

Joint Select Program – prepared statement

Over the past couple of months, the newly formed BHC has been investigating several options to find potential cooperative efforts for both BCHL and BMHA.

The latest discussions have involved a joint select hockey program. Although both organizations agree that it is a good program and would benefit players, coaches, organizations and the city, a discrepancy on usage of a brand/logo has the real possibility of derailing this initiative. I find this entirely regrettable.

Some history... In 2009, Thom Foster and Carolyn Rollins spearheaded an initiative to merge two separate MD programs and agreed to brand it as Brantford Saints MD. The reason was that any other branding would eliminate the Saints name entirely. The circumstances as described in the Expositor article of April 7, 2009 strikes eerily similar chords to recent discussions... presidents talking over coffee... committee of 3 members per organization... wanted to move from mixed teams to a full slate of teams... improving rep hockey... Unfortunately, what started out as a cooperative MD program has devolved into a BMHA program with no cooperation between the organizations and no indication of any historical involvement by BCHL. As of today, all references to the BCHL Saints concerning MD hockey in the city has been lost.

Regardless of what happened with the MD program between then and now, BCHL cannot let this happen with Select hockey.

BCHL must safeguard their league, their brand and their vision for future years. BCHL must also be mindful of the fact that future leadership may not always be aligned to the current vision so all efforts must be made to preserve the history of BCHL and justify all decisions for future reference. Select hockey is all that is left of the Saints logo and BCHL has worked tirelessly over the past couple of years to increase the overall awareness of the Saints brand. From a reinvigorated Select program, to retail space within Giant Tiger, there is real value that should be taken into consideration and leveraged instead of discarded, filed away and hidden from the public.

This joint select initiative should not be seen as a threat to BMHA. There is more than enough room in Brantford for two distinct house leagues. However, make no mistake; the greatest upside to a joint select program is for BMHA. Because the vast majority of players on BMHA select teams are majors, the current development model defaults to major aged players. Without a cooperative program, minor aged BMHA players will continue to be excluded from a select program, resulting in fewer ice times, less skills development and a lower likelihood of competing for a rep roster spot. The efficient flow of talent to higher levels of rep hockey will continue to be stunted by running separate programs. For BCHL, all Select teams are a mix of minors and majors. Status quo will not affect BCHL as it will allow the current allotment and mix of players to continue to enjoy the experience of Select hockey.

There is also the critical hurdle of available ice time. With a plethora of rep hockey teams in the BMHA stable and an undetermined spring playoff schedule, there will always be a redistribution of ice allocation come March. Uncertainty with any hockey schedule is not ideal, especially as select teams fine tune and gear up towards the end of year tournament. BCHL had traditionally enjoyed scheduling flexibility with several additional ice times available throughout the calendar year.

If the joint select program is to be led by the BCHL Director of Select Hockey, run as per the current BCHL Select model and with BCHL assuming all financial responsibilities and liabilities then it only makes sense to brand the program under the BCHL umbrella. This not only ensures that the BCHL brand will remain in the community but it also maintains the history of BCHL. Not insignificantly, we must also remember that there is one mainstay Select hockey tournament in Brantford and that is the BCHL Tournament of Friends. If the league is recognized as the Saints, then the teams that enter their own home tournament should reflect the name and logo, shouldn't they?

I am uncertain as to the overall benefits of moving to a brand new, unrecognizable, neutral brand. I need to be able to outline all aspects of this recommendation at the upcoming BCHL board meeting where it will require a vote of acceptance before proceeding. I cannot currently explain or justify the use of a neutral brand for this joint select program.

For a one-year trial program, it makes the most sense to stay with a current, viable, recognizable and strong brand instead of inventing something new.

With enormous gratitude to the BHC for their efforts and with all due respect to all involved with this initiative, I strongly recommend and fully support branding of the proposed Joint Select Program under the BCHL umbrella with the Saints logo. Anything less would be a disservice and unacceptable.

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