUPPORT**

We will be looking for volunteers to help us with the operations of the team (assistant coaches, on ice helpers, trainer, manager, social coordinator, fundraising coordinator etc.). We hope to have as many parents involved as possible and will be looking to fill these roles as soon as try outs are complete and the team has been selected.

**TOURNAMENTS**

As part of the Hockey Canada pathway, we are limited to how many games we can play in a season, so typically at this level the focus is on league play. That being said, I am planning to participate in two tournaments this year:

1. Novice Holiday Classic – December 15-17
   1. Half ice jamboree format
   2. Will include 2 games on Friday
   3. Will include a fun skills competition
2. Showdown in YGK (Kingston) – February/March TBD
   1. Full ice format with scorekeeping
   2. 2-3 night stay in Kingston depending on schedule
   3. Participation in this tournament will depend on dates and HEO direction on 5v5 involvement

**TRYOUTS**

Tryouts will begin the week after Labour Day and will include mandatory pre-skates followed by a series of tryouts which will involve both skill evaluations and 4v4 scrimmages. This is a chance for kids to go out, have fun and try their very best.

Dates, times and more information will be posted on the KMHA website in August and I will be reaching out to all participants via email before the first pre-skate.

Again, I am extremely excited to work with this team for the upcoming season and look forward to helping make these kids better players on the ice and better individuals off the ice. Should you have any questions or concerns throughout the summer, please give me a call or send me an email.

Cheers,

Matt Bennett

Head Coach – U9 Tier 1

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