

2018 AGM Reports - Table Officers

President

I will start my 2018 echoing the same sentiments that I did to begin my 2017 report: the past 12 months have again been a challenging time for our club and for me in my role as club president. We have seen some great successes but also endured some off field issues that have consumed a great deal of time and energy. But to counter that we have seen our Executive work through these challenges and continue to offer quality programming to our membership.

Declining enrollment numbers have impacted most of our programming both on the youth side and with our adult programming. This trend is being felt throughout the soccer community country wide and we will continue to explore new ways to promote soccer locally and engage new players but also work to bring back past players, both youth and adult in an effort to grow the game locally.

At last year's AGM I committed to a series of initiatives regarding the issues we experienced with our efforts to bring a paid Technical Director into the club. I am happy to report that I have been able to engage Paul Varian of Capitas Consulting, an expert in many areas of soccer governance, specifically club structure and club governance, to come to the valley and conduct a workshop with our executive in April 2018. Mr. Varian recently presented at the BC Soccer Conference and has provided his expertise to both clubs, district associations and provincial governing authorities throughout Canada. His input will help the club to focus on the future and how to positively engage paid technical staff should the club proceed in that direction as we move forward.

The club continues to pursue a field house at the Vanier Turf field and are in the midst of a series of meetings with local government authorities as we continue to try to move this project forward. As you will see in the club's financial reports we are in a good position to move forward with this project, that in conjunction with the commitment from several members of our Master's program, we hope to see significant progress on this project in coming months.

This year will see a significant change in the makeup of our club executive. We bid farewell to Tony Dickson, a long time club coach and member of the executive, Tony will step away from the executive table but will continue to be involved with our club programming and coaching. In addition Trevor Hill, our equipment manager will be stepping down. Trevor has done an incredible job in ensuring we have equipment on hand for all of our programming, his efforts and commitment to the club will be missed. We also had the pleasure of having Myra Wilson step in to help Cheri in the office for much of the past year. Unfortunately for the club, but fortunately for Myra, she has chosen to return to teaching but has agreed to continue on as our club secretary. I will speak further on the specific contributions of each at our AGM.

It is my hope that we have some new faces from our soccer community step forward and take on

one of the several vacancies that we have at the executive table. The full list of positions that are vacant, and or up for election is included in the AGM package.

I think our club has tremendous volunteers, players, coaches and supporting staff that make it an honor for me to continue serve as your club president. I look forward to seeing great things both on and off the field in the coming year.

In closing, I want to extend a huge thank-you to all of our club coaches, you are the backbone of our club and without each and every one of you we could accomplish all that we do as a club. We have included a few letters at the end of the AGM package that highlight the sacrifices and contributions made by coaches. Please take a few minutes to read and maybe pass them on to others as you see fit.

Yours in soccer,

Paul West

President - CVUSC

Vice President- Masters

Masters soccer continues to have inquiries regarding our three age groups over 30 s , 45 s and 55s. Our over 30 team has the most new players and is healthy in numbers. Forty five and fifty fives seem to mix players between as needed. Our teams are very competitive and though there are not standings we are a strong group in all age . In the last year Masters did purchase a defibrillator in conjunction with Comox Firefighters. Luckily to date it has not needed to be used but is a great thing to have . I would think that if we as a club needed this unit for any club major function it could be available upon request. Most games are being played with not many cancellations regarding field closures . John Ross is President of Masters and has been doing a great job keeping the group informed and in the loop. This can be more of a babysitting job than you can imagine so thank you John !! Regarding the next season ahead, it was brought to my attention that Masters would like an earlier time slot for practice . Though they are aware of the pressure on our turf field it truly is affecting the turn outs to practices . We should note that most of these players are coaches or former coaches of our club . As well, Masters and there players have contributed financial support and or their time to club projects over many years . This would include the building of our Club House and Turf Field project . As Paul West and I continue to work with the bodies to be regarding the field house at the turf site, Masters again have committed to support the project in a large way. I hope we get this done this year and I'm sure we will!! Personally, I would like to thank the executive board for all their hard work and commitment over the last year. We as a group have the responsibility to govern the club . I for one take that responsibility very seriously and have enjoyed the challenges we share together . Let's keep our club strong and lead by example.

