

## **Junior Hockey Report 2020-2021**

Like the rest of the club it has been a very difficult, disrupted, and truncated season for the Juniors this year. Covid obviously played havoc with our normal raft of fixtures and tournaments and meant that opportunities to play and train were spread out across the year. Despite this, our coaches were all really determined that our juniors should not miss out on pitch time and so we decided to extend the season well beyond our usual April cut off and into July for the first time on memory. I must thank all the coaches for their dedication in this regard and for making sure the juniors had the opportunities to play when the rules allowed. I must also thank Adnan for producing a series of home coaching videos and challenges during the first lockdown and then running online Sunday sessions during the second lockdown that I know were well received by those that tuned in and took part. Rachel Armitage has yet again work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that all the teams had as many fixtures as possible and that new joiners could get involved and enjoy hockey. Rachel has taken on a new role at work now and so won't be continuing her role as Junior administrator next year, but leaves us in a great position and I thank her for all her efforts over the past few years.

In this newly created role of Junior Director I have been working behind the scenes to try and ensure that we (BSHC) offer our juniors the very best product that we can, whether that be a child's first steps picking up a stick and starting to play or trying to push themselves towards county, regional or national levels. We were able to reintroduce the summer academies with the help of EVO hockey and I'm hopeful we can expand on this offering over the next few years to offer this level of coaching and pitch time to more and more players. I'm looking forward to very shortly being able to share our vision for the junior section over the coming years which I hope you will all be as excited about as I am, as we look to make Stortford Juniors the best that they can be in every regards. A key aspect of this will be for Stortford to gain Talent Centre status in the new England Hockey club pyramid. We are already one of only a small number of ClubMark accredited clubs in the country and feel that this is the next step on the road to achieving our goals. More on that shortly. We are always on the lookout for more coaches and volunteers so if you would like to find out more, please do get in touch.

Below are the thoughts from the coaches on the season for each age group.

Thank you to all and lets make next season a great one.

*Gregg Pettit*

### **Age Group Season Reports**

#### **U8 Mixed**

U8's have successfully grown to produce their first fixture against Hertford, played last weekend. We regularly have double figures training, especially during term time. We have a good record of retaining the same group and holding their attendance all season, so we can send them up to u10's. We rarely lose any that become disinterested. We do lose a few to other sports but I think that's mainly boys to football. It's been a nice season this year, despite lockdown making the socialising and fun of the sessions even more special for the children.

*Ros Brown*

#### **U10 Girls**

The girls have really enjoyed themselves and have been glad to play as many matches as we have been able to arrange against other clubs. A big thing for them this year seems to have been the deeper friendships they have formed as a squad which seems to have been really strong this year, perhaps partly due to their being able to enjoy each other's company after having been isolated in lockdown for so long. The continuity and routine the club has been able to provide them seems to have helped a lot of girl's cope with the pressures of

lockdown, particularly for those who were in households where the need for isolation was particularly stringent.

*Juan Salinas*

### **U12 Girls**

What a brilliant season with U-12 girls, it has been lovely to coach this talented bunch, I'm satisfied with their overall progress, I have been working on their technical and tactical basics, and they have shown a massive improvement, they know what are the defensives and attacking principles.

I also have been working on their training attitude and I'm quite happy with their discipline and organizational skills.

The way they ended the season is awesome, they played a game against Blue Harts and their team and individual performance were on the spot, we can see all the principles which we have been working, so pleased with this group and their hard work.

*Adnan Zakir*

### **U14 Girls**

We were in a position to field three teams given the numbers of players so we aimed to maximise competitive playing opportunities for all. The most pleasing aspect was when we played a match for a predominantly U13 team against a larger, older team from Sudbury was the resilience shown last October. The other pleasing element was a development team winning over at Old Loughts with many players not having played 11-a-side before.

The U14 Cup side were eliminated by a strong Cambridge City team in the National Cup. We could only play well for 20 minutes and struggled to finish our chances.

*Richard Temple*

### **U16 Girls**

Supposed to play 16 games, played 7. Won once (National Cup vs Chelmsford 3-0), drew twice (2-2 vs Cam City and 6-6 vs Waltham Forest), couple of heavy losses to Cam City (0-10) and St Albans (1-9) and a couple of close defeats (0-1 to Old Loughts (1st game) and 1-3 to Bluehornets). We trained a lot, but numbers dwindled after the Spring/summer restart. Hopefully have a better season next year with Katy.

