



2017 Jr.A Division Season Report

The 2017 lacrosse season started with high expectations for the division based on the previous year's Minto Cup performance by the Calgary Jr.A Mountaineers. The feeling was that huge strides were made & we needed to maintain that momentum on the path to excellence, in order to win a National Championship.

To help facilitate the objective at hand, the Jr.A board unanimously instituted a few initiatives to improve our public awareness, image & audience with mixed results.

The 1st ever live graduating midget draft was held in Calgary & Edmonton simultaneously, had some technical difficulties, but was an overall success in both centres & I expect this will continue advancing to a higher plateau, the smile on the kids & family's faces are unforgettable.

The new webpage www.abjralacrosse.com is up & running. This will be a very productive tool, but needs a webmaster.

Live streaming was an exciting prospect. It worked in some places, but not others & will need to be addressed by each team. Whenever it was implemented, there was very good response. I would recommend each team set up the best available live streaming option that is compatible with their venue.

The broadcast deal with Shaw for 6 games, 2 each in Edmonton, Saskatoon & Calgary was knocked down to just 2 games in Saskatoon, due to the closure of local content broadcasting programs in Edmonton, Calgary & Vancouver. The SWAT games that were broadcast by Shaw had a very good rating & audience response.

In the regular season, the Okotoks Raiders had an outstanding season, finishing with a 19-1 record & the least goals against. The Calgary Mountaineers finished 2nd at 15-5 & the most goals scored. The Saskatchewan Swat had a similar season from the previous, followed in 3rd at 11-9. Edmonton Blues had a stronger year finishing @ 4-16, but recorded the 1st default ever in Alberta Jr.A lacrosse. The Miners fell off from last year record & ended up 1-19.

There were numerous outstanding individual seasons that were rewarded for the 1st time this year. Brett McIntrye added the inaugural David Fehr Award as League MVP to the AJ Jomha Award as top scorer. Best Transition Player was the Mounties veteran stalwart Derek Lloyd, Best Defender was Raiders veteran defensive leader Brett Craig. Top Goaltender of the Year was the Mounties Doug Gardner, who has received a tryout agreement with the Roughnecks this coming season. The Best coaching staff this season was undoubtedly the Raiders staff, with only 1 loss in the regular 20 game season. Congratulations to all of these deserving winners.

The Playoffs saw the Mounties win 3-0 in a best of 5, 1st round series with the Swat. The Swat came close to winning their 1st Jr.A playoff game, just falling short, 7-6 in the deciding game. The championship series came down to the same teams as the last 6 years. Cross town, sworn enemies, the Okotoks Raiders & the Calgary Mountaineers. The Raiders closed that out in 5 very intense hard fought games. Each of these teams has been league champs 3 out of the last 6 seasons, nobody has been back to back champs.

This leads us to the question of league parity. Calgary must continue to retain & nurture their lacrosse culture by being closely associated with minor lacrosse & Jr.B affiliations. Swat must continue to promote lacrosse through the province for vertical alignment to stay competitive or purchase elsewhere. Edmonton needs to amalgamate their 2 teams into 1 for a competitive balance for the time being. If there is a resurgence of interest & growth in the area, then return to the 2 team format.

Next year it is our turn to host the Minto Cup after a 6 yr absence. The Raiders & Mounties will work together as hosts of this prestigious national championship in Calgary. They will do an outstanding job. It is a very large task & will need the support of every RMLL/Alberta lacrosse fan to show Canada what Alberta Lacrosse is all about. Put this event on your calendar....offer sponsorship, volunteer, support the game.

In closing, I would like to thank all the amazing people I have met thru the game in the last 40 years, in particular the RMLL board the last number of years. It was a great journey, enjoyed every minute.

Best regards,

Mike Fynn