Sincerely

Philip Statham

Vice President - Youth House

The 2016-2017 soccer year was a good one for CVUSC House Soccer. House soccer is the foundation of the CVUSC in terms of attracting players, training players and providing revenue to the club. House soccer is also very inspiring and motivating when one sees dozens of children on a field of pitches, playing an intelligent game and

learning to work a member of a team. Most importantly, the players are getting healthy physical exercise. There are so many positives to having young people in organized sports activities.

All sports organizations are largely staffed by volunteers including the CVUSC. Of all the programs that CVUSC offers, House requires the most volunteers because it is the largest program. Finding enough volunteers has become an increasing challenge over the past several years. This is a problem we will be working hard to rectify in the upcoming seasons. Our Volunteer Coordinator will likely address this issue in her report.

Highlights of the past year include successfully combining the U11 to U14 age groups but splitting them into gender groups and giving U14's the option of playing up. The group also got to play 11 aside in the fall which provided some exciting opportunities. It was for the practical reason that we did not have enough coaches but the players enjoyed the change. In the younger age groups the numbers really increased and this bodes well for the future. The CVUSC also got the use of the Valleyview fields again and that is where the younger age groups played.

Looking ahead to the future there are discussions taking place currently about significantly changing the structure of House soccer. We are considering this change for many reasons, hoping it will address some of the current challenges. Whatever the future holds for House soccer, I am confident that it is a robust program that will thrive.

Esther Bayles

Vice President - Youth Select Girls

My first season as VP Select was exactly what I expected. Lots of moving parts and lots of emails and phone calls to Cheri.

The tryout portion in May/June went well. There was lots of juggling players due to player numbers which eventually worked itself out. There were approx. 3-5 newer girls into the valley. They made an easy transition within their teams and their new coaches made them feel welcomed.

The format of evaluating players was interesting. It was hard at times to get volunteers out to help with the assessment process. Some of the players that didn't make their team stopped playing all together. This led into countless discussion with the coaches. Something that needs to be discussed at the board level.

After all teams were finalized the CVUSC ended up with:

U12 girls' team x 2.

U13 girls' team x 2

U14/15 girls' team

U15/17 girls' team

U17/18 girls' team

I didn't see or hear of a lot of players moving up. The younger age groups were healthy and the older ones did some shuffling. Balance-ish was created.

Speaking of players moving up. The permit process needs to be adhered to at all times. Something that we all should be keeping in mind throughout the season.

U13 girls Island Invitational are being held in Comox Mar 11 at Highland.

Girl's super 8 jamboree is being held March 4 at Highland

Girls B cup is in April I believe – will have to call Cheri again ☺

Early on in the season I passed on to all the coaches to showcase their team via newspaper or other. Only one maybe two teams have submitted an article to the paper during the year. Something that I will encourage yet again. I find that kids love to see their names in the paper.

Now that I know the ropes more than a year ago, I am looking forward to emailing Cheri less ☺ and continuing to grow our great club house.

WE....ARE....UNITED

Jerret

Vice President - Youth Select Boys

The season is still in mid swing. Minor adjustments were made to our season structure to account for some of the issues that surfaced from the previous seasons. Here are Tony's top Ten:

