

## **2024 RMLL RIC Report**

In what is the largest shift to the way lacrosse is played in recent memory, the RMLL was a national leader in adopting the Jr A/Sr A modified LC rules across all of our divisions. We were proactive in filling in the potential contradictions in the two rule sets, and reactive in addressing issues that came-up throughout the season. This was a challenging, but successful, endeavour for our officials at the league, provincial, and national levels.

### **Season Accomplishments**

The implementation of a new rule set was largely successful. This is a task I will continue to work on in my RIC role, especially as I delegate the Alberta assigning responsibilities to others, while I solidify RMLL RIC roles and procedures. The assigning changes to having one assignor initially send out all RMLL games for a set-time frame and an additional assignor handles changes worked exceptionally well, and we will continue this in 2025.

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 at the national levels, both minor and major. One development opportunity that RMLL officials were regularly a part of (U13 & U15 Nationals), was not available to our referees this year. This was due to LC limiting the officials at this levels to one official per team sent - which had not previously been strictly enforced. We sent one official to each of the Minto Cup, Founders Cup, and Presidents Cup. A Saskatchewan-based RMLL official who attended Minto this year was hired to the NLL for the upcoming season.

We had eight Alberta-based RMLL officials attend the 2023 World Box Lacrosse Championships in Utica, NY as on-floor officials or off-floor assessors/evaluators/officials coaches. All officials represented the RMLL well, with one official working the Men's Bronze Medal game.

### **Season Overview**

We have continued to recover officials who elected to take time off over the past few seasons, and promoted many others into the RMLL, or new divisions within it. The implementation of the 3-official mechanic to Tier II, in addition at the leagues with National Championships (Jr A, Tier I, and Sr B), was another large success. Tier II showed that more minor penalties are called in the 3-official system, but fewer significant events seem to occur in the forms of matches, grosses. In short, the analysis done of the Tier II games with and without 3-officials show that the minor penalties that are missed in a 2-official mechanic can escalate tensions and emotions - leading to more significant penalties needing to be called later on.

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

decisions was made very close to Presidents to not use the two-official system in the round-robin, which was then reversed to allow for 3-officials to be on-floor and properly adjudicate the games.

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.

### **Season Setbacks**

The basing of Lloydminster in Hillmond, Sk and overlapping home game start times, particularly in the North East region of our province, made home games were difficult to schedule referees. **Centres in these areas must assist us in recruiting ex-players or officials from a different sport in order to reduce travel costs.** 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 fortunately did not have utilize more Saskatchewan-based RMLL officials to help cover busy weekends, which helped keep travel down from what it could have been.

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. If Cranbrook decides to return to the RMLL, we will need to have an RMLL clinic in Cranbrook, or having Cranbrook officials travel to Alberta to certify will be a necessity.

A change in assigning practices was required, and executed in 2024. All levels of RMLL games were assigned by myself for a set of dates, and Jon Bennett handled any last minute changes

and all rescheduled games/official declines. Jon did an outstanding job of reconciling the mileage at the end of the season, as he always does. Jon did more than usual, as I was tied-up with defending the National Selection process and my reputation that was attacked by an official who was not selected.

With my work and (more importantly) family commitments expanding, I have delegated my initial assigning role to Jack Sylven, who has accepted. Jon Bennett is also slated to return.

### **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. Officials consistently gaining in-game experience in different levels and settings has returned to historic levels. Minor assigning of appropriate up-and-coming officials where they gain experience in real game situations is still 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 few season.

Two 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 fund a supervision/coaching team directly, so we can target specific officials and areas to improve their skills and abilities. Braydon Lawrence, Jon Bennett, and myself are interested in running the program out of the northern parts of the province.

With the assigning responsibilities delegated elsewhere, I can continue to work on solidifying the playing rules for the RMLL and work with the WLA on creating a pathway for officials to work 2-3 weekends in Sr A 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 need to add about 10 new officials to officiating staff, with 5 of those being in Wheatland and 5 of those in the Edmonton area.

Thank you to everyone for their support in making the 2024 season an enjoyable experience.

David  
RMLL RIC