

## Jr. A Northmen keeping active despite shutdown, switch to solo physical training

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

For lacrosse players heading into their final season of Junior A competition, best case scenario would mean a late start to this year's schedule, allowing them to play even if it is an abbreviated season.

The worst case scenario is they could lose their final year altogether if things are delayed enough that the league executive finally has to call off the season.

While there is currently no organized lacrosse training going on anywhere, players have adjusted by training on their own while they wait it out.

For Jr. A Northmen veteran, Dustyn Pratt, keeping a stick in his hand and maintaining his physical conditioning is a key part of training while things are at a standstill. He's heading into his fifth season with the Northmen A team.

Dustyn has been busy with the Rochester Knighthawks of the NLL during the winter so it's not like he's been away from the sport for a long period.

"We haven't had any updates for now," Dustyn said of the pre-season. "All I know is our pre-season try-outs have been cancelled. Our first training camp was going to be in the first week of April. Our coach reached out and let us know that all camps will be cancelled until further notice. It's a waiting process right now, but I'm sure that there will be an update soon that the season is going to be cancelled or pushed to a later date."

Keeping in shape is necessary for players during the off-season.

"There are lots of ways to stay in shape," Dustyn said. "Now that you can't go in the gym, because they're all closed too, there's a lot of at-home workouts. Mainly the biggest thing is to always keep a stick in your hand. If you can find a wall, you can play a little wall ball. And going out for runs, that's a big thing. You can do things like sprints."

Playing in the NLL has kept his skills current.

"That has been a lot of experience for me going into my fifth year of Junior A. I'm playing with a lot of guys that are older and stronger and have been playing the game a lot longer. That has helped a lot with my game sense. I was playing there all winter."

Teammate, and team captain, Zach Deacon, is poised to enter his fourth season with the A team after first playing with the Northmen Junior B team.

He keeps active in the sport during the winter months playing Division 1 field lacrosse with his team at Jacksonville University in Florida, where he attends school.

"I have a couple of buddies and we go to the school behind my house and throw the ball around for a bit," he said of keeping his arm in shape. "On my own I'll do a home workout three or four times a week. I also do a bit of running."

As far as putting a team together in a shortened amount of time for this season, Zach said he's not worried, remaining confident that they will have a competitive team once the season gets underway.

"We have a core group coming back from last year. Bruce (Codd, head coach) knows the league and all the players. He'll know who he wants by the time the season rolls around and he'll have it all figured out."

Zach said a shortened season means the team will just play that much harder to achieve a good place in the standings.

?It will have a little bit of an effect,? he said. ?We normally plan on winning at home, and with that we would have less home games and only see certain teams at away games. I think everyone will be super excited just to get back to playing and I don't think it would matter too much where we're playing. We come out to play, no matter where we are.?

Currently there have been no recent updates from the Ontario Junior A Lacrosse League regarding potential start-up dates for pre-season events or any kind of League schedule.

The League executive, like every organization is waiting to see how the current situation plays out before making on decisions on the 2020 season.