

CUMBERLAND REFEREES ASSOCIATION (CRA)

2022-23

District XII AGM Report

Message from the President/Referee-in-Chief

The 2022-23 season has been a year of rebuilding, following the losses of many of officials, several of them seasoned veterans, in the last two seasons due to COVID and other factors. Nonetheless, our officials pulled through and met the challenges with integrity and professionalism. Several officials were promoted to higher levels faster than usual. The good news is that there were NO interruptions due to COVID during the season.

- The Cumberland Minor Hockey Association (CMHA) continued to play within its own association at the HL level this season. The only exception was at the Juvenile level, which played in the Gloucester Hockey Association (GHA). That meant games were 90 minutes long but there were not as many issues as in the past.
- Overall, we invited 23 new officials to join the CRA this season. Of these, four did not register or didn't do any games. We are also pleased that eight of these were female, our highest numbers in that respect; however, one did not register. As a result, we went from 51 officials (includes one guest official) last season to 63 officials (includes 6 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 3,672 (2,449 HL and 1,223 Rep) total assignments this season, which works out to an average of 58 assignments per official, compared to last seasons' 3,025 (2,176 HL and 849 Rep) assignments for an average of 48 assignments per official. Seventeen of the total officials did less than 20 games (six had 0), while 11 did more than 100 games, three of which had more than 150 assignments. The reason we had more assignments this season is mostly due to the fact that we helped out with extra tournaments at Richcraft and DB games at RF3 as a result of rink closures in their area.
- There were many uncertainties and delays at the beginning of the season regarding the recertification process, especially the certification of new officials, some of which had to go out-of-town to certify.
- We are currently reviewing our executive structure and are planning to bring some changes for next season.
- Finally, after five seasons as Referee-in-Chief, I will be stepping down at the end of this season; however, I will remain as President and assist the new RIC in the transition. It's been a pleasure and a fulfilling experience but it's time to start thinking about succession planning.

Meetings/Communications

HCO Minor RIC Meetings: There were three virtual RIC meetings scheduled for this season and all three were attended by at least one of the CRA Executive. The fourth RIC meeting is scheduled for May 2nd and it will be an in-person meeting, with the option to join virtually. Attending these meetings also allows us to be more involved in the development and promotion of our officials.

District XII Meetings: The District holds regular monthly meetings during the season and one of the CRA executives attends most meetings. Once again, attending these meetings allows us to work a little 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: The CRA also held regular in-person monthly meetings this year. A presumptive positive COVID case (positive test result using rapid antigen test) amongst a member of the CRA executive forced the November executive meeting to shift to a hybrid meeting. However, all executive meetings went ahead as scheduled. Attendance was very good and the commitment by all was very good this year. These meetings allow us to review how the season is going, discuss any issues that arise and prepare for the Body meetings.

CRA Body Meetings: For the 2022-23 season there were no Covid-19 related restrictions or capacity limits, so the CRA returned to holding its monthly body meetings at its usual location at 255 Centrum Blvd, instead of venues used in the previous season that allowed for larger capacity. Our preferred dates were always available and there were no major logistical issues related to building access or room setup.

Across all membership (body) meetings during the regular season – excluding our year-end AGM – we saw an average turnout rate of 55%; amongst new officials, turnout rate was slightly greater at 58%. These numbers were slightly improved over the previous season when members would occasionally need to decline out of an abundance of caution (mostly Covid-19 / sickness-related concerns), and they are consistent with the last three winter seasons prior to the pandemic. Nine members attended all six body meetings throughout the course of the season; among them were three members of the CRA Executive, and four who were first-year officials.

Risk and Safety

We are happy to report that 100% of our adult officials have completed the VSC-PRC process and have no outstanding issues. We will strive to ensure we remain at 100% by focussing our attention on VSC-PRC expiry dates of officials prior to the start of the next season as well as reaching out to those officials that will be turning 19 what their responsibilities are with respect to VSC-PRCs and HC/HEO policies. This is an ongoing process and we will be continuously monitoring this very important risk mitigation strategy.

In terms of COVID, we continued to follow the province of Ontario, city of Ottawa, Hockey Canada and HEO guidelines .In late fall, we saw a surge in cases of Covid-19, influenza, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) amongst the general population. In response, CRA strongly encouraged and recommended the use of masks in the referee change rooms. Some officials experienced one or more of these illnesses during the season, but there were no instances where CRA failed to fully cover any scheduled games in a given day for public health reasons, including on major tournament weekends. Otherwise, COVID-19 was not much of an issue this season.

Assigning

From an assigning perspective, this was the first hockey season post COVID pandemic in which we had a full season of hockey without any interruptions.

As a result of the loss of officials in the last couple of years (many being senior officials) and the fact that we had more newer officials, it was a challenge from a development and integration perspective but the new officials were eager, learned quickly and have given the CRA a larger base of officials. Congratulations to them all and I 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 second year of officiating the U9 half ice hockey and it was much more apparent that all involved including officials were much 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 who participated in these games, mostly 1st and 2nd year officials and some seasoned officials, cannot be thanked enough for the important role they played in the development of these young hockey players.

