

2019 SAHA Board of Directors Candidate Questionnaire

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Vice President Questions and Answers by Paul Bajda and Tom Garrity (listed alphabetically)

Question: How do you create more interest for SAHA parents to volunteer on various committees?

Paul's Answer: From my experience, a direct method of communication with specific details regarding the role for the volunteer is best. While email blasts are a good way to communicate information, people will likely disregard general requests for volunteers in that form. The most success I have had with getting volunteers is by having varied roles within the committee. For example, start with a request for a leadership role on the committee to the broader audience. One of the responsibilities of that leadership role is to assist in the enticement of more volunteers. I have found that people are way more likely to volunteer if:

- a) They are directly asked.
- b) They are asked by someone who is vested in that committee.
- c) The person asking is someone the volunteer would like to work with.
- d) The role for the volunteer is clearly defined.
- e) There is an "end goal" so that people don't feel like they are volunteering for a never-ending task, showing their time will be respected.
- f) The organization has an established culture of recognition. Everybody likes to be acknowledged for a job well done. This can be as simple as a "Thank You" showing that the volunteer is genuinely appreciated.

These guidelines are something I have directly used and have had great success in the past. As this process is used, generally I see volunteer interest increase because of positive past experiences.

Tom's Answer: It's a great idea to get more parents involved through various committees. SAHA has plenty of parents who could add significant value to the success and vision for SAHA moving forward. I've worked on a variety of boards and committees and I've learned specific things need to be addressed in order to get more volunteers:

- Development/creation of worthwhile committees
- In the beginning, identify key people to Chair committees who bring key expertise to each specific committee
- The Board should work with Chair of committee to develop vision, goals and set benchmarks to be used when asking others to participate – organization and direction will help encourage volunteer participation and ultimately get better results
- Begin recruiting parents with SAHA resources such as end of the season survey, word of mouth, and reaching out asking individuals to get involved
- When committees are formed make their time spent efficient, successful, as well as fun

Question: During your first year as VP, what is one idea that you would like to implement? Why and how would you implement this idea?

Paul's Answer: Honestly, I have a few ideas that I would like to implement. I don't think any are as important as getting charitable gambling off the ground. While not my idea, charitable gambling would have the greatest benefit to ALL our SAHA members and provide the best means to strengthen our association. If elected, I would like to assist here as much as possible (my first year and beyond). Since the previous answer was not my idea, I have another around social media continuity for SAHA. While our association does a really good job on our social media platforms, there are some areas that can be improved. For example, (I will use Twitter since it is the main platform used by us) having followers is the main way to "spread the word" so to speak. Right now, we do not have well defined processes in place to hand down Twitter accounts year over year. The result is that we have accounts that get duplicated and abandoned. The duplication of accounts leads to confusion for the people wishing to follow certain teams within SAHA, sometimes giving the impression of social media apathy due to accounts appearing dead. Once these accounts have been duplicated, most of the followers from the original are lost and that team is starting from square one. If elected, in my first year, I would like to review, improve and formalize our social media/online policies and processes.

I believe this will benefit us by showing a "unified face" of SAHA to our members and online community at large. Since SAHA can be likened to a business, a robust social media presence can be one of the most cost-effective forms of advertising there is.

Tom's Answer: If elected, I have a variety of ideas that I would like to implement during the first year, but, at the top of the list, I would begin with helping **ALL** the kids in our association to develop.

I would start with the tryout process. I would make sure the evaluation process was the best we can offer our kids and their parents.

Work in conjunction with a player development committee in order provide ALL players a more in-depth analysis as it relates to their individual tryout.

We would implement a system that not only is used to create teams with like-ability players, but also more importantly be used to provide feedback and help each player in their hockey development during the season and to track their progress as it relates to each player's strengths and areas for improvement. The evaluation would have specific skill elements clearly outlined that each player would need to develop (varies by level) and then this info is entered into a database that would ultimately be accessible by the player and their parents. This information would also be shared with their respective coaches once the teams are formed. Before the season begins, each team would have an outline of specific practice plans and resources that can be applied to help develop their players throughout the season based on their tryout evaluation. This will help each and every coach set goals and address specific skills that his/her players need more emphasis on during the season.

When the season is completed, a year-end meeting with each player, his/her coach and parent will outline the players' progress and share key strengths as well as areas to continue working on. –At that time, SAHA could also provide available training resources necessary to help each player during the off-season and specifics to work on to be ready for the next level of the following season. This platform needs to be consistent across the entire association yet be tailored to each age level with appropriate skills.

Question: What is your definition of player development?

Paul's Answer: This is a tough question as defining player development is not an easy task. At the highest level, my definition of player development is "Providing the needed skills, appropriate to the level of a player to be successful". If I break down what I mean, skills are not just skating, stick handling, etc. For example, younger players and learning to be a good teammate is imperative. This may not be as critical for older players due to it being a skill already obtained, which is why they have made it to a higher level. On the reverse side, systems, hockey sense, etc. are important to later stage players than to earlier ones. Teaching level appropriate skills is foundational to good player development. Also, being successful does not necessarily mean in hockey alone, many lessons and skills obtained in hockey should help the player in life. Fact is, majority of our players hockey careers will begin and end with SAHA. For that reason, hockey can be used as a vehicle to teach kids teamwork, leadership, time management and so forth. All of this helps build their confidence, and that, is a huge benefit in the game of life.

