

Wolves U11 LL team battling through the season]

Written By **Brian Lockhart**

It has been a tough season for many hockey teams as they needed to recruit new players to fill the roster.

The pandemic saw many clubs lose players when arenas were closed and hockey players moved on to other activities.

The Shelburne Wolves U11 LL team has several new players, but as the season progresses they are understanding the game and getting better on the ice. The team has several players who lost a couple of seasons of development during the pandemic.

Coach, Justin Dzikowski, said his team has many new players who have come a long way since the start of the season.

‘To start the year, we had kids that were so brand new to the sport they couldn’t even line up for a face-off,’ Justin said. ‘They didn’t know what a face-off was. Now we are playing games ? we know our positions, our lines, different plays, break-outs, and forechecks.’

The loss of ice time during the pandemic meant some players missed out on important instruction to move them to the next level.

‘We have four or five kids that lost two and a half years,’ Justin explained. ‘The way instruction works with Hockey Canada, those are development years where you switch from half-ice to full-ice and have new rules like icing, off-sides, and on-the-fly changes. Those are big things for the game that they didn’t learn.’

Despite the missing time, Justin has worked hard with the kids to give them the skills and training they need to compete.

‘It’s amazing ? it’s night and day from where we were when we started,’ Justin said. ‘We had players that couldn’t skate at the beginning of the year. We practice and run two drills and we run them all year. It’s all about repetitiveness. It’s just transitioning to a game. They’re listening and they’re getting it.’

The Wolves won their first game of the season on Saturday, Dec. 10, when they beat the South Grey Spartans 7-6.