1. Player Assessments were moved to days that in no way conflicted with Riptide Academy.
2. Mass player assessments continue to help us to build a cohesive set of standards for parent - club communication, player assessment and selection as well as player experience.
3. Pre-season meetings to set the shape of the season for our Select program also brought about a relatively similar experience for players in all age groups in terms of competitive opportunities, training standards, team values, and overall approach to the game and player development.
4. Technical support for teams was made available on Tuesdays on the Turf. Robbie Taylor and I provided fairly consistent support to team training on the Turf, aiming to support coaches in program delivery. This ranged from just an extra set of hands, to session planning on specific topics, to model sessions and tactical support. The U18 boys team who practiced on Monday's received sporadic support. All of this was made possible through an effective and efficient approach to Turf Time assignments.
5. Turf time assignments have made possible to efficiently support teams, provide joint team training and full field practice games due to similar age group time slots.
6. We continue to hurt for numbers of players and most squads are mixed age groups. This is in large part due to a three tier system in grassroots soccer development that sees players drawn from lower tiers into higher tiers despite their standard of play. This is especially true for our older age groups. The solution in my mind it to work towards non-concurrent seasons for tier 2 and tier 3 and potentially tier 4. While the mechanics of this are currently problematic, it would ease the pressure on a small player and coach community; it would support a stronger sense and purpose to both club and regional development. Perhaps even just offering a Summer House League or Tournament Team might help.
7. U16 and U18 have made it through the first round of Cup Play and look capable of playing competitively at Provincials as our Island Reps.
8. Super 8's continue to evolve as UISA's vision unfolds and adapts to address the many challenges and unforeseen issues that arise in this league. This year for us, we saw a unique opportunity to offer a large number of U11 players a chance to participate as U12's. This resulted in a 5 team cohort of U12's and U13's. The benefits were that a large group of underage players got to experience a chance to play an appropriate level of competition for their level development. The cons were that it added to the challenges of creating a "team" cohesion and resulted in an inordinate number of "keeping up with the Jones" type of complaints and conflicts. This was further exasperated by the administration of an A-B team creation for the U12's. I strongly suggest we promote and even team approach to Super 8's. I further suggest that we return to practice of keeping cohorts together as age groups so far as possible. At the UISA table I have promoted either the use of player cards to counter the hearsay around coaches manipulating teams, or to do away with rosters at this level of play. ID Cards would be a more fair process for smaller clubs who do not enjoy the benefits of larger player pools and multiple teams in an age group.
9. As Rush, Riptide, and Whitecaps continue to draw upon a very small player base for the higher levels of player, it becomes all that much more important to know and stick to our own mission statement and not conflate our purpose with those of these other programs. It is important that our members know about VIPL as

a very important opportunity in their player pathway of development and that the official communication out to members by simple, short and sincere. Such communication should be made available through official emails from our main office (not from VP's nor president) as well as posted through visuals and links on our website. We should be open to joint projects and mutual support with VIPL. What we should not be doing is confusing our role to manipulate, control, threaten, discipline or mandate any players, parents, or coaches who feel this direction is not for them. To this end I Support two specific actions: first an official uncluttered statement and visual clearly outlining the CSA Soccer Pathway and how these many different programs work in support of our members to that end posted on our website (note that grassroots are lumped together as quoted directly from CSA and supported by attached visual



“While the recreational and competitive streams of play are largely delivered through clubs and schools across the country, the EXCEL stream is designed to ensure more of Canada's exceptional young players find their way into the top competitive environments: professional clubs and National Teams.”); and second, a return to civil discourse focused on our own programs and development.

10. Finally, this is my last report as VP Boys Select. For over a decade I have enjoyed the benefits of a community brought together around a passion for the beautiful game. It has been my aim and understanding to work very hard to fulfill a simple purpose in my various my roles within the club: to build the best club level programs so that coaches and players can take advantage of opportunities beyond our club's purview when they choose to take them.

I wish you all the best,

Tony Dickson

Vice President - Men

Just before the start of the season our Div 1 and Div 3 men's teams were in the process of recruiting players as the outlook for each team was in question due to low numbers. There was some good news and not so good news as for the Div 1's there was an influx of players from the Campbell River Div 1 team as they unfortunately had the same issue and decided to fold thus opening the door for a number of players to join the Comox Valley team. The same could not be said for the Div 3 team as the recruiting unfortunately did not result in a healthy number of players to continue and therefore had to fold for the upcoming season. Due to the influx of players from Campbell River the Div 1 team had some healthy numbers entering the new season. The initial start was encouraging but the middle of the season the team seemed to struggle and hovered around the relegation zone for much of the season. Unfortunately the team did end up in the relegation zone at the conclusion of the season and now await to see what happens with other teams to see where their fate lies. Either dropping down to Div 2 or having to play a challenge match to stay up in Div 1. At this time they are involved in the Jackson Cup and are excited to finally have a home game for cup play in a long long long time. Should be exciting.....

On a very positive and emotional note, the Div 1 men were able to host a memorial indoor tourney for their beloved brother Tom Butcher who was taken from us way too early last year. This tourney was a fundraiser and because of the community coming together to help this cause the men were able to donate funds in the amount of \$3000 to the Comox Valley Ground Search and Rescue. There will also be a donation from the same tourney and in the near future to the Comox Valley Soccer Club, also in the honor of Tom.

Community is powerful and a wonderful experience when people unite together for the good of the whole.....

Carey

Vice President - Women

There are 2 women's team in CVUSC the Shooters and Kickers. We play soccer in MIWSL which has 5 women's teams. Two from Courtenay 1 from Campbell River, and 2 from Nanaimo.

