

AMHA caps successful season by celebrating five championship teams and hosting OHF Playoffs



Aurora Minor Hockey Association President Corby Saltzman exhales when he sits down to chat about the end of the 2024-25 season last weekend and the beginning of the next at the ACC this weekend.

Serving as a kinetic backdrop to our conversation is a series of Aurora Tigers rep tryouts on the ACC2 pad.

As we meet in the ACC's mezzanine, the ice surface behind us is populated by over fifty U13 players bedecked in yellow, red, orange, green, black, and white practice jerseys. Nervous parents, clutching coffees in the bleachers, watched their prodigies skate to prescribed drills and demonstrate their hockey acumen for their prospective coaches.

The tryouts are the lifeblood of the AMHA's rep program which distinguished itself in 2024-25 with a U16BB OMHA championship and four York-Simcoe championships.

Aurora's U16AA, U16A, U15AA, and U13B squads won gold medals for being the best regional team in a league spanning Vaughan, King, Markham, Richmond Hill, Newmarket, Stouffville, Georgina, Barrie, Orillia, and all the way to Collingwood, Midland, and Wasaga Beach.

Saltzman couldn't be more pleased with this year's gold medal haul by AMHA teams.

?It goes to show we had the right coaches in place. The championships are really a testament to the coach and staff. Of course, it feels good that our players earned five championships and that we served as an OHF centre last weekend here at ACC2. It's icing on the cake to host the OHF championships after such a successful season on the ice.?

Hosting the OHF championships was, indeed, the administrative highlight of the season, according to Saltzman.

?It's the high point for us because we ran a first-class event from beginning to end. It was a year in the making. We ran a great banquet for the five teams at Stonehaven to kick off the weekend. I was also pleased with the performance of our U13 Tigers who beat the reigning OHF champs Quinte West Hawks 4-2 in Game 1 of the championships. It was an experience like no other for our U13 team and all the teams in the tournament competed on one pad at ACC2 ? making it easier on parents and players with just one rink to go to each day. The OHF provided rave reviews of the weekend in Aurora and described it as 'one of the better events of the season.' We were really happy with the number of dignitaries that attended the event, too.?

Saltzman was also pleased to see the recent rise in registrants with the AMHA and noted that "We're back to pre-COVID levels of registration. 730 players are in the program for 2025-26, with 430 in House League and 300 in rep?they'll be competing on travel teams from U8 to U17."

The AMHA President attributed the rise in numbers to both the beneficial aspects of the OMHA's Open Borders policies and the rep teams' success on ice in 2024-25.

"We embraced the Open Borders OHF mandate where players are now free to go wherever they want to play without a release. For example, we know we're going to pick up rep players from a Richmond Hill U10 team that just folded this weekend. We're picking up players from King, Newmarket, Stouffville, and Richmond Hill due to our central location in York Region, but our performance on-ice this season has also attracted players. In addition to the OMHA championship and the four President's Cup gold medals at the York-Simcoe championships, our U15BB team made the semifinals in the OMHA's and our U15A's won the silver medal at the President's Cup. Certainly, the highlight of the season on-ice was to see two of our teams reach the pinnacle in the provincial championships and to see four of our teams tossing their red caps in the air to celebrate their gold medals. These are all championship teams."

The diligent and engaging President reflected on the best part of leading the AMHA over the last year: "The most satisfying aspect is to see these kids develop their love of the game. Being a voice for them is very important to me and we've made some meaningful and positive changes to make their experience as hockey players even better. Due to our increased registration, I've released a 'Call to Action' to all members of the AMHA. We need more volunteers?especially coaches?for the coming season to deal with our rising numbers. I'd love to see 4-5 coaches rather than 2-3 behind our benches to elevate the game."

By Jim Stewart