

RMLL Jr B Tier 1 Commissioner Report

2021 “Return to Play” Season

The 2021 RMLL season was dubbed the “return-to-play” season. Teams, athletes, and families were anxious and excited to return to some form of competition after zero games were played in the 2020 season.

Tier one clubs made the decision for a mostly local schedule, with clubs scheduling their own exhibition games, culminating with a north and south tournament to ensure lots of gameplay and great competition. The scheduling worked out well as teams were given a deadline to submit schedules for approval, and teams did a great job working around the JR A and Tier two schedules to ensure players could be shared, and the ALRA could assign all games. The tournaments were both the highlights of the summer for Tier 1, and were both well organized and very competitive.

The north tournament was hosted by the Fort Saskatchewan Rebels, using modified gameplay that included shorter games, quarters instead of periods, and was well received by teams. The teams competing were from the north division (Rebels, Outlaws, Crude, Warriors), and also the SWAT. Games were closely contested all week, including the quarter and semi finals that all went to overtime. In the end the Warriors emerged victorious over the Crude in the final game. Games were very successfully streamed online by 12oz sports, with a total of 15,206 viewers over the six days of play, including just under 5,000 for the finals!

In the south, The Okotoks Marauders stepped up to organize the tournament, using traditional gameplay timing and format, which again resulted in fantastic, spirited gameplay. The teams competing were from the south and central divisions (Marauders, Cudas, Mounties, Chill, Silvertips, Shamrocks). We saw a buzzer beater game and a tie breaker to determine the final standings, and

the Shamrocks emerged victorious over the short-handed Marauders, who put up a gutsy effort. Both tournaments were a real bright spot for RMLL lacrosse in 2021 and a big thank you goes out to the Rebels and Marauders for taking on the task of organizing.

Of course, there were some challenges that came with the return-to-play format, and some rules needed to be adjusted on the fly. I would say the two biggest issues pertaining to the Tier 1 division were both surrounding rosters. Teams were using affiliate players in large quantities, and not keeping up with the administration task of notifying all parties necessary, as well as making sure players were not playing for more than two teams. I was tasked with helping with the latter, keeping a spreadsheet with affiliates, but I would say I failed at this as the number of affiliates being used was overwhelming for me to track where they came, what other teams they had played for, etc. I am extremely happy and proud to report that no Tier 1 games were cancelled due to Covid, but we did have cancelations due to a lack of player availability.

Looking forward to 2022 I believe all of lacrosse in Alberta will suffer some loss of numbers due to the uncertainty of these last two years. My hope is that all Tier 1 teams can make it through these times and come out stronger than ever with a more competitive product than ever. If we build on some of the promotion that individual clubs are doing, and adopt some of these practices league-wide, I am confident we can make the Tier 1 division truly special, with a model that other provinces could look up to and try to emulate across the country. Hope to see you all back in full force for the 2022 season, as clubs once again look to compete for the Larry Bishop Memorial Cup, and ultimately, the Founders Cup.

Sincerely,

Jason Crook

Tier 1 Commissioner - Interim