We are well supported by CVUSC and are pleased to be part of this organization.

The year has gone well other than a few weather cancellations.

The women's team are very thankful for the referees that come out and referee the game but also do some education while they are on the field.

Last year we had 8 teams so there is a concern that they league may not continue unless we get more women interested in playing soccer. The league is hopeful that when the young women from the u18 can no longer play as they have aged out they will consider joining the women's league.

We see this does not always happen due to going away to school or working on the weekends.

So hoping to get the word out so we can continue to play women's soccer in this area.

Sincerely,

Linda Wyton

Vice President - Development

Overall, the past year has been as challenging as it has been enjoyable. Although VP Development is a very broad portfolio spanning all age groups at our club the majority of efforts lie in the younger age groups. Overall, below are the major initiatives and highlights from the past year:

1. Development stream continues to be a great success at our club and we continue to draw around 120 children to this program. Given issues with house registration last year, the structure of this program changed from 1, 11 month program to 3 phases with sessions on Monday nights at the turf. Further, the 2nd phase included futsal on Saturdays (I'll speak to this in the futsal section). In terms of curriculum, this is coach driven, however the majority of sessions centre on 1v1 attacking, evasive dribbling and transitions.
2. UDP. Unfortunately, interest in this program waned this year and based on speaking to several parents, they felt that a 4th session per week (after 2 house and 1 DS) was simply too much. Although a smaller program targeting U8s and those not in DS was attempted, there wasn't enough interest to carry on. It is uncertain whether we will continue this program next year.
3. Futsal. As has been the case in the past, an indoor program was run across the winter at the 19 Wing fitness centre. The focus on this program is ball mastery and free play done with a low bounce ball on an unforgiving surface. The program was linked to DS this year and over 80 kids have been coming out on a weekly basis. I love it because there is minimal intervention and lots of manipulation of the ball!
4. Summer programming. For the second year in a row, the summer camp was run by the men's team. Focussed on soccer and fun, we again had 40+ kids run their hearts out in the July heat (and cool off in the pool). The formula works, kids love it and we're already planning it for this summer.
5. Coach education. This past fall, the club ran Active start and fundamentals courses with approximately 30 coaches receiving this training. Further, Tony completed his advanced national certification and Jerret his national C license. Finally, I was able to start my A-License program which will take about a year to complete. I would for the next year like to get more coaches into the licensing stream of coach ed, either national C or B part 1 (old provincial B). We're looking at running another active start and Learn To Train in the Spring.
6. Whitecaps partnership. After much work, the whitecaps came back to the valley this fall with a series of clinics for our kids run by Craig Angus and Maya Zink. Over 80 kids participated and from this series, a number of our kids were picked up for the upcoming adidas cup in Vancouver. Looking ahead, we will be working with the caps on an upper island academy prospects academy in Qualicum beach on Sunday evenings (Kevin Lindo leading) and once again looking at clinics in the fall.

Been a busy but fruitful and rewarding year, thanks for your support!

Stefan Szkwarek

Equipment Manager

Equipment Inventory

- The equipment at the time of this report has been inventoried and is in good standing to support our projected requirements for the next season.
- The majority of our equipment at this time is being stored at our Ryan Rd storage unit and the turf locker. The equipment inventory that is not in these two locations are distributed in trust amongst coaches from Select/DS/Men's/Women's/Futsal /Masters programs.
- Over the past year we were able to replenish many of our balls that have worn out and donated to programs of need. We also increased our futsal ball supplies with anticipation of increasing the futsal program enrolment.

The Year in Review

- Having volunteers on equipment handout/in days made facilitating the process that much easier. I believe creating a positive environment that encourages parents to help out with this project is a huge benefit to the club. The more hands involved with the equipment processing the lighter the job is for all.
- Communication from coaches, players and parents was generally positive and appreciative for the equipment provided, especially from the younger groups. As some of the team sizes increased due to lack of coaches some of the ball bag numbers were doubled up to accommodate which made for some challenges with supply and demand but in the end all was accommodated.
- Looking to the future, I believe the club and its membership will benefit immensely if equipment storage is to be located at the clubhouse. The reduced costs in rentals and time will make facilitating equipment management so much easier.
- This year saw many challenges of the turf locker being left open...balls going missing and the lock being misplaced. As a club we need to delegate representatives from each user groups that use the turf to insure that lock ups are happening after every use and that are accountable for their groups usage of equipment on the turf.