Tom's Answer: My definition of player development is simple. In order to develop every player, we need to set goals and provide consistent coaching and resources at every level of our association to help each player maximize their potential.

- Focus more on skill development and less on wins/losses and individual player stats
- Hire and educate coaches who are able to provide age appropriate instruction to the players (utilize year end coaches reviews to help in this process)
- Create age specific developmental plans/goals...with focus on on-ice, off-ice as well as mental training used across all levels from AA to C
- Overall, programs should be designed for ALL the players and not just the elite. We want kids enrolled in hockey to stay in hockey and enjoy it.

Boys Traveling Director Questions and Answers by Dan Bjornlie and Bill Rhody (listed alphabetically)

Question: What is your philosophy on playing time at each level (Squirt, Peewee, Bantam)?

Dan's Answer: Honestly, I struggle with the fact that we are even asking this question for kids ages 9-14! Roll the lines throughout the whole game! The last shift in a +1 goal tournament game would be the only exception. Shortening the bench destroys the confidence of the less advanced player and will ultimately hurt their development and potentially end their career prematurely. On the other side, encouraging long shifts for more advanced players teaches them the wrong way to play the game which also hurts in their development. It teaches them to be poor teammates and selfish players. The game of hockey, if played the correct way, is physically impossible to take shifts in excess of 45sec.-1min. By enabling long shifts, we are teaching our kids to play when they are tired and thus at a slower pace. This should be a non-issue for all SAHA teams. Coaches should instead be focusing on teaching the kids how to play hockey the right way instead of worrying who won the "Squirtacular" in 2008. I feel very strongly that if we can instill this focus and mentality at a young age, we will be building great teams, not individuals and we will instead be worrying about state titles. The wins will follow!

Bill's Answer: I do not believe in short benches or short shifting kids – at any age group or playing level. Everyone deserves equal chances to develop. I believe what's most important is working together, and working our hardest, as a team. I believe everyone should have a chance to kill penalties. I believe teams should try to have 3 power play units.

There will likely be times where, in the last 2-3 minutes in a close tournament or playoff game, Coaches need to have the authority to extend playing time for a certain line. Or, put some of the more developed players on the ice in those last minutes in an effort to maintain a lead or close a gap. But these situations should be the exception rather than the rule. All players need to experience "high pressure" game situations. That's how they learn and how we help them build confidence in their abilities. That's how they have fun and want to keep playing hockey. This doesn't happen by sitting on the bench watching teammates play.

Questions: During your first year as boys traveling director, what is one idea that you would like to implement? Why and how would you implement this idea?

Dan's Answer: My first initiative as the boys traveling director would be to form a "Stillwater hockey Advisory Board" compiled of former college and professional players in the community. Each member would be in charge of the 4 development stages (Mites (Mite Director), Squirts, PeeWees, Bantams). This committee would also include the new high school boys and girls coaches. We have so many good hockey resources/minds in our community and need to be able to pull that knowledge/experience to provide the absolute best development platform for our kids. The SAHA program is the "minor league" or feeder program for the high school, so it is critical that we are all on the same page and coaching systems that align with the high school coach. This committee would be in charge of developing team/locker-room culture, practice plans and overall hockey processes and systems. The USA Hockey Development platform is good, however as the kids get older and progress, we need to bring new and better ideas/practice plans to the coaches. Well organized, high-tempo, quality drills, "unselfish" hockey mentality will keep the kids engaged and on the right development path.

Bill's Answer: SAHA is fortunate to have many talented coaches. I'd like to help build upon the strength of our SAHA coaches by creating a Coaches Committee. By including all coaches, we can bring more collaboration within our group, at all ages and levels. I'd like us to meet at the beginning of the season, and several times over the course of the season. This would give us the opportunity to reinforce our coaching philosophy and vision. To develop SAHA specific systems that are consistent – so as players move from Year 1 to Year 2 within their age group, they already know the systems that will make the team successful. To address feedback received along the way; collaborate and problem solve; ask and answer questions that arise. And have a forum in which we can support and learn from one another. The more consistency in practice plans, game strategy and philosophies we can have among age groups, the better.

Question: How would you support/grow young inexperienced as well as experienced boys coaches?

Dan's Answer: In my opinion, the coaches are the most important piece in the development of our kids. They are the CEO's of the team and are in charge of everything that goes on in the locker-room, on the ice and ultimately the complete experience for your child. In conjunction with the Stillwater Hockey Advisory Board members, each SHAB member would be responsible for meeting with the coaches at each level to implement the initiatives established by the SHAB. This would provide direction and practice plans for every coach at every level and ensure that there is coaching consistency at each level. In addition and as Bill Kohn has already done, we will hold random coaching seminars/clinics for all SAHA member coaches as we are all (experienced and inexperienced) looking for different ideas, drills, coaching philosophies, etc. to implement.

Bill's Answer: This is where the Coaches Committee would come in to play. All SAHA coaches receive training as they obtain required certification through the USA Hockey Coaches Education Program (CEP). But the CEP training is a short window of time. This can be a forum where we can bring in outside speakers and educators that coaches with all levels of experience can learn from. I'd like the Coaches Committee to be a resource for one another. In person meetings, or group emails, will be ways in which we can share real world situations and collaborate on various approaches and ways to address them. We can learn from one another. Ultimately, we will create better experiences and stronger development for our players by also supporting and creating development opportunities for all SAHA Coaches.