

CUMBERLAND REFEREES ASSOCIATION (CRA)

2023-24

District XII AGM Report

Message from the President/Referee-in-Chief

The 2023-24 season was yet another year of rebuilding, following the losses of many of officials, several of them seasoned veterans, as a result of the COVID pandemic and other factors. We feel that we have pretty much caught up this season and hope to keep this momentum going. Our officials pulled through once again and met the challenges with integrity and professionalism. Several officials were promoted to higher levels faster than usual.

- The Cumberland Minor Hockey Association (CMHA) continued to play within its own association at the HL-B level this season and joined the Gloucester Hockey Association (GHA) for all HL-A levels along with the Juvenile levels. CMHA also brought back the U18/U15 HL tournament and are hoping to bring back more tournaments next season.
- Overall, we invited 21 new officials to join the CRA this season, one of which was a returning official from several years ago. All of these registered but one didn't do any games. We are also pleased that two of these were female, bringing our total female officials to nine. As a result, we went from 63 officials (includes six guest officials) last season to 66 officials (includes 4 guest officials) this season. Guest officials are on our website but are only called upon when extra help is needed, such as for tournaments, etc.
- Our officials covered 3,754 (2,586 HL and 1,168 Rep) total assignments this season, which works out to an average of 57 assignments per official. Twenty one of the total officials did less than 20 games, while 10 did at least 100 games, five of which had more than 150 assignments.
- First year officials do not typically get as many games because of the amount of time it takes to complete shadows and the fact that all U-9 and U-11 games are on weekends, which limits availability of new officials to get games, until they progress to higher levels.

We would like to recognize and thank our entire D12 CRA Executive for the all the work and time they contribute to D12 and operating the CRA. They not only manage the CRA but have to work with the D12 District Body, Cumberland House League, Jr. Grads, HEO and all of the other Ottawa Officiating associations and RICs.

We would also like to thank the members of District XII for their on-going support, both morally and financially.

Meetings/Communications

HEO Minor RIC Meetings: There were three HEO RIC meetings scheduled for this season and all three were attended by the CRA RIC. The third HEO RIC meeting was held on April 14th and it was an in-person meeting, with the option to join virtually. Attending these meetings allows us to be more involved in the development and promotion of our officials and to provide CRA feedback to HEO.

District XII Meetings: The District holds regular monthly meetings in-person/virtual during the season and one of the CRA executives attends most meetings. Once again, attending these meetings allows us to work closer with District XII, the Cumberland Minor Hockey Association House League and Jr. Grads. The primary goal is to provide both organizations with a consistent level of officiating at all levels in addition to developing a more respectful and knowledgeable relationship between all CRA Officials and Hockey Coaching Staff / Volunteers.

CRA Executive meetings: Between July 2023 and April 2024 the CRA Executive met seven times. For availability reasons and a projected inability to attain quorum, the CRA Executive did not meet in January 2024. These meetings allow us to review how the season is going, discuss any issues that arise and prepare for the Body meetings. The Executive plans to meet in June 2024 to close out this season and begin planning for next season.

CRA Body Meetings: For the 2023-24 season the CRA membership met on a monthly basis – 6 monthly membership (body) meetings between October 2023 and March 2024, and our Annual General Meeting in April 2024. All meetings occurred at 255 Centrum Blvd. We were always able to secure our preferred meeting dates.

The City of Ottawa implemented new security measures that set limits on the time periods where the main entrance doors at 255 Centrum Blvd would be unlocked – generally 15 minutes prior to meeting start time until 15 minutes after meeting start time. Officials arriving late were advised in advance to text the Secretary who would then open the main entrance doors from the inside. CRA did encounter issues early in the season where the main entrance doors remained locked throughout our bookings. The Secretary addressed these issues directly with the City and implemented back-up measures for future meetings, and things ran more smoothly in this regard as the season progressed.

Overall turnout across the six body meetings was 67%, which marked an improvement from 55% the season prior. New officials' turnout rate also improved from 58% the season prior to 68% this season. Twelve officials attended all six body meetings, among them three members of the Executive and four first-year officials.