Trevor Hill CVUSC Equipment Manager

Reports - Directors

Referee-in-Chief - not available

Division Manager Liaison

My first season as Division Liaison Manager went well. I was extremely thankful to have the guidance from a very knowledgeable Cheri, and to also have the invaluable assistance of Myra and Esther, along with all the fabulous Division Managers.

My duties kicked off with liaising with Division Managers regarding putting together teams for the Mini World Cup, which went very smoothly and the Comox Valley was very well represented at the event.

The co-ordination of the photo sessions went extremely well thanks to the planning and flexibility of Darrin McLeod and the co-operation of all the Division Managers and individual teams.

It was also fun to help with the end of season wrap up, albeit the weather didn't co-operate!! Watching all the parents out on the field show recognition to their children by forming an arch for them to run through finished off the season in style.

Thank you to all the staff, coaches and volunteers of Comox Valley United Soccer Club, without you none of this would be possible. Please keep volunteering, it's so fun to be involved, and your children truly benefit from their parents being present and helping out when they can, where they can, however they can.

Debi Sargent
Division Liaison Manager

Field Manager

Summary of 2017 activities from a Fields perspective:

Locks: This past summer we took the step of locking up the goals at ValleyView, Highland and Queneesh parks. This decision was made in order to minimize vandalism and the resulting damage to the goals that had previously been occurring. While things have worked out relatively well with this exercise, we are periodically having locks disappear. In order to minimize these losses, I will implement a lock retention system for the spring season. Your continued support in setting up and returning goals to the lock up area before and after games & practices is appreciated.

Goal Anchors (Sandbags): Sandbag style goal anchors were placed at ValleyView and Woodcote parks at the end of the fall playing season

and will remain in place for our upcoming spring session. These bags are to be used to anchor the goals in position, and minimize the potential for them toppling over and injuring players. Bags will be placed at the Highland field shortly, and as a reminder, referees will be looking to ensure that these anchors are in position prior to the start of games. This practice is in keeping with BC Soccer's goal post safety guidelines.

Field Closures: In comparison with the winter of 2016/2017, we have been quite fortunate in regards to field closures due to weather

this winter. Having said that, there have been some ill-timed snowfalls in recent weeks that have made the task of scheduling and fitting in playoff games a challenge. I can appreciate the frustration that can occur during these closures, and the challenges it puts on team officials to coordinate with their players, parents and opponents. Not to

mention our referee scheduler and Club Administrator.

For some background on process; during periods of heavy rainfall, snow and/or icy weather, I keep in touch

throughout the week with the School District, the City of Courtenay Recreation Department, and the Soccer Club to

receive and provide updates on field condition status. This information is shared as soon as it is received, with every effort being made to get the information out to coaches and managers in a timely manner. This decision can sometimes be delayed in hopes that incoming weather changes may favourably change the field status - keeping in mind that we need to err on the side of caution, so the earlier a final decision is made, the higher the likelihood that

the status is set to closed.

As a reminder, the school district maintenance operations department makes the final decision on the status of the

Vanier Turf field and communicates this information to myself and the City of Courtenay Recreation Department.

Their policy is that the field remains closed until all of the snow and ice on the surface has melted naturally.

Physical removal of the snow via shovel or snow blower has the potential to damage the turf, and is therefore discouraged. Your continued support and understanding is appreciated.

Regards,

Mike Kearns
CVUSC Field Manager

Volunteer Coordinator

Recruiting volunteers to help out this year as in years past proved to be difficult. We had a few that came out to help with equipment handout in the spring and the fall but more are always needed to assist with getting house jersey's, balls and nets handed out and brought in. Last June we honoured our volunteers with a volunteer bbq for the house season wrap up. We are continuing to think of new ways to thank our volunteers. This past fall house season, we gave all of our house league coaches insulated coffee mugs as a thank you.

Going into the spring house I would like to host some volunteer meeting nights to help us get some more volunteers assisting with the house season. These will highlight what jobs need to be done, how and when.

Thanks,
Jennifer Vinzenz

Appendix A

1. Letter Posted by BC Soccer

Written by a 14 year old about his coach, also his Dad.

