

2014 Jr. A Commissioners Report

Growth and Recruitment

The Junior A league in Alberta continues to recruit many of the best players in the province. However, there are still many top level players who decide not to play at the highest level of Junior Lacrosse in the province and opt still to play 'B'. The reasons for this are many but more needs to be done across the province to attract, entice and make the Jr. A league the choice for the vast majority of our top level talent. Recruitment and competition between our players should improve with the adding of the 5 import rule which will allow our franchises to reach out to players across the country to try to get them to come play lacrosse in Alberta. That being said, some of our players are still leaving the province for BC for the opportunity to play a higher caliber of lacrosse and gain life experience. I commend the Alberta teams who have allowed their players this opportunity even at the detriment of their teams talent levels. The South division at the current time is no doubt stronger than the North but as in years past there seems to be a natural ebb and flow to this process. Our biggest area of concern this year was the Jr. A Miners who struggled to recruit enough players to field a strong competitive team. I do not believe the talent pool in Alberta is deep enough to have four teams competing at the level of the other Jr. A provinces of Ontario and BC. To grow, recruit and improve our players I believe strongly that we need to look at creating a Western Junior A league in partnership with BC, and hopefully expanding to other provinces as their talent levels improves.

Season Overview

Each of the four teams plays an 18 game balanced schedule. Though there are two teams in the North and South there is only one division with three of the four teams making the playoffs. The Calgary Mountaineers finished first, followed by the Okotoks Raiders, Sherwood Park Titans and finally the Miners. The regular season saw a few problems with proper correspondence in relation to affiliate players, inconsistent officiating and poor transaction communication but on the whole things went smoothly. There were very few suspensions to deal with, no major issues arising and no major appeals that needed to be heard. The league and provincial championship was won by the Calgary Mountaineers in a four game sweep of the Okotoks Raiders. The Calgary Mountaineers went on to play in the first Western Jr. A Final that saw them competing against the Coquitlam Adanacs of the BC Junior A Lacrosse League. This five game series was played at the Poirier Rec Centre in Coquitlam, BC and saw the Adanacs win 3 games to 1. This should be seen as a huge success as this is the first time an Alberta team has won a game against a league champion from BC or Ontario since joining the Jr. A ranks of Canadian lacrosse.

Season Setbacks

I came into the job late, having been hired in late March stepping in for the interim commissioner who took over temporarily when the previous commissioner stepped down. The year started off with the Miners in a difficult position of not having enough players to field a team and needing the division to approve changes to the operating policy and affiliation rules. This was a contentious issue with two of

the teams but at the late juncture of the spring I felt approve these changes was the only option as it was too late in the spring to look at moving to a three team league.

Future Goals

The league needs to look at doing many things better and running itself in a more professional manner. Junior A Lacrosse in the province needs to model itself around the more successful Jr. A franchises in Canada. However, the main goal that I believe necessary to move our province closer to the caliber of lacrosse in Ontario and BC is creating a league that competes with BC. We need to play against better competition throughout the year.

Brian Broks

Jr. A Commissioner