Risk and Safety

The Secretary assumed responsibility for managing CRA officials' compliance with HEO policy with respect to Police Record Checks (PRCs). The vast majority of CRA officials have PRCs that remained valid for the duration of the 2023-24 season. 2 returning officials, 2 new officials, and 1 official who turned 19 during the course of the season were all successful in securing their PRCs as directed. This is an ongoing process and we will be continuously monitoring this very important risk mitigation strategy.

There were no major Public Health-related concerns during the 2023-24 season. Some officials did contract COVID-19 and/or other seasonal illnesses during the season. Any assignments affected were able to be covered on short notice.

Assigning

From an assigning perspective, we had another successful season this year, which included a great U15, U18 House League (HL) tournament in February. Since COVID-19, this was the first year we had this tournament. We also helped with several competitive tournaments at Richcraft SensPlex, in addition to our own Rep B tournament, held in October.

This was our second full season post COVID and as a result the CRA evaluated and selected more new officials than what has been the standard in pre-COVID years to replenish and augment the number of total officials required to officiate all competitive and HL games. The new officials were eager, learned quickly and have given the CRA a larger base of great new upcoming officials.

The new officials did a great job this year at attending all meetings, development sessions and making themselves available for on-ice mentoring and officiating games. The development of the new officials progressed very well this year. Congratulations to them all and we think the CRA will be able to depend on these officials for many years to come as they develop and officiate higher level games. As their development progresses so will the number of games they officiate each year.

This was the third year of officiating the U9 half ice hockey and all involved officials were more comfortable at managing and officiating these games. It was also obvious that this format is doing a very good job at allowing the young hockey players develop their individual skills at a much quicker pace. Officiating games using the U9 format is not very representative of a typical hockey game and thus may not augment officiating skills as typical hockey games would but it plays a very important early role in the development of young kids learning the fundamental skills of hockey. All our officials, mostly 1st and 2nd year officials and some seasoned officials, who participated in these games cannot be thanked enough for the important role they played in the development of these young hockey players. That said, the U9 games moved to full-ice in mid-January this season and this was very well received.

The D12 CRA continues to perform well both from an on-ice technical perspective, off-ice development and our ability to cover all hockey games. Based on a review of all our games this past year, we covered 100% of the games. In any case, our ability and reliability regarding the coverage of games is only accomplished as a result of our officials and the responsibility and accountability they take on to ensure they attend and/or cover each of the games assigned to them.

The CRA had sufficient officials to cover all 139 games of the U15, U18 House League Tournament but not all were available, therefore we required some assistance by officials from another District. The tournament went well with no major issues.

Development

The focus of the CRA continues to be the development of our Officials to ensure we strive towards consistent and competent officiating. We continue to work closely with our partners (HEO Minor, other Ottawa Referee Associations, District XII, Jr. Grads and CMHA) by receiving their feedback and suggestions as a way to continually improve our program.

It is the shared objective of the CRA Executive that development will always be the number one priority of this officiating organization. It has a direct impact on the performance of our officials on the ice and subsequently of the games played. The CRA Executive has and will continue to work on development methodologies, which will continue to challenge our Officials and enhance their technical development. Suggestions and participation by anyone in District XII are more than welcome to help us improve our program.

In conclusion the District XII CRA Program continues to be a strong technical program thanks to the ongoing investment being made in Development and the District's financial contribution.

Off-Ice Development: The CRA continued to hold off-ice development sessions for our junior/Intermediate and senior officials at our monthly body meetings during the hockey season. The sessions focused on improving everyone's technical knowledge of the rules, their game management skills and how to interact with Coaches, Staff and Hockey Players on and off the ice. Officials that missed any meeting had to complete a development assignment. This is an ongoing process and will be continued for the foreseeable future.

Coaching/Supervisions: HEO renamed the supervision program to "Coaching" program in 2021 but we continue to use both interchangeably. Completed supervisions for our District this year equalled a total of 562 (up from 549 last season), representing approximately 13.2% (versus 15.6% last year) of the HEO Branch totals. This works out to an average of about nine supervisions per official. Junior and Intermediate officials are typically supervised more frequently than senior officials. Of the 562 supervisions, 522 (up from 504 last season) were done by our officials. The others were at the Rep A, AA, AAA and Junior levels.

