

OCTOBER 2020

Dear Parents and Players:

The 2020 – 2021 season is officially underway! All our travel teams have taken the ice, and our Learn to Play Clinics kicked off this weekend. In normal times, seeing our 250 players and 40 coaches back on the ice – learning, developing, competing, and having fun – brings us tremendous joy. But in these COVID-affected times, this site is even more appreciated.

Today, we are the largest girls-dedicated program in Southern Connecticut, and we owe it all to our hard-working coaches and volunteers and the loyalty and support of our awesome Sharks families. Thank you.

Albeit with masks and COVID rules, we're excited to provide a high-quality hockey experience for our members that includes:

- 12 travel teams for girls U8 – U19
- Two Learn to Play hockey development clinics
- Participation in three leagues to provide the right competitive level for our travel teams
- Partnerships with the best area hockey resources, such as Pro Crease Goaltending, MB Sports Training, and IPH Hockey, to provide formalized, first-tier skill development
- The best goalie training program in the state
- Ongoing commitment to adding female role models through our coaching selection.

We aim to provide development opportunities, on and off the ice, allowing our members to grow as hockey players and people. Confirmation that we are getting it right is that members return season after season. We're proud to have a retention rate for eligible travel team players this year of close to 100%! Your support and loyalty are greatly appreciated.

2019-2020 ACHIEVEMENTS

Last season is worth remembering and supplied powerful momentum as we turned to this season. At the end of January, we announced our intention to merge with the Mid-Fairfield Stars to become the largest and most inclusive all-girls hockey organization in the region. It certainly caught the hockey community's attention and the support of our members. But despite our noble vision, planning, hard work, and tremendous diligence, the Connecticut Hockey Conference prohibited the proposed merger. With tryouts on the horizon, we needed to move forward as independent organizations for the 2020-2021 season. We continue to explore opportunities that allow us to offer Tier I programming to our membership.

COVID hit in mid-March and abruptly ended hockey, as we stayed home and quarantined. The good news is that except for our U14 Green team, all our CGHL teams fully participated in their state tournament. All of our national bound teams qualified for USA Hockey Regionals with the hopes of earning a spot to play in the USA Hockey National Championships, which could not

take place due to the pandemic. This was a huge disappointment for all, but our coaches were proud of their teams' hard work and overall progress during the season.

Here are some of the season's highlights:

Competitive Success

- 2 CGHL Finalists: U10 Black and U12 AAA
- 3 CHC Tier II Finalists: U14 Black, U16 Sharks/Stars, and U19 Black
- 1 Tier II CHC State Championship: U16 Sharks/Stars
- 3 New England Tier II Regional Qualifications: U14 Black, U16 Sharks/Stars, and U19 Black

Exposure & Opportunity

- 6 players selected for all-state high school team honors (SCC/FCIAC)
- 6 players committed to top boarding schools to play hockey, pushing the total to 30 such commitments since 2018
- 14 Learn to Play Clinic players graduated to travel teams

Programming & Infrastructure

- Added Coaching Director Michael Barrett, former head coach of the Quinnipiac University Women's team, and USA Hockey development camp instructor
- Launched a new website with expanded content and improved functionality
- Offered our inaugural House League season
- Expanded our opportunities for U16-19 players to 5 teams with split and full season options to accommodate high school/boarding school play
- Organized numerous fun off-ice activities, including block seats at the USA vs. Canada Rivalry Series, CT Whale ticket giveaways, tubing at Powder Ridge, and our annual hockey Helps the Hungry service program, all of which build our positive organization-wide culture

2020-2021 FOCUS

As you know, we never slow down. We strongly believe in continuous improvement and are always looking for opportunities to strengthen our organization and serve our members better.

Heading into this season, our areas of focus include:

Player Safety: Of course, safety is a priority every season. This year, its importance is heightened, given the pandemic. We've dedicated considerable time working with Northford Ice Pavilion, benchmarking other youth hockey organizations, and monitoring developments at the state and national level to ensure we take all the reasonably necessary steps to deliver a

safe environment for our families. Please note, it's critical that we, as an organization and individually, fully comply with NIP's COVID guidelines, so our players stay healthy and to minimize the risk of our season being disrupted. We will continue to publish COVID policies and procedures as needed.

Female Role Models: We are always looking to add female coaches as role models. Heading into this season, we are proud to boast nine females on our coaching staff (all of whom are former collegiate players), up from zero just six years ago. Connecticut Whale players Sarah Hughson and Brooke Wolejko, along with legendary former Shark and UMASS-Boston player, Edy Moritz, led our Fall pre-season clinic. Additionally, we have a long-standing relationship with the Quinnipiac Women's Varsity Hockey team. We hope the COVID situation improves so they can join us on the ice as in past years.

Exposure for our National Bound Team Players: Players selected to play on our Tier II National Bound teams typically aspire to play hockey in high school/boarding school and college. We provide opportunities for exposure by actively working with boarding school and collegiate coaches and participating in high-profile tournaments/showcases, such as the Beantown Classic, NAHA, and the Islander's Holiday Fest.

Top-Tier Approach to Goalie Training: We've taken our goalie training program to the next level with a renewed focus on ensuring our goalies grow and develop their craft in our trademark positive environment. Our Director of Goaltending, John Barto, in collaboration with Pro Crease, enhanced the training's resources and infrastructure to deliver a more individualized and effective experience for our goalies.

Expanded Learn to Play Clinic: We've formalized our skill progression system to put players in smaller groups following USA Hockey's ADM Model, providing more puck touches and allowing coaches to better tailor drills to a more defined skill level. Additionally, we invested in more ice time for our clinic to accommodate demand and give players more physical space to develop their hockey skills.

Continued Commitment to SafeSport: Although COVID protocols take the spotlight, we have a zero-tolerance policy for abuse and misconduct affecting player safety. All coaches, board members, and team managers are certified and receive national background screening through [USA Hockey's SafeSport Program](#). Our volunteers are trained to identify and, hopefully, prevent abuse, bullying, threatening, and hazing. All our travel teams are required to have certified locker room monitors for practices and games. