

Local coach hangs up the whistle after seven seasons on the rink

By Jake Courtepatte

While many local hockey mentors fly under the radar, Coach Darren Slind had an influence on those around him that his management team could not let go unnoticed.

After a decade in coaching minor hockey in Aurora, and a lifetime in the Aurora Minor Hockey Association, Slind has coached his last game and run his last practice.

"Thank you Coach Darren for teaching our players about fair, honest play," said Laura Pitre, who worked as manager on the teams Slind coached. "We will miss the sound of your whistle."

His first position behind the bench came as a trainer, working with his older son's team for three or four seasons.

Having some coaching experience under his belt, Slind took the reins as a head coach with his younger son Dalton when he was playing Tyke house league.

"I surrounded myself with some really outstanding hockey people that helped with the roles of trainer or assistant coach," said Slind. "It made the new experience fun and a lot easier."

The feedback from players, parents, and other coaches that first year was positive, prompting Slind to continue his role as a head coach and progress with his son through the minor hockey age groups.

Slind's decision to hang up his whistle coincided with Dalton's decision to hang up his skates, after seven seasons as a head coach and a decade in total working in Aurora minor hockey.

His favourite moment behind the bench came in his son's PeeWee year, when they were able to take a tournament win back to Aurora.

"Being able to represent Aurora in that setting was so exciting," he said. "When the kids work so hard, and begin to implement the skills you've been teaching them at that kind of setting, it was pretty remarkable to see how happy they were."

The time Slind spent as a coach was a proper fit to cap off his hockey days, after he had grown up playing in his hometown Aurora.

"I loved the opportunity to give to my community, in a meaningful way," said Slind. "So a lot of it was a need to give back."

He recalled playing for Lowell McClenny, former President of the AMHA, who had a positive influence on Slind's hockey experience.

In turn, Slind wanted the opportunity to influence and shape players not only as athletes, but as stand-up young men and young women.

"My coaching philosophy was much more around the development of the whole person, and your obligations as being a member of a team. It's not an individual sport, it's a team sport, and that comes with responsibilities."

These were the messages that Slind and his coaching staff tried to, and were successful in, instilling in their players.

"I see these life skills as applicable outside of a hockey career, whether you go into the corporate world, or academia, or anything really."