

Dear SAHA members-

My name is Dan Bjornlie and I am asking for your vote on April 22<sup>nd</sup> to become the Boys Traveling Director of Hockey. I currently live in Lake Elmo, MN with my wife (Molly) and three children: Jake ('09 SAHA Mite-Lake Elmo Elementary), Luke ('11 SAHA Mite-Lake Elmo Elementary) and Kaylee ('14 Learn-to-Skate). My family is my absolute number one priority and hockey is a big part of our lives. Growing up in MN and now living in the Stillwater community, I know how important the hockey association is to this community.

Among other things, the position of Boys Traveling Director is responsible for selecting coaches, developing practice plans, conducting the evaluation/tryout process and overall oversight into the hockey skill development of your kids. I have been involved in the SAHA program for 6 years now coaching my two sons at the mite level, volunteering at Pony Pride and being an evaluator for both squirt and bantam teams over the past few years.

I want to first offer my background and experience in the game of hockey. I was lucky to settle back in the Stillwater community after a 13-year professional hockey career which was spent mostly in Europe. I grew up in Eagan, MN and played high school hockey there. After graduating, I then went to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and played 4 years for Jeff Sauer and Mark Johnson with the Badgers, where I was an alternate captain my senior year and graduated with a bachelor's degree in Finance from the Business School. During my time with the Badgers, we won the MacNaughton Cup ('00 WCHA Regular Season Champs) and the Broadmoor Trophy ('98 WCHA Final Five Champs) and I was honored during my time with the Badgers to win individual awards (Final 5 All-Tournament Team, Most Improved Player, Scholar-Athlete of the year, All Big-Ten Academic Team). After college, I pursued a professional career where I played for Paul MacLean (2013 Jack Adams Award as the NHL's Coach of the Year) in the Quad Cities with a short stint in Portland, ME for the Portland Pirates (AHL affiliate of the Washington Capitals) where I played for Glen Hanlon (Wayne Gretzky scored his first NHL goal against). I attended the AHL's Chicago Wolves training camp the following year with former MN Wild assistant coach John Anderson (currently assistant coach with the Phoenix Coyotes). After two years of minor hockey in the USA, I received a call from Dany Heatley's (who I played with at Wisconsin) father, Murray regarding playing in Germany. Next thing you know, I was on a flight to Munich where I played for 11 years in both the German and Austrian league where I played in Sweden, Finland, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary. During my time over there, I was lucky to play for Team USA and Peter Laviolette (Current Coach of the Nashville Predators) in the Deutschland Cup where we beat Team Canada and won gold. At age 35, I returned home to settle in the Stillwater community and helped coach the Bethel University hockey team in St. Paul for two years.

I have been around hockey my whole life. Developing a passion for the game, having organizational/team/family support, and good coaching is what allowed me to continue my career for over 30 years. I would like to lead — as the Boys Traveling Director — with the experiences I have had and incorporate them through the decision making not only as the Boys Traveling Director, but also my contribution to the board and SAHA families. The Stillwater Association is one of the top programs in the state because of the prior work the city, board, volunteers, stakeholders and families have contributed; however, I believe there is always room for improvement, and I would like to focus on the following to take it to the next level:

1. **Ice Time**-We simply need more skill development repetition. Mahtomedi or any other association should not be getting priority over Stillwater taxpayers.
2. **Volunteers/Coaching**-We need to be better and more prepared. We need more people to step up and volunteer their time and talents. Coaches need to be better organized/prepared with often times 30 kids on the ice and only 1 hour of ice time. There has to be a good flow to the practice and kids have to be moving for the full hour (no standing still).
3. **Team First Culture**-Coaches have to be teaching kids more than just the game of hockey. I like to call it "unselfish" hockey. I think this is where there is a lot of room for improvement in kid's sports in general, however it has to be a top-down approach. Shortening the bench will not be tolerated with the exception of the last few minutes of a +-1 goal tournament game. The game of hockey is too fast for short benches and long 2-3 min. shifts and we need to have a platform that develops every kid, not just the most advanced players at that particular time, but at the same time making sure the more advanced players are continuing to develop. If we're taking shifts that long, we're not playing or teaching hockey the right way.
4. **Respect the Game**-We are not going to win every game and the kids need to learn to handle both winning/losing with respect and dignity. Nobody likes losing and winning is certainly more fun, however treating the opposition/coaches/teammates with respect should be a priority of every player. Losing should be a lesson to work harder and get better! Hockey is a team sport and you win and lose as a team with class.
5. **Develop a Passion for the Game**-This is very important part of your kid's development. Our goal as an association should be to develop a love and passion for the game of hockey. We need these kid's loving the game at age 16, so we need to create a culture where they enjoy coming to the rink. If they don't, it doesn't matter what you have done as a parent, the kid won't want to play. I've seen it too many times already at the Mite level where coaches/parents are berating their kids over a mistake. For me, it's not so much about the mistake, rather the effort level and the overall enjoyment of the game.

Last, I want to thank you for reading and your consideration. I promise I will work to give your son or daughter the absolute best experience possible as a member of the Stillwater Hockey Association and appreciate your vote on April 22 at the annual board meeting from 6-8pm at the Stillwater Family Building.

Thanks,

Dan Bjornlie