

Minor hockey returning to a more normal schedule

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After losing a regular season last year, minor hockey is starting to get into more of a normal situation with hockey schedules and tournaments.

Most hockey centres around the province had a cautious approach to getting the season started this year, but just about every minor hockey association made the decision to move ahead and get a regular schedule going for this year.

Part of that decision relies on the new provincial rules in place that require everyone entering a public arena to show proof of two doses of COVID-19 vaccination. This includes players, coaches, parents, and fans, who must provide a document and photo ID to prove they have had a double dose.

Hockey associations have also set up a criteria that teams must follow to ensure everyone is kept safe.

Last season had limited games but no real league type of activity.

At the junior level in the province, teams were relegated to playing a series of exhibition games. Although games took place, there were so many rules in place, a lot of players felt like they were at a practice rather than taking part in any real competition.

The rules included no hitting or contact on the ice, and a player limit on the bench that meant teams couldn't roll two full lines.

Those rules also came down to the minor hockey level. There were no face-offs after off-sides or a goal, so the play had a continuous flow on the ice which became a challenge for the small rosters who didn't get the usual few seconds to rest before a face-off took place.

This season the rules for travelling rep teams has been relaxed and squads are starting to travel to areas outside of the own health district.

This is putting some real competition back on the ice as the teams are up against rival cities and towns for regular play as well as the various tournaments that are held every year.

Orangeville Minor hockey was represented at tournaments on November 13 & 14, and had teams playing in Milton, Mississauga, and Stoney Creek over the weekend.

Teams are registered for several more tournaments this season including the Brampton Silver Stick and the Golden Horseshoe Tournament being hosted in Burlington.

Orangeville Minor Hockey will be hosting the Ray Hunt Memorial House League, Local League Roster Select Tournament on December 28 & 29 in Orangeville.

Player response to this season has been very enthusiastic as hockey players have been eager to get back on the ice and go up against some teams with real competition.

The full minor hockey season will run through to March with final tournaments played at the beginning of April of next year.