OTTAWA STING U16B (2007) COACHES LETTER

Hello All Prospective U16B (2007) Players and Families!

Introduction:

My name is Will Murray and I am absolutely thrilled that I was selected as the Ottawa Sting U16B Head Coach. While many of you may know me already, allow me a bit of background about who I am and what I hope and expect for the upcoming season.

First, I have been involved in athletics of all kinds virtually my entire life, including soccer, track, rugby and hockey. I played hockey and rugby competitively and continue to enjoy playing both ice and ball hockey to this day (albeit I’m a bit slower but no less competitive!). I have always studied sports, physical performance, and coaching, and when the opportunity to get involved at the community level presented itself, I jumped at it. I have coached hockey since 2014, including supporting Head Coach Tyler Bjornson for the past two years. I am humbled to have been chosen to fill his skates.

Coaching Philosophy:

My coaching philosophy is straightforward. I see hockey as one part of an athlete’s development, and I believe strongly in Long Term Player Development. Coaching has to be about teaching skills, and at this level, certain tactics, and certain game strategies – but it is also very much about the discipline required to play competitive sports. I believe the greatest attributes any athlete can possess are work ethic, compete level, commitment and high personal conduct. I expect the players to respect each other, respect parents, volunteers, coaches, on-ice officials and their opponents. I also expect to have open communications with the players and their families. It is a high standard, and I will hold myself, my staff, and the players to it.

I understand that contact hockey is an exceptionally difficult game to play. I understand well that emotions can run high on the ice at certain points in a game or tournament. Regardless, the players will demonstrate the focus required to get the job done.

Lastly, I will also always advocate for player health and safety and will not compromise on a player’s long term health if something adverse happens.

Style of Play & Player Profile

Taken with my philosophy, you can see how it dovetails with how hockey is now played: it is a sport about speed, dynamism, skill, grit, possession, communication, and using all 5 players on the ice. This last element is \*critical.\* Players will support the puck and players will distribute the puck – in contact hockey, it is smartest way to keep your opponent off balance.

I will be looking for players who are very fit, can skate, have high hockey sense, work hard, and compete from the moment they hit the ice until the moment they return to the bench. Specifically, I am looking for athletes who are dynamic, accelerate quickly, have very strong edge work, four-way mobility, have good stick work, are puck hounds in corners and on forecheck/backcheck, separate the opponent from the puck and attack/counterattack, support the play (do not be on the wrong side of the puck, anywhere), pass smartly, are evasive and can anticipate plays well.

Our identity as a team will, with player input, be one that never quits under any circumstances, and will contest every inch of ice –regardless of your size or speed (do not worry, it is my job to help give you, or help you hone, these skills).

Player Commitment

Most of you will be entering Grade 10. I know it will be difficult to balance the pressures of school with the pressures of competitive hockey. However, time management is a critical skill that will serve you well throughout your life. You can expect to be involved with team events (games, etc) at least 13-15 hours/week. Work with Mum or Dad, Aunt, Uncle, Grandparents, Step-Parents, Guardians to help set a schedule that will help you succeed in athletics and academics. I cannot promise you what marks you will get or how many assists you will pick up, but being organized will take a certain amount of stress away. I also expect the players to take ownership and accountability for preparing for practices and games, including reviewing practice plans BEFORE practice and knowing where you need to be and when.

You can expect:

* Games that last 1.5hrs, with an arrival time 45 mins prior (barring normal delays)
* Approx 3 hours of practice/week
* Specialized skills sessions: skating, defending, goaltending
* Off ice training
* Game video requiring your review
* Team building and social events
* At least four tournaments (TBD) – two local, two away
  + October
  + November
  + December
  + January (likely Lake Placid – mid January)
  + Possibly Feb

Tryouts

Many of you might feel anxious about the prospect of a tryout – regardless of how many times you have tried out - that is perfectly normal. Try to channel those nerves into action on the ice. It starts with working hard. So make sure you are giving everything you have. Lots about hockey is beyond your control or governed by mistakes. Do not worry about that, the only thing you control is both your effort and your attitude. So if you have a bad shift, shake it off and get ready for your next shift.

The exact format for tryouts is not set yet – and they will likely be mid-September. There will be further communication about dates soon. However, expect scrimmages and for the final releases, exhibition games. I will be working with the VP of Coaching to select evaluators who have a great degree of hockey experience, and who will be neutral to this cohort.

Lastly, do not come to tryouts out of shape. If you are not yet engaged in dynamic physical activities, get going. Also, work on your hands and shot. If you are able, get on the ice a few times before tryouts start so that new equipment is broken in.

Summary

Sting hockey is good quality and real a blast. If you have yet to try out, I encourage you to do so – but make sure you take a couple of contact clinics first. There are a lot of good clinics offered across the city. As you all enter the U16 level, lots of things can happen with your personal and athletic development. You have read what skills and attributes we will look for, and that should help shape your approach for the rest of the summer. You have my commitment that you will be assessed fairly and thoroughly.

I will do my best continue your journey as hockey players, athletes and adolescents. It is an honour and privilege to be part of it.

I hope you all have an enjoyable end to your summers. See you at a rink soon!

Yours in hockey,

Will Murray,

Head Coach – Ottawa Sting U16B