Thanks to Katy and Adnan who helped take the sessions this year.

*Phil Mathison*

### **U10 Boys**

The U10 boys had a really good season this year. At the beginning of the year, we struggled with numbers, but as we opened up the team to our strongest U8s and U9s we were able to field a full team. The boys made impressive progress in their basics over the season and were lucky enough to play a few fixtures which I think they learnt a lot from. My biggest highlight of the season was seeing how they worked so well together as a team and formed new friendships.

*Gabi Morgan*

### **U12 Boys**

As you all know, this has been a very strange year with in fact three different seasons for the U12 boys: September to November, two weeks in December, then the summer section from 11<sup>th</sup> April until their last Tournament which will be on 11<sup>th</sup> July.

However, in the end we will have had a reasonable number of sessions with the lads over a fairly long period. There are many positives to what has been achieved

- High numbers at the start and continuing to increase with 4 new players since Easter
- Excellent progress from all players, especially those with initially more limited experience
- Great results from both A and B teams, the A team being unbeaten in matches so far and the B team having a series of good results with ever improving performances

The A team results up to now have been:

*Played 6. Won 6. GF 29 GA 12*

- V Blue Hornets Won 3-1 (Ossie 2, Alec)
- V Blue Hornets Won 5-2 (Stanley 4, Ossie)
- V Saffron Walden Won 7-2 (Ossie 3, Stanley 2, Alec, Ed)
- V Hertford Won 4-3 (Ossie 3, Stanley)
- V Blueharts Won 5-2 (Ossie 3, Toby, Stanley)
- V Blueharts Won 5-2 (Ossie 3, Alec, Stanley)

In the A team there has been little problem with scoring goals. Ossie (15) and Stanley (9), backed up by Alec (3) have been a consistent threat to opposition defences and they would in fact have scored even more than they did when they develop greater calmness in front of goal as they will do in future years.

Ed and latterly Will in midfield offer different strengths but both read the game well and are neat in possession. Thomas and Edward as the regular defenders have won the ball consistently well and are developing their distribution. Dylan did well in goal showing bravery and skill in making saves when needed. The side could suffer from over-indulgence on the ball, a common problem when young players are learning and using newly acquired skills, but this did improve. Also, several did need constant reminding of the effectiveness of strong side receptions, carrying, eliminations and passing / shooting but...this is also very common amongst emerging players who want to use reverse stick too much. However, it was also pleasing to see some advanced reception techniques and 3D skills in use which they have to experiment with to know when and where to best use them.

They worked very hard in training on development of the essential off the ball skills of marking and closing / channelling / tackling which became quite good in later games. Team skills that still are 'work in progress' are the outlet patterns, which depend on developing more secure long ball distribution techniques, pressing as a unit and not as individuals and the quality of transition play, both after winning or losing the ball. However, there was always a fierce desire and determination from all players which is great to see.

At the start of the year there was quite a gulf in skill level between the A team group and the others. However, due to the hard work that the less experienced players have put in, this has narrowed as they have been catching up fast. This is very encouraging for the club as it means that it will not just be a small number of competent players coming through but hopefully a decent sized cohort who have the ability to play for senior teams in the future. After some struggles to score goals earlier in the season, the B team then had a good 2-2 draw with Saffron Walden and beat Blueharts 3 -1 which was most encouraging.

Many of these boys will go through to U14 next year and hopefully will form the basis of a decent side. More importantly, however, several will soon be old enough to start playing in the mens' teams and with the current club policy of encouraging the youngsters I am sure they will be given opportunities and hopefully become regular BSHC players as they continue to enjoy the game and contribute more and more to senior hockey in the future.

*Charlie Bannister*

### **U14 Boys**

Struggling start with them because of the different playing abilities and few U14 boys don't want to train with the 16s but after few sessions they feeling alright, we have been working on basics and lot of small ball games I have set few training principles and working on them throughout, we have played just 2 games and the performance were satisfactory.

We have a very low number of U14s but one thing is vital U14s improve their confidence while playing and training with U-16s.

The moment of the season was when Ozzie scored the goal against St Albans HC U16 boys and the team goal celebration.

*Adnan Zakir*

**U16 Boys**

The Boys U16s for this season were mainly drawn from the U15 year group. They performed well in matches then they had the opportunity with one win, one draw and two defeats in matches played in the autumn and the spring. Adnan has overseen some real improvement through the year and we look forward to a good (and hopefully less interrupted) season next season.

*Duncan Barber*