



Annual Report of the RMLL President
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2008 was the year of national championships in Alberta (minor and major, box and field). RMLL teams hosted two of these nationals. The Sherwood Park Outlaws, led by their tournament committee Chair Shauna Sterparn, hosted the President's Cup. The Calgary Jr. A Mountaineers, led by their tournament committee Chair Lorie Pesowski, hosted the Minto Cup. The demands and challenges of each tournament were completely different, but in both cases, the event was professionally run and enjoyed by participants and spectators.

The 2008 season had 59 teams in six divisions in three provinces:

- Senior – 5 teams
- Junior A – 4 teams
- Junior B Tier I – 10 teams
- Junior B Tier II – 17 teams
- Junior B Tier III – 15 teams
- Junior Ladies – 8 teams

Senior

On the disappointing side, the senior division lost a team when the Red Deer Rage had to suspend operations. However, rumours are circulating that they may return for the 2008 season and may even be joined by a third Edmonton-area team. On the positive side, the senior division continued to upgrade both its quality of play and competition. There were only a handful of points that separated teams 1 through 4. As a consequence of the Rage dropping out, a fully balanced schedule was played including a balanced playoff format. The first round of the playoffs saw the Sherwood Park Outlaws defeat the Okotoks Raiders and the Airdrie Knights defeat the Spruce Grove Slash. The finals, for the fourth year in a row, saw the Outlaws defeat the Knights. At the President's Cup, the Knights made their first ever national appearance. This was a steep learning curve, and despite improving over the course of the tournament, the Knights failed to win a game in the roundrobin. Meanwhile, the Outlaws were, for the third year in a row, playing in the gold medal game. Unfortunately, they were defeated by the Owen Sound Woodsmen. I would like to thank Mike Fynn for his leadership as the new senior commissioner. The fact that Mike had broken every rule in the book as a player and coach, made him well placed to keep potential violators from straying sideways! The fact that there were only two suspensions handed out – that must be some sort of senior record – is evidence of Mike's fine work.

Junior A

The biggest news out of the Jr. A division was off the floor. First, a new website was rolled out that will soon be the envy of the other Jr.A leagues in the country. Second, was the successful hosting of the Minto Cup by the Calgary Mountaineers. This was the first time since 1979 that a major box nationals was held in Calgary. The event was a success on and off the floor. Off the floor the crowds were the largest to ever attend amateur lacrosse in the city and there was some very good media coverage. This is to be built on for the 2009 season. On the floor, the Calgary Mountaineers competed very well, putting a scare into both Orangeville and Victoria. In particular, the semi-final against Victoria had the Mountaineers trailing by only one goal with less than three minutes remaining. In the league itself, the Edmonton Eclipse went through the regular season undefeated. However, in the first round they were met by a stubborn Okotoks Raiders team that beat them once and forced OT in another. After getting by the Raiders, the Eclipse met the Edmonton Miners in the finals. Despite finishing behind the Eclipse in the regular season, the Miners defeated the Eclipse 4-1. Congratulations go out to the Edmonton Miners for their fifth Jr.A title in six years.

Junior B Tier I

In 2008, the Jr.B division added a second team outside of Alberta, with the introduction of the South Saskatchewan Stealth. Changes were made to the playoff format with the first place team in both the South and North receiving a bye, and the second place team hosting a weekend elimination tournament. In the North tournament, the Saskatchewan SWAT emerged victorious, and in the South, after a special tie-breaking win, the Calgary Chill went on to the finals. In the regional finals, the Sherwood Park Titans upended the SWAT, and the Calgary Mountaineers defeated the Chill. In the RMLL final, the Mountaineers swept the Titans to win their second straight Jr.B title. At the Founder's Trophy, the RMLL was represented by five teams (Mountaineers, Chill, Calgary Shamrocks, Edmonton Warriors, and SWAT). In 2009, the Edmonton Warriors will be hosting the Founder's Trophy.

Junior B Tier II

The calibre of lacrosse in Tier II continues to improve. This division remains a key stepping stone for players going into JrB and JrA. Several Tier II players were even picked up by JrB teams attending the Founder's Trophy. The playoffs and provincials (hosted by the Fort Saskatchewan Rebels) were very competitive. Here are the results:

Gold: Fort Saskatchewan Rebels

Silver: Lethbridge Barracudas

Bronze: Medicine Hat Sun Devils

Even though she has resigned her position as commissioner, I would like to thank Christine Thielen for the work that she did organizing the Tier II division. One worrisome trend in the Tier II division was the number of discipline issues (fights, gross misconducts, and even off-floor events). Despite holding hearings and levying stiff fines and suspensions, the behaviour continued. Referees who enjoy doing major games in the other divisions have been asking not to do Tier II games. I challenge all stakeholders, administrators, referees, coaches, managers, and especially players to come up with an action plan that will get rid of these problems and build respect in the game.

Junior B Tier III

The Tier III league continues to grow as a place for late entry players to play lacrosse. I had the pleasure of attending the provincials (hosted by the Medicine Hat Sun Devils) and saw a number of skilled and competitive games that thrilled the spectators until the final whistle. The results were:

Gold: Okotoks Icemen

Silver: Lethbridge Barracudas

Bronze: Medicine Hat Sun Devils

Unfortunately, the discipline problems that were present in Tier II were even worse in Tier III. Despite the purpose of the Tier III division as player development and opportunity, early in the year it became obvious that some players had signed up for lacrosse for the sole purpose of getting into fights. Even arranging in advance the videotaping of the fights for quick posting on youtube! The Tier III Commissioner Linda Robertson responded to this deteriorating situation by taking the drastic step by mandating automatic suspensions for fighting, a move that eventually paid off, as the number of fights decreased. The issue of fighting will be placed on the agenda for the Tier III breakout session at the RMLL AGM.

Junior Ladies

This division continues to be dominated by the Sherwood Park Titans, who won their 100th straight game and remained undefeated in winning the provincial title. The Titans are a deeply skilled team and are the benchmark for their opponents. But there are signs that the gap is closing, the Red Deer Riot gave them a scare at the provincials and there are a number of fine players scattered throughout the division. Clearly the caliber of girls lacrosse is improving. Here are the results from the provincials (hosted by the Calgary Cardinals):

Gold: Sherwood Park Titans

Silver: Red Deer Riot

Bronze: Calgary Cardinals

One worrisome trend in the junior ladies division is the number of forfeited games by teams claiming a player shortage. This even occurred at the provincials when the Calgary Axemen pulled out after the first game. In a provincial league where there is travel it is disappointing to see games being forfeited. This issue is something that needs to be addressed at the RMLL AGM.

Yours in lacrosse,

