

2023 RMLL RIC Report

In the second traditional season since 2019, we continued to build on what we've learned about returning to "normalcy." This was a challenging, but successful, endeavour for our officials at the league, provincial, and national levels.

Season Accomplishments

The RMLL continues to maintain an overall high level of officiating competency. This was highlighted at the national level by RMLL officials refereeing on-floor for the 12U, 14U, 17U, Junior Ladies, and Minto Cup finals. The RMLL sent four officials to Minto Cup as the host, with three of those officials working the final series. I was also fortunate enough to be named Official in Charge (RIC) of the event. We have also had another RMLL Alberta official hired to the NLL (one who refereed at the Founders Cup), along with two Saskatchewan officials (one attended Founders Cup, the other Minto).

We had officials be successful, despite their ages, at Founders (21) and Presidents (22). The feedback we continue to receive from out of Province OIC's at nationals is remarkably positive, and is a testament to the games played at the RMLL level, and our officiating standards and practices.

Season Overview

We recovered some of the officials who elected to take time off after the modified/return to play season, and promoted many others into the RMLL, or new divisions within it. The implementation of the 3-official mechanic at the leagues with National Championships (Jr A, Tier I, and Sr B) was another large success. In addition to more adequately preparing our officials for higher levels of lacrosse, it also serves a valuable purpose for the teams to get used to the floor coverage before nationals, and before moving to Sr A or Professional levels. Jr A utilized the 3-official mechanic throughout the season, including all playoffs and Minto Cup. Jr B Tier I utilized the 3-official system for nearly all of the regular season games in all three provinces, all of their playoffs, and at Founders. Sr B used the 3-official system in the vast majority of their games, both regular season and playoffs, but a decision was made very close to Presidents to not use the two-official system in the round-robin. In watching bits of the Founders Cup games, it was apparent which teams were and were not used to having 3-sets of eyes on the floor, in terms of infractions assessed and reaction to restarts. The quality of officiating at Presidents Cup substantially improved when the 3-official system was utilized.

The teams are seeing benefits from the 3-official system they might not be aware of. In speaking with Christine, the drop in serious penalties (Matches, Grosses, Game Misconducts - especially fighting & third player in) correlates directly with the implementation of the 3-official mechanic. Having another official on the floor to de-escalate scenarios behind the play, or assess infractions, or even staying low when teams spread the floor, still allows for two officials to move up with the play and maintain adequate sightlines/coverage. Additionally, when fights/scrum/altercation occur, two officials are able to defuse the situation, while the third is able to control the benches and record additional infractions away from the scrum, or that the

officials breaking up the situation may not be able to see. Using hockey as an analogous sport (and controlling for cost in the comparison), the comparable leagues to the RMLL have nearly all moved to four-official (WHL, USport, ACAC, Jr A, Sr AAA, Jr B, Sr AA), and did not adjust their fees downwards. Included [is a link to compare](#), but the difference between a University Men's game and Sr B is over \$100/referee, and \$5/linesperson). This is due to the increased speed and rules that emphasis speed and skill. It is not unreasonable to have the third official standard in our leagues with National Championships and then cascade down, as more officials become available.

The Minto Cup was a great display of how well our teams competed on the floor, and our organizational committees are able to put on such a large-scale event. The production quality of the stream and feed was immaculate, and really assisted the officiating team in reviewing plays after the event, in order to learn from them and keep the same standard.

Season Setbacks

The relocation of Lloydminster to Hillmond, Sk and Cranbrook's home games were difficult to schedule referees. Both of these centres will require local officials to continue to host home games, especially for short-notice playoffs. I will propose again that teams can only host playoff games if they have officials who live within 50 km of their home arena. I communicated to the LGB RIC of Wheatland that I was willing and available to to assist promoting officials to the RMLL for this year, and next. We have had to utilize more Saskatchewan-based RMLL officials to help cover busy weekends, especially Sr C in Wheatland.

Additionally, an RMLL clinic in Cranbrook, or having Cranbrook officials travel to Alberta to certify will be a necessity in 2024. I have began the preliminary steps to have a clinic for Junior level officials in Cranbrook with the BCLOA, as last year we had no referees able to consistently referee in Cranbrook, and should they move to Tier 1, I am very concerned about their ability to officiate their home games without dramatic support from Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba traveling out, and/or BCLOA officials traveling from the Mainland. I may be able to go out myself while working WLA games, and catching a flight back.

Scheduling with arena availability continues to be a struggle. With multiple teams requiring weekend games to accommodate travel, it would be ideal if games within 100 km travel (round trip) could be played on more weeknights (Monday-Thursday). The downside to this would mean fewer potential practice days for teams, the upside would be lower referee travel fees. This is a decision the teams would need to consider.

Even if more weekday games are not possible, planning to only have one game per day in Wheatland, coordination to share facilities, or scheduling to allow for officials to officiate one game, and then travel to another game in the region on the same day will need to be addressed.

A change in assigning practices is required. The current system led to single games being charged for an official traveling a great distance, and not having it be split by another team to reduce the costs. In all likelihood, I will be the initial assignor for all games, with either Wes or

Jon looking after changes or turnbacks, along with billing being completed and submitted monthly. Refining the mileage and expense process is at the top of the list for the season, and a new form has been created based on the feedback improvement, which I believe we have now corrected. The ALRA will be making changes to paying our officials out, including expenses, so they are able to have a single-payer, the ALRA, and be paid expeditiously. This process will lead to a much cleaner billing document at the end of the year, as well.

The Minto repayment process has been problematic. At the time of my report, four officials are owed game fees, all travel to and from the facilities has yet to be paid, as well as per diems. The committee did an outstanding job of managing the onsite product and creating a fantastic on-site experience, but there were logistical overlooks. In the future, I would suggest the committee reach out to the OIC and LC to allow for communication about executable responsibilities ahead of time. The two other MA's/leagues still owe money to their officials, as well. I am intentionally not submitting my Minto Cup OIC report until all officials are reimbursed.

Growth and Recruitment

With the success of LC utilizing the 3-official system and moving towards it for major national championships, the RMLL would best support the continued excellence of officials at national championships by using the 3-official system for all playoffs and provincials. This will continue to require more officials be moved into the RMLL and be available during July & August. Having two normal season where officials gained experience in real game situations was crucial to promoting more officials to the RMLL, especially as more officials are retiring and others are requesting to limit the amount of games they work in a week. Existing officials also have improved over the course of the last season.

Three budget items have been submitted for consideration to the RMLL executive. The first is to reinstate the RMLL travel budget to move officials between the four provinces to help the newer officials in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Cranbrook travel into Alberta to work with more experienced officials, and potentially higher levels. The inverse is true too, as more experienced officials from Alberta would be traveling to the other three provinces to work with the upcoming officials in the RMLL from there. The second is to help offset the cost of potential officials with past RMLL player experience start officiating. The third is to fund a supervision/coaching team directly, so we can target specific officials and areas to improve their skills and abilities. Tony Reid, Wes Kendall, and Jon Bennett have all been approached and are interested in running the program out of the northern parts of the province.

My goal is to work about about 20 on-floor RMLL games this year, and spend more time coaching our officials and reviewing games online. I plan on traveling to work the WLA on 2-3 weekends this summer, and work to move more of our officials into the Sr A circuit.

Looking to the Future/Upcoming Season Goals

Staffing 100% of all regular season games in the leagues with national championships, and 100% of playoffs/provincials with the 3-officials system is one goal. We are planning on adding 10 new former players to our officiating staff, as well as at least 10 additional referees from the minor levels.

Thank you to everyone for their support in making the 2023 season an enjoyable experience.

David
RMLL RIC