

Cancellation of Jr. C hockey final leaves local fans out in the cold

Written By BRIAN LOCKHART

It will be remembered as the hockey season that wasn't.

The decision to cancel the remainder of the Junior C hockey season came as a shock to both fans, team executives and players alike.

When the decision to cut the season short was announced during the first game of the Stayner Siskins / Alliston Hornets North Carruthers Division championship on Thursday, March 12, most people thought it just meant the series would be delayed and resume after a hiatus of a couple of weeks.

It soon became apparent that this was it- the season was over.

Hockey Canada announced that all hockey would stop ? including minor hockey. It has since placed restrictions on any team events including going to arenas, teams gathering and even team executive meetings.

You can't blame Hockey Canada for the decision. If they didn't cancel hockey, they would have been under fire from the public for encouraging people to gather in arenas. They really didn't have much choice.

?I got a phone call on that Thursday night from one of the guys in our League that is part of the governance committee, and he gave me a heads up that it (the decision) was probably coming down that night, and the first thing Friday morning they were going to put the League on suspension,? said Stayner Siskins General Manager Richard Gauthier. ?I thought we might go to the end of March and then play two weeks in April and have a League winner. I got the call at ten in the morning that this was it- the season was over.

The fact that the season was stopped as the two teams were just started the championship series was a big disappointment to both players and fans.

?The fact that there was no winner is disappointing,? Gauthier said. ?These young men worked hard. We made a lot of changes this season and worked hard with our 20 year-olds and 19 year-olds to put a competitive team on the ice. They don't get to complete the season and they don't get to know if they're a champion or not.?

The Siskins finished the regular season in second place with 56 points before heading into the playoffs.

Alliston Hornets GM, Blair Molto agreed that the season ending abruptly means they will never know who the 2020 champions are.

?When we found out, the general feeling was shock,? Molto said. ?The worst part is there is no closure. Even if you lose the series you have the sense that you went through the whole thing. We played one game and there was nothing else. Everyone was wondering ?what do we do now? It was hard to believe it was actually over.?

Currently, it is expected that no hockey teams will be allowed to start meeting or start try-outs until June.