



## 2016 RMLL Junior A Season Overview

The 2016 season started with new enthusiasm. A new team was added to the division, the 2015 RMLL Jr. Tier 1 Champion, Saskatchewan Swat.

The regular season was dominated by the Calgary Mountaineers (18-2), and their cross town rivals, the Okotoks Raiders (16-3-1). The Mounties won their season series 3-2 to make the difference.

The Saskatchewan Swat proved to be very competitive, as they qualified for post season play, with a record of 7-11-1. Good for a 3<sup>rd</sup> place finish in the regular season & a playoff date with the Raiders.

The St. Albert Miners, a veteran team, battled neck & neck with Swat for 3<sup>rd</sup>, but ended up 4<sup>th</sup> @ 7-13. Swat won their series 3-2, home team winning all 5 games.

The Sherwood Park Titans (0-20) had a very young & improving team that went through organization & management transitions & will continue to rebuild.

Offense was the name of the game this year, as long standing scoring records were broken & overall scores were higher than previous years. 2 schools of thought on this: 1. Better skill on offense 2. Poor defense or goaltending. I would prefer to think that the overall skill of the offensive players has gone up & defenses will have to be adjusted for that. Kudos to Raiders Sean Tyrrell for racking up 128 points to set a new division standard, as well as Raiders Brett McIntyre scoring a record 59 goals. As the highest scoring team, Raiders accumulated 287 goals, 1 more than the Mountaineers, and the Mounties had the least amount of goals against (172) 18 less than the Raiders. Mounties were the most penalized by a wide margin, but still managed to persevere.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> round of the playoffs, the Raiders turned it up a notch, easily winning the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 games at home, before the Swat pushed the Raiders into overtime at home in the 3<sup>rd</sup> game, eventually losing 17-15 in OT. From all accounts, one of the best games of the year & a true sign that the Swat are here to play.

The Championship series featured the 2 top teams in the regular season, with no love lost between them. Winner goes to Langley for the Minto Cup.

The Mounties prevailed 4-1 in an intense, hard fought series that had both teams leave it all on the floor. Every tilt was just that. Momentum swings, explosive speed & skill, costly penalties & an old fashioned brawl at the end of game 4, resulting in 6 suspensions to the combatants, including both starting goalies. This series win would prove to be very beneficial to the Mounties, as it prepared them for the type of play they would face in the Minto.

While the future of Jr.A lacrosse appears to be growing in both Calgary & Saskatoon, it seems to be declining in Edmonton. Some of that can be attributed to the presence of the Roughnecks in Calgary & the recent arrival of the Rush in Saskatoon, which has boosted registration in Saskatchewan & has boisterous record crowds. These pro teams have help create & encourage a culture. Another contributing factor would be players who don't want the commitment it takes for the A programs, whether it be work, school or personal reasons. Most of it is culture. The culture for lacrosse from minor to major must change. The need for more interaction with the minor system from our teams must be prevalent & consistent. Junior teams can adopt a team or organization, help them with schools, evaluations, on site practices, coaching, etc. Create that excitement for kids to want to play junior lacrosse, at whatever level. Something to aspire to, heroes to admire. Alberta's retention numbers must go up to ensure the growth of the Creator's game in our province. Alberta has made great strides in the competitive balance with the rest of Canada, but we need everyone on the same page in regards to player placement, development, coaching, recruiting to reach an even higher level, the ultimate goal, an Alberta Minto Cup Champion.

In closing, I would like to thank all the players, coaches, management & volunteers of the Jr.A division, for their passion, hard work & dedication to the game of lacrosse this season & look forward to working together next year.

The future is bright, now is the time to make it happen.

RMLL JR.A COMMISSIONER

*Mike Fynn*

