My name is Roman Srutek and I’m excited to be back as a second year Head Coach of the Kanata Blazers - U14AA team. First year there is always a lot to learn; however, now that I am a semi-seasoned second year coach, I’m ready to rock ‘n’ roll and teach the selected 17 competitive players in becoming exceptional team players, grow as leaders in hockey and society in general, continue to develop their hockey skills, and support those players who want to push themselves to higher levels of hockey. I am proud to have had two exceptional players graduate from our team last year and move to the AAA level. Hoping for more this year.

Most of you know my background by now, but for those new to the Association or a newbie to competitive hockey, welcome, we are excited to have you and your player come out to our selection process. I grew up playing in the KMHA system and have had the opportunity to coach last year and my children during their early hockey experiences, both in KMHA and KGHA. I have also taught in several hockey related programs throughout Ottawa and have worked with kids in various sports.

I consider myself fortunate to have played hockey for over 20 years, progressing from minor hockey all the way up to the university level. Last years experience really ignited an inner flame, where I want to continue to give back to players that want to develop hockey skills and the values taught from a competitive hockey experience.

Coaching Philosophy

At the core of my philosophy is the creation of a safe, fun and healthy competitive environment where every team member feels important and contributes to the overall success of the team. It is my objective to ensure that no player feels more significant than the collective team.

This year presents a new element of body contact to the game of hockey, which in my opinion increases the importance of a ‘Team First’ mentality. Now hockey truly becomes a team sport, and those who are willing to learn and make decisions and sacrifices for the team will ultimately have a better chance of making this team. I will spend a great deal of time making sure our players understand how to take and give body checks in a safe and learning environment.

During practices, we will maintain a high tempo, emphasizing repetition to foster skill and tactical development for each player. While individual skills and tactics will receive considerable attention, we will also prioritize team tactics and strategies to enhance players’ understanding of the game as a whole and promote effective teamwork.

My ultimate goal is to have a lot of fun with these athletes in a competitive environment where everything I and the coaching team do, inspire these players to be better people and hockey players in this world.

Evaluations and Tryouts

The primary focus in selecting this group will be centered around the ‘Team First’ concept and building a strong culture of willingness to learn. In addition to assessing hockey specific skills, the evaluations will look to identify players who display hockey intelligence, selflessness, consistent hard work, accountability and above-average levels of competitiveness both with and without the puck.

Additionally, evaluations will also consider positive attitudes, active listening skills, ability to follow instructions, and strong inclination towards teamwork. The final selection of players will be based on a comprehensive assessment, drawing upon information gathered from inter-squad and exhibition games, discussions and assessments from previous coaches and other sources of gathered information. To ensure an objective evaluation of all players, the evaluation panel will consist of several independent evaluators.

New to this year, my evaluation process will consist of off-ice testing prior to on-ice hockey specific evaluations. I’m a believer that the best hockey players are well rounded athletes and a little effort in the off-season will give me and the evaluators a better perspective of which players are committed to play competitive hockey. By no means am I asking that you as the parent to invest in any sort of training that costs money, in fact it’s quite the opposite. What I am asking is to please encourage your player to train outside at a park or the backyard.

The off-ice evaluation will consist of:

1. 1.5-mile run (7 laps around a standard soccer field)
   * Target: under 15 minutes
2. Shuttle Run 200 meters – two pylons distanced 20 meters apart. The player is to run from one pylon to the other and back five times
   * Target: as fast as possible
3. Push-ups – chest touching a fist distance from the ground
   * Target: minimum of 12 to complete, do as many as possible
4. Bodyweight Squats – legs shoulder length a part, make sure hands are on hips or stretched out in front of your chest and slowly bend knees until thighs are parallel to the ground
   * Target: minimum of 30, do as many as possible
5. Bodyweight planks – balancing on toes and forearms while holding the rest of your body off the ground and keeping your spine in a neutral position.
   * Target: minimum 75 seconds, hold as long as possible

A minimum target has been set in consultation with fitness instructors based on age appropriate testing. The minimum targets are only set for players to have a goal to aspire towards. This off-ice testing will not be the only consideration for player selection. The fitness testing will be used to complement the on-ice hockey specific evaluations.

As we all know, only 17 players can be selected per team. There will be some difficult choices to be made come September.

Additional Information:

This year I am excited to name Martin Pilon as my Associate Coach. Due to the significant time commitments and additional circumstances, Martin will be instrumental in our team success. Martin and I have a similar philosophy in running a competitive U14 AA hockey team. It really does take a village to make great things happen and having an Associate Coach will be key for me. Martin will be learning and supporting myself in all aspects of this year’s team from initial player/team evaluations, practice planning, off-ice training and additional responsibilities in making sure this year is a successful year. Welcome Martin!

Success does not mean “winning” all the time, we recognize that Kanata Blazers Hockey can feel reminiscent of David against Goliath. This year will be no different. We understand the challenge ahead of us, but we believe we can be a good competitive hockey team with the meticulous selection of players willing to learn and make sacrifices, and where parents are supportive and willing to let us coach their children in a positive, competitive environment.

Commitment/Season Plan

As with all competitive sports, playing competitive hockey is a serious time commitment for players and their families. The current plan is to be out 4 or 5 times per week which will include practices and games as well as additional skill/body contact clinics, chalk-talk and/or off-ice training.

Financially, on top of KMHA registration and tryout costs, families can expect team fees of approximately $2,000 to $2,200 for the season. A detailed budget will be reviewed with parents at the start of the season.

There will be 4 tournaments booked for the season:

a. Capital Gold Rush Gloucester Tournament - September 20-22

b. Peterborough Hockey AA Tournament - October 25-27

c. Kingston Canadians Tournament - November 29 to December 1

d. Capital Winter Classic - January 3-5

We will not be booking any tournaments or mandatory ice times over the Christmas break, other than the Capital Winter Classic as noted above.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer and I look forward to seeing all aspiring U14AA players at their local parks over the summer and of course at the hockey rink in late August.

Yours in competitive hockey,

Coach Roman

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