



Coaching Day in Alberta

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On Saturday, October 5th, 2002, I had the pleasure to attend the inaugural “Coaching Day in Alberta” at the Pengrowth Saddledome. This event, a joint hockey project between Tim Horton’s, the Calgary Flames, the Edmonton Oilers, Canadian Hockey, Hockey Alberta, and the Calgary Minor Hockey Association, was organized to assist volunteer coaches in the province.

It was a full day of hockey activities which included on ice and off ice sessions. Kelly Hrudey, with his laid back approach, did a great job being the master of ceremonies! Several of his personal hockey stories were quite amusing indeed! The key note speaker for the day was Mr. Flame himself Lanny McDonald! There were several very interesting talks: Craig Button, the General Manager of the Calgary Flames talked about the upcoming season and expectations, Robin Mann, President of Calgary Minor Hockey discussed several rule changes for the season and the challenges and issues of operating a large minor hockey association, and Greg Gilbert, Head Coach of the Calgary Flames had a very insightful question and answer period with the audience concerning the morning practice and expectations /challenges for the upcoming season.

The agenda included on ice sessions pertaining to the initiation program (i.e. seeing 5 and 6 year old kids from Okotoks loving their playing time on the Saddledome ice was a real treat!), Calgary Flames’ pre - game practice, Edmonton Oilers’ pre – game practice and power skating / puck control sessions etc.

Off ice sessions included presentations on hockey equipment, Flames adopt a team program, and hockey resource programs etc.

There were in excess of 1,000 coaches who attended the full day seminar. An awesome turnout for the first year... to compare Toronto organizes a similar event each year... but it took them until their third year to reach Calgary’s first year numbers! Just another example of the “Volunteer Spirit in Alberta” , so many coaches willing to allocate their whole day to learn more about the great game of hockey and pass any information learned back to their players... i.e. strengthening our grassroots minor hockey system.

During an event of this size, a person will always run into someone they known who is involved in hockey in one capacity or another. It’s a special bond being around people who have a similar interest and love for the game. This event was geared towards the grass roots of hockey but no matter what level one coaches, one can always walk away with a little more hockey knowledge or better understanding of the game; a new drill, a new coaching idea or make a new hockey friend!

Personally, I made quite a few new hockey contacts, discovered a couple new drills, chatted with several hockey friends I had not seen in a while and discovered “spray paint is a good tool on the ice... for marking off zones and can also be used in place of pylons”!

I was quite impressed with how well the event was organized. I will “tip my hat” to the 2002 Coaching Day in Alberta Organizing Committee which included David Beeston, Jay Blakely, Trevor Elgar, Doug Gunn, J. J. Hebert, Dean McIntosh, Corey McNabb, Marty Savoy and Jennifer Spencer.

It was a free day (no registration cost) for Alberta coaches... as well each registered coach received a package which included a coaches manual, Fox 40 whistle, coach board clipboard and a complimentary ticket to the Flames vs. Oilers pre –season game following the seminar!

Quite a good deal indeed for the coaches... but the real winners I believe are the kids in the minor hockey system who will benefit from their coaches improved knowledge, steadfast enthusiasm and dedication to the game!

Yours in Hockey,
Coach Rex