My Dad is a coach, not just a coach but MY coach, People say "bet it's great having your dad as the coach?" In some ways yes .. but most of the time no. So Let me explain.....

When you have your family on the sidelines cheering you on, supporting you.. I have to share the support I have from my Dad with all of you. .. in fact sometimes what I do is missed.

When I hear comments from People on the sidelines criticising the coach or complaining about his decisions .. well that's my Dad .. he may be a coach but that's my Dad you're pulling apart and that takes the enjoyment out of my own game.

I see how those comments affect him at home away from the pitch, how he takes things to heart, how it can change a full days mood (that's my time with my family your affecting .. your game has finished)

When you're all rolling out of bed and relaxing before a game.. I am up and out putting goals up or getting kit ready. When you rush off after the game I'm still there, Tired, Hungry and sometimes cold .. but things need putting away and clearing before I can get home.

Depending on the match is dependent on the mood of my Dad for the rest of the day .. You don't hear or see how much time he puts in at home, you don't hear or see how self critical he can be of his own skills, you don't see the worry he carries on his shoulders .. just by trying to do the right thing (which will always be wrong to someone).

You don't see how tired he is from work but masks it just to make sure that your training session is fun.

Sometimes being the coaches son / daughter you feel under pressure to make sure you perform right (after all you're the coaches son / daughter so it's expected from others that you do everything right). (well that's how it feels to me)

My grassroots journey is one that I share with many others .. when sometimes I wonder what it must feel like to have someone there supporting you and only you.. watching you and only you... praising you and only you.. no stress, no worry just pure enjoyment of the game then go home.

I am proud of my Dad and wouldn't change what he does.

He is a role model to me and he gives it his everything and all. I Just want others to stop a moment and think, it's not all that it's cut out to be.. being the coaches Son / Daughter .. you only see the training and the game .. I see it and live it every single day.

My Dad is a volunteer (a very good one)and so much is sacrificed for him to be able to do this.

Please don't judge the coaches Son/Daughter .

We don't "Get Everything" we "Give Everything"

You really need to understand that.

Anon 14years about his journey and more importantly his DAD.

2. Article published in the Globe and Mail: A coach's plea to parents

BY ALISON BELBIN

CONTRIBUTED TO THE GLOBE AND MAIL

PUBLISHED MARCH 28, 2017

UPDATED NOVEMBER 12, 2017

Alison Belbin is passing on her love of the game. So why does she get so much interference from the sidelines?

I am here, on time.

My mortgage is two-weeks late; my oldest child is suffering through a medication change and trouble at school; my youngest child begged me not to leave, and my husband and I haven't looked each other in the eye for days. I spent much of the day holding my aging dog as she recovered from a seizure.

But none of this matters now. I am here. I compose myself and prepare for the next 90 minutes on the field with your child. And mine; she has already leapt from the car and disappeared into the growing crowd of girls.

Sometimes you wave as you drive away, and sometimes you don't. It usually depends if we won the previous weekend and if you felt your child had been given an appropriate amount of play time.

Your daughter is funny and kind and thoughtful. And tonight your daughter had a great practice. She struggled with a new skill and shook off a solid smack to her ear from a ball. And, we laughed. She also told me something that has been bothering her, asking shyly that I not tell anyone.

I explained why she was subbed off last game. She nodded in agreement and asked how to get better. We

hugged, she thanked me, and we moved on.

She likes a boy, she hates her thighs. Her best friend ignored her today and she still has difficult homework to get through after practice. She got her period in art class. And yet she's here with me in the freezing rain, our cleats rotting and our noses dripping. She is here because her team provides a safe shield from the outside world.

We sweat together, we celebrate together and we all feel the same sting of defeat when the bounce of the ball is not in our favour. We step on the field with the best intentions. We try.

I always leave the field a better person than when I arrived.

In the time it takes me to drive home, dry off and microwave my dinner, you have hastily typed an e-mail. My youngest has fallen asleep on the couch and my husband is cleaning the kitchen while I sit at the table alone, reading how you feel I've let your child down.

You believe last weekend's loss was due to my poor decisions. Your daughter would have scored the winning goal if I only had subbed her in earlier or let her play a different position. You believe they aren't playing like a team should. You watched a Premier League game and they seem so much more in tune with each other.

It's a shame, I think, that you missed the girls hugging and cheering each other on tonight while you were at the coffee shop around the corner.

