



2019 - 2020 Cincinnati Swords Pee Wee Hockey Prospectus
Coach: Andrew Backen

I am happy to introduce you to the 2019 – 2020 Cincinnati Swords 2007 birth year pee wee major hockey team. My coaching philosophy begins with two important elements; 1) providing a positive environment whenever we are together that is conducive to learning and having fun, and 2) teaching my players respect and being great teammates.

I played for Miami University where the philosophy of “The Brotherhood” was more important than winning hockey games. Character is a critical element to being a great player and more importantly a great person. Even at this age, showing up to whatever you do with a purpose and desire to be better today than the previous day is essential. I help the players understand this independently and in the context of having teammates.

I get to know each player on a personal level and help them develop their skills at their pace and in a way that they understand and learn. I expect each player to have fun, give their best in practice and in games, all while pushing them beyond what they thought they were capable of every time they are on the ice.

At this age hockey must be fun, but I also know that it is a commitment for both the kids and the parents; and therefore they must develop hockey skills and life skills as a return for this commitment. Knowing this, I take my responsibility as a youth hockey coach personally and with a great deal of accountability. I had a lot of great coaching influences in my life and for them; I owe this back to the kids that I coach. Each and every kid I coach will be a better person and better hockey player at the end of the season.

I played my minor hockey in Thunder Bay, ON Canada from mites through Midget AAA, and then junior hockey for the Thunder Bay Flyers in the United States Hockey League (USHL) from 1989 – 1992. Hockey brought me to Ohio playing four years (1992 – 1996) at Miami University on a hockey scholarship. I was fortunate to play on the first ever CCHA Championship and NCAA Tournament team in school history. After Miami I played a season of professional hockey in the Central Hockey League for the Memphis Riverkings before giving in to the aches and pains that come with 20 years of hockey.

I am a USA Hockey Level 4 Certified Coach and have been involved in Cincinnati hockey for the past 8 years; the first 2 years helping as an instructor in the Learn To Play program, 3 years coaching at the ADM Mite level, 2 years coaching the squirt travel team, and this past year with the 2007 11U pee wee travel team.

I am married to my beautiful wife Kari, who is from Escondido, CA and attended Miami University on a field hockey scholarship. We are fortunate to have 3 fantastic children, Bradley 12, Camden 10, and Sydney 7; we live in Mason, OH.

Remember that children are heavily influenced and learn what they see and hear from adults. It is often the parents through good intentions that take the fun out of sports. I ask that the parents remain a positive influence on the kids and give them nothing but positive encouragement. Please refrain from correcting your child’s short comings after a game or practice as this then becomes the last thing they remember. The car ride home should not be a blow by blow



account of all they did wrong. Please allow the coaches to coach and the parents be the most supportive parents and fans.

I am open to dialogue with any parent regarding your young player's development and only ask that if you are upset about something that you don't approach the coaches for 24 hours from the time you are upset. Any of us will be happy to speak with you on the phone or in person. Decisions will be made and you may not know the background leading up to the decision or understand the philosophy for a decision; but know we are always willing to have dialogue with a parent so they do understand.

My expectations are that your children will come to practice and games prepared, listen to the coaching staff, work as hard as they can, learn something new, and respect everyone. Being coachable is a skill set that will be emphasized as our kids will need coaching throughout their lives.

My intentions are that our team will compete as an independent AAA team this season and play approximately 55 games. Expect a practice schedule of twice per week (~50-55 total). I intend to play in 4 tournaments; 2 CCM World Invite Tournaments in Chicago and Nashville, potentially a tournament in Canada and 1 other. In order to offset some of our travel costs parents will be required to participate in fundraising and helping in efforts to attract sponsors. Expect team fees for this season to be approximately \$3,000 - \$3,500. In addition to our team fees, each player will be required to purchase home/away jerseys and socks.

In closing, I want to share the foreword by Wayne Gretzky from Jean Beliveau, My Life in Hockey; 2 of the greatest players of all time on and off the ice.

The "C" that Jean Beliveau wore so proudly on his Montreal Canadiens jersey could as well have stood for "class" as it did for "captain" of the perennial Stanley Cup champions.

I clearly remember watching Hockey Night in Canada on Saturday nights as a child, sitting with my dad at my grandma's farmhouse. We all marveled at the command displayed on the ice by Jean Beliveau. It was obvious that he was the leader of those great teams. He carried himself like a leader, he competed like a leader, and he won with dignity like a leader. My father often remarked that whenever Jean Beliveau spoke, his comments were intelligent and humble. When Jean's team won, he was gracious in describing the Canadiens' opponents. Even at the age of six or seven, I could see there was something special about the Hab's big number 4 – on and off the ice.

Many years later, I had lunch in Atlantic City with Jean and his beautiful wife, Elise. I had been playing in the NHL for only two years at the time, and Jean was firmly fixed in the executive offices of the Canadiens after eighteen glorious NHL seasons. Many legends of sport attended that event, and I watched as many of the biggest names in the history of the NFL, NBA, and professional baseball came to our table to greet the distinguished Jean Beliveau and his wife.

Having had the good fortune to win four Stanley Cups in my career and to experience the satisfaction and lifelong friendships that are generated by such a difficult and collective effort, it is mindboggling to recall that Jean Beliveau accomplished the feat no fewer than ten times as a player and seven times more as a senior executive with the same organization. I



don't think there can be any other figure in the history of professional sports who better exemplifies the word "winner."

Jean's induction into the Hockey Hall of Fame was automatic. I'm sure the decision came as naturally to the selection committee as scoring the goal, winning the big game, and conducting himself with grace and distinction did to Jean Beliveau.

I look forward to a fantastic year where we all have a lot of fun and build lifelong friendships. Thank you for this opportunity.

Andrew