We had 24 supervisors this season, compared to 23 last season. Supervisors need to complete a minimum of two supervisions (games) per each of 4 reference periods, which go from the 15th of a month to the 14th of the next month. A few supervisors did not complete their required amount of supervisions and some supervisors stopped officiating during the season. Of all supervisors, four of them completed their supervisions on time.

Supervisions will always be a major component of our development program. Supervisions are an HEO Minor requirement delivered by each District.

On-ice Shadow: As per our development program, our NEW officials were provided with on-ice mentoring by a senior official (SHADOWS) during their first 3 games, primarily at the U11 House League level. This program provides the NEW officials an opportunity to quickly become acclimatized and comfortable with the basics of officiating. This worked well and was well accepted by the CRA and the CMHA. This is a program we will continue to use for the foreseeable future.

On-Ice Development: We held two on-ice training sessions this season, one on September 11, 2023 (for new officials) and one on November 23, 2023 (three-official system training). These were geared for all officials but especially the first-year officials and those in the mentorship program aspiring to progress and do higher levels of hockey. The sessions worked on improving everyone's technical officiating skills, on-ice positioning, as well as procedures and teamwork. We had 20 officials participate in the 1st session and 14 in the 2nd session.

Mentorship: This program is designed to smooth the introduction of new officials into refereeing. This season, we continued to work on standardizing the program to provide a more formal structure and included incentives to strengthen our numbers. We will continue to build on this for the upcoming seasons.

The mentorship program includes all officials that are still in the HEO Quiz program. The intent is to help maintain officials within our refereeing program. All of these officials are assigned a Mentor. We had a total of 47 mentees (20 first year officials, 17 second year officials and 10 in their third year or more), two of which graduated this season.

The program aims to include reviews of each of the Officials who were mentored, at four reference period intervals, along with a couple of specific supervisions by the Mentor of his or her Mentees. The Mentor was also a resource available to each of these officials for any questions they may have had during the year. This program is a HEO Minor requirement delivered by each District.

We had mixed results with mentor/mentee interaction, although there was an improvement over last season. We had five senior officials as mentors. We plan to continue being more stringent on following up with mentors and mentees to ensure better participation and communication.

On-line Quizzes: This is a program implemented by HEO Minor and includes all first-, second- and third-year officials. There are four on-line quizzes to complete throughout the hockey season and new officials need to complete/pass 12 (three years) of these in order to graduate from the program. The pass requirement for this program is 80% or higher. The HEO Minor plans to continue this program next year.

It's been another season of positives and negatives for the quiz program. The average of all completed quizzes increased from 80% to 87%. The amount of completed quizzes also increased, from 118 to 141. There were continued issues throughout the year with some officials about completing quizzes or accessing the TTM tool. We will continue to focus on this next year to increase responsibility.

CRA began the year with 42 participants (24 in 2022-23) and we are pleased to report that four of those participants graduated this year, while six officials are on pace to complete the program next year.

Officiating Excellence: This is a program that allows the CRA to develop officials aspiring to move into higher levels of hockey by paying for or subsidizing the delivery of higher-level educational training for them. We will continue to use this program to promote selected officials to higher levels of hockey. This year, we had three officials successfully complete the Level III upgrade clinics.

Game Incident Reports (GIR): These reports are required to be submitted by officials in the case where Major Penalties, Misconduct Penalties, Game Misconduct Penalties, Match Penalties or Gross Misconduct Penalties were assessed during games. As well, officials are expected to create separate reports in cases where something unusual occurred during a game (e.g. Power outage, injury requiring medical attention (where no penalty was assessed), etc.

There is continued concern at the HEO level regarding the number of Checking from Behind incidents. The other area of concerns was the maltreatment incidents.

Finances

Our fiscal period is from July 1 to June 30 so the final statements will not be available until sometime in July or August. Given that we lost money in four of the last five years, we did a review of our financials during the off-season and identified areas to cut some costs and increase revenues. As a result, we expect to be in the black this season as we start to rebuild our balance sheet.