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 quick look at all our games this past year, we covered all our games except for a few games due to scheduling errors and for one that was incorrectly scheduled and verification of the date and time missed. 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.

It was unfortunate that the District did not have the annual U15-U18 House League tournament again this year due to a lack of tournament volunteers early enough for teams to commit, but let's hope that we can get that tournament back for next year.

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 was able to return to a restriction-free environment for our monthly body meetings during the hockey season, which include off-ice development sessions for our junior/Intermediate and senior officials. 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 549 (up from 417 last season), representing approximately 15.6% of the HEO Branch totals. This works out to an average of about ten supervisions per official. Junior and Intermediate officials are typically supervised more frequently than senior officials. Of the 549 supervisions, 504 (up from 348 last season) were done by our officials. The others were at the Rep A, AA, AAA and Junior levels.

We had 23 supervisors this season, compared to 29 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, ten 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: Once again we included this program as part of our development initiatives. On-Ice Shadows were used for all of our first year officials. The On-ice Shadow program was

primarily done at the House League U11 Levels again this year, given the U9 half-ice program. This program allowed us to have a senior official on the ice with our first year officials during their first 3 games (or less in a few cases) at the beginning of the year, which 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 November 22, 2022 and one on January 14, 2023. 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, with special focus on working in the 3-official system. We had 12 officials participate in the 1st session and nine 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 42 mentees (21 first year officials, 10 second year officials and 11 in their third year or more), four of which graduated this season.

The program aims to include mid and year-end reviews of each of the Officials who were mentored 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. We had five senior officials as mentors. There are continued issues with finding senior officials who are able to devote the time and effort necessary to commit to a full season of responsibilities. We plan to review the number of mentors for next season by focusing on those who have proven consistent in the past and possibly recruit one or more new mentors as well as 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 72% to 80%. The amount of completed quizzes also

increased, from 79 to 118. There were continued issues throughout the year with officials completing quizzes or accessing the TTM tool. There will be a greater emphasis 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 four 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.

Although there were more GIRs submitted this season, the increase was basically from the competitive side. 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. Although we managed a small positive result last season, it looks as though we will return to a negative result again this year. As a result, we will be reviewing the financials for areas to cut some costs and increase revenues.

It's been challenging to collect funds from the SensPlex organization at times once again but the process seems to be improving. HEO got involved with this issue once again.

Discipline

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

We did have a couple of informal discussions, and again it was in the suggestive format to make development stronger for the Body; the discussions were not in a complaint format. The suggestions have been forwarded to the appropriate member of the Executive.

Discipline: We had very few matters that required formal discipline this year. Three fines were issued for missed games and one for failure to complete the CRA development assignments. A few warnings were also issued for failure to attend the monthly meetings and/or complete the development assignments. We also had one warning for not having the correct crest on the official's jersey.

Referee Representative: For the 2022/2023 hockey season the CRA referee representative did not receive any complaints from the body membership.

The referee representative had several discussions with body members throughout the season, all within an informal setting. The discussions were directed towards officials either not attempting, or not completing the quiz within the HEO quiz program. The intention was supportive and constructive in nature. The CRA executive did not become involved.

Webmaster

A quick reminder that we had to modify our website address to "www.cumberlandrefs.ca" last season due to technical concerns.

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.

A couple of enhancements were made to our website; official's able to add assigned games to their calendar on their mobile device, and a more friendly interface for uploading schedules. A couple more tweaks for the website are in discussion.

We keep adding HEO's Rule of the Week videos to our website and watch/discuss them at our meetings.

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

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.

The Cumberland Referee Association handed out toques to all first year officials. The CRA Executive has been working to catch up on the issuance of apparel to officials that have reached certain milestones, as this was postponed last season.

Recognition Program

The recognition 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 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 out with games, mentorship, coaching, etc. Alex Felix was D12’s HEO Referee of the Month recipient for November.

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 Oscar Metcalfe.

This year, the CRA introduced two new awards to be presented: The rookie of the year award (presented to Xavier Francis) and the President’s award (presented to Kaitlin Inomata). These awards are designed to acknowledge both outstanding talent and commitment to officiating and to recognize outstanding effort and continued involvement within officiating.

The CRA also acknowledged the service of one official (Stephane Rollin) who has completed 25 years of service.

Expectations for 2023-2024

We look forward to continue to build on our development program and look for more participation from our younger but experienced officials to help with the program.

We will continue to look at ways of improving our program both on and off the ice and are always looking for officials who want to get more involved and for feedback / constructive ways of making this a top notch officiating program.

We hope that a number of officials who decided to take some time off will return next season. We also 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 recruit 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.

Finally I 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.

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

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 fall of 2023.