If we win, I'll read that it's because the more talented girls got too much playing time; that I'm too competitive; that I'm pushing them too hard; that I've managed to crush the souls of the players on the bench. If we lose, it's because I played the developing players too much; I am ruining the stronger players' chance at future glory; I'm not pushing them hard enough. What do we even do during practice anyway?

I know what you've told her about me and I know what you've said about her teammates. And yet, your daughter and I both keep showing up. We keep trying.

I may not do it the way you would. I may not speak to your daughter the way you would, but she needs more than one voice in her head.

I am not a professional. I am a parent who loves the game and has the desire to pass that on. I accepted the role I was offered; not for a paycheque, not for status, certainly not for praise. I accepted this role because I have been where your daughter is now. I see myself in her missteps and in her triumphs. I have felt them all and I feel them all over again through her. I, too, have been bruised by a ball, pulled muscles in tough tackles and played with a broken heart. I also had coaches who believed in me, just as I believe in your daughter.

Knowing I had someone in my corner who challenged me and called out my excuses was the greatest reward of my years in sport. I vaguely remember the final scores of even the most important games, but I sure remember how I felt. Winning doesn't promise pride, just as losing doesn't guarantee disappointment.

One of my parents' great gifts to me was their unwavering support of my coaches. They never wrote a letter, made a complaint phone call or disrespected a coach – even when my eyes stung and I desperately needed it to be someone else's fault. It was my team, my game, my experience to have.

I learned early on that my coach was neither my parent nor my friend. I admired them and sought their praise. I hated them sometimes, too. If I thought I deserved a higher standing on that team, it was up to me to earn it.

My parents sure weren't going to earn it for me.

Criticizing your child's coach might simply be a reflection of your insecurities or long-held regrets as a former player. That's okay. We all have them. As adults we can understand this, but as a child, your daughter does not. She is being pulled in opposing directions between her team and her parent's opinion of her team.

On her team, she is finding her identity and her place among her peers. It is here she will decide if that place makes her feel whole and satisfied, or if it makes her edgy and hungry for more.

Let her discover this, on her own.

Let her play.

Alison Belbin lives in Nanaimo, B.C.

3. ADVICE FROM RAY FERRARO

Monday, January 22, 2018

Ray Ferraro message to parents...

Former NHL star Ray Ferraro was asked to talk to parents of a hockey club that was going through a tough time and with parent expectations at an all-time high. This is what Ferraro told the parents.

- Minor hockey is out of control in terms of Parents chasing the dream for their kids instead of kids deciding on their own how passionate they are for it and how bad they want it.
- In the last 10 years only 21 kids who either played at NSWC or BWC have appeared in at least ONE NHL regular season game. Point is if your banking on your son collecting an NHL pay cheque to solidify his and yours financial future you seriously need to stop and come up with a new plan and now.
- The odds of going pro are extremely low but the odds of having to find a career and a job to pay bills and be a husband and father are extremely high and it's not dictated by if you played AAA hockey
- Parents need to enjoy the ride while you have it ... your son's minor hockey days end too quickly and often times people end up regretting what they did not know then and what they ending up missing because they were focused on everything but their kid having fun
- As a parent who devotes time and money to your son, the only right you have to ask is they give it their best ... not how much ice time they get, if they play on the PP, who is their winger or D partner
- Don't pay for power skating, dryland training, skill development and expect your son to score 50 goals, if you decide to invest in extras do it because your son asked for it and wants to improve and has a smile on his face each and every time ... too many parents decide what they want their kids to do instead of their kids asking to do it.

- 12 month hockey is wrong ... organized skills sessions, tryouts, spring hockey is too much and too taxing ... kids can shoot pucks, stick handle, play street hockey but they need out of the mental insanity of a hockey rink and need to be engaged in something other than hockey ... the time away reinforces the passion to want it
- Coaches are coaches...we all know the game and think this should be done a certain way ... how come we never tell our kids math teacher how to teach calculus but we think as parents we have the right to tell a hockey coach how they should coach or whom and when our kids should play.
- When you evaluate your kids season, never base it on how many banners they won, what provincial they won, what tourneys they went to and won ... ask yourself what improved from September to April, what did he learn or improve upon including non-hockey stuff ... evaluate the season besides wins and losses but gains and improvements. Just let them play, learn and develop. Pressure is high enough, no need to make it worse.