Collecting funds from the SensPlex organization has improved considerably this season as a result of them paying via EFT/wire transfers.

We continued to distribute the officials' pays at our monthly meetings.

Webmaster

About 1,400 games were added to the website.

We are very pleased by the efficiency of our website as measured by no-shows for assigned games – we only had two incidences for the season.

Over the season, there were small hurdles uploading House League schedules as HL-A was being sent to us in pieces since the schedule had to come from GHA to CMHA to us. CMHA schedulers do their best to send schedules in chunks when they are in control.

Another season of 'Rules of the Week' videos from Sean Tobin & HEO were created and the links (to YouTube) to those were added to our website. Great video resource!

Minor clean-up of the Documents page was performed to archive older files.

Our website is still a very valuable asset to our association and key focal point in our communications internally and externally.

Discipline

Complaints / Compliments: We had very few complaints this year. Each was investigated and appropriate responses were provided. None of the complaints merited any formal disciplinary action, although the subject matters of the complaints were, in most cases, used as generic examples for training and development at our monthly meetings.

Discipline: We had very few matters that required formal discipline this year. One fine was issued for missed game, four for failure to complete the CRA development assignments or HEO Quiz and three for failure to complete supervisions. A few warnings were also issued for failure to attend the monthly meetings and/or complete the development assignments.

Referee Representative: For the 2023/2024 hockey season, the CRA referee representative did not have any official reports or complaints to handle. All cases regarding officials and discipline had been handled accordingly and without official challenge.

Referee Apparel Program

The goal of the referee apparel program is to reward long service officials, promote ongoing succession of officials, while continuing to identify and promote the CRA Body.

For the 2023-2024 season the CRA Apparel Program continued to welcome new officials with CRA logo toques. The apparel program continued with catching up with years awards and recognition of service, lost due to COVID-19.

Recognition Program

The recognition program is intended to recognize some officials for their contribution throughout the season.

Sean Tobin (HEO RIC for minor hockey) instituted a “Referee of the Month” award at HEO, in the 2021-22 season, to be awarded to two officials each month, one for each District per year. Ideally, this is to recognize a younger official who has been helping with games, mentorship, coaching, etc. This didn’t happen this season but they plan to bring it back next season.

Of the five HEO awards, Elizabeth Bernardi was the recipient of the “Hockey Canada Most Improved” award.

The following CRA awards are presented annually at the end of year AGM. These awards are presented to officials that demonstrate the highest standard and dedication to officiating, while upholding the core values of the CRA.

The Ron Pompeo Award was introduced in 2019-20 and was named after our founder Ron Pompeo. The award is to acknowledge one official each season for their outstanding commitment, exemplary contributions and going above and beyond what is expected of our officials. This includes body meetings, development exercises, quiz program, supervision program game assignment and overall ice hockey officiating. This year’s recipient is Danny Methot.

This year the “Rookie of the Year” award was presented to Juliette Lalonde and the “President’s” award was presented to Dylan Stone. These awards are designed to acknowledge outstanding talent and commitment to officiating as well as recognize outstanding effort and continued involvement within officiating.

Expectations for 2024-2025

We look forward to continue building on our development program and we will continue to look at ways of improving our program, both on and off the ice.

We plan to return to a more normal recruitment of new officials for next season, but that will be dependent on the number of current officials who will be returning and/or leaving. We plan to hold the tryouts for new officials in late August and will continue to look at adding more

diversity and recruiting more qualified officials for next season. As a general rule, new officials should be a minimum of 14 years old and have passed the written and skating portions of the tryouts. Information regarding tryouts will be posted on our website as soon as we have a date for the tryouts.

Here is our proposed/tentative schedule for Development for the 24-25 Season:

- Recertification clinics will be back to in-person.
- New official tryouts – week of 19-22 August.
- Two-official training – week of 7-10 October.
- Three-official training – week of 18-21 November.

Finally the D12 CRA continues to run a good program and great learning environment for our officials, all KEY to a successful officiating program.

Thanks again, have a safe and great summer and looking forward to another season in the fall of 2024.