

## **OTTAWA STING U13 AA - COACH LETTER**

Hello All Prospective U13 AA Players (and families);

### **Introduction**

My name is Graydon Almstedt and I'm excited about the opportunity to coach the Ottawa Sting-U13AA team this upcoming season. Many of you know me by now, but for those that do not, I was born in Ottawa and grew up playing minor hockey locally before moving on to Junior A and Major Junior hockey and then winding up my competitive playing days in USports while earning a BSc. in Kinesiology. I've spent the past couple decades as a High School educator/coach and some of my personal interests are in the areas of sport science, athletic performance & development and obviously youth hockey. For the past several seasons I've enjoyed coaching with our local Associations and while the last couple years have certainly been challenging, I'm optimistic that everything is behind us now and I look forward to working to ensure that your '22-'23 hockey season is an enjoyable & memorable experience!

### **Coaching Philosophy**

My general philosophy at the minor hockey level has always been guided by the Long Term Player Development Model (LTPDM) and is quite simple. To play the game really well requires the mastery of fundamental technical skills and tactics that ideally begin at a young age and continue throughout a player's competitive playing career. To that end, technical skill acquisition will remain a priority in practices throughout the upcoming season and players will be encouraged to use these newly refined skills in game situations. Winning hockey games is obviously a primary objective at this age level but it shouldn't be mistaken for a win-at-all-costs mentality. This mentality is often detrimental to a young player's long term development in that players begin to rely too heavily on the low(no)-skill 'safe' play for fear of turning over the puck. There is obviously a time for the 'safe' play but in general players will always be encouraged to play a skilled, creative, possession-style game of hockey even though mistakes will undoubtedly occur from time-to-time.

## **Style of Play & Player Profile**

Over the past several years no sport has evolved -in terms of style of play with an emphasis on speed & skill - more so than the sport of hockey. This year's Ottawa Sting U13 AA team will strive to play a modern high-tempo style with a focus on speed, skill and puck possession.

To play this style of hockey requires a certain type of player. In selecting this year's team we will look for players who have a strong foundation in the three key areas of **skating** (with and without puck), **hockey sense** and **competitiveness level**. The best skaters are not necessarily the fastest but they are dynamic in that they possess a good combination of acceleration, open ice speed, agility (easiness) and 4-way mobility. We will look for players who have these specific skating skills and who are able to use them while carrying the puck and seeing the ice. With a possession-style system of hockey in mind we will also look for players who are creative with the puck and who display strong hockey sense with , and in support of, the puck . And finally, we want to build an identity where we're viewed by opponents as a team that is hard to play against. For that to become a reality we'll look for players who possess a very high competitiveness level and work ethic.

## **Player Commitment and Expectations**

The upcoming hockey season coincides with your entry into jr. high school. While this milestone is undoubtedly very exciting it presents a potential 'time management' challenge that most of you will have had little experience navigating. At this level of hockey, players can expect to devote an average of ~13 to 15 hours per week to hockey related activities. This is obviously a big time commitment and you'll be required and expected to plan and manage a more demanding academic workload appropriately to ensure that your commitment to the hockey team and your teammates is not adversely affected.

Players can expect :

- Longer league games
- ~3 hours of weekly team practices
- Regular 3 v 3 sessions
- Off Ice Conditioning -Video sessions
- Guest Skill Coaches - Shooting, PEP, Perfect Skating, Edgework, Goalie Training
- Team building activities
- Social events
- Five Tournaments:
  - Jay Peak (Sept 29-Oct 2)
  - Kingston (Nov 11-13)
  - Pembroke Silver Stick (Nov 18-20)
  - Oshawa (Dec 9-11)
  - Sensplex Capital Winter Classic ( Jan 20-22)

### **TRYOUTS:**

As always, the tryout process will be very challenging and for most players, a stressful experience. Tryout anxiety is a normal emotion experienced by players from novice right up to the NHL. Once you hit the ice these feelings are likely to go away , allowing you the opportunity to show what you can do. My advice is to play YOUR game.... and to give 110% every single shift. Whatever happens after that is beyond your control but you'll be satisfied knowing that you left nothing in the dressing room and gave it your all.

The tryout format is still to be finalized but players can expect scrimmages , small-sided games and for the final releases , one or two exhibition games. Every single evaluator, having never seen the players, will be a new set of 'unbiased eyes' and are all former high level (Jr A or higher) players and/or coaches. I recommend that all players get on the ice several times before the first tryout and please make sure any new skates are well worked in and sharpened!



## **Summary**

I want to finish by encouraging ALL interested players to come out to tryouts! This is an age where we see tremendous growth and development in the skillsets of many players and I expect the tryouts to be very competitive. I've tried to outline some of the skills and intangibles we'll be looking for during the selection process and I can ensure that every effort will be made to thoroughly and fairly evaluate each player. I will end by wishing everyone a relaxing & invigorating summer break and I look forward to seeing all of you at the rink later this summer!

Yours in hockey;

Graydon Almstedt

Head Coach - Ottawa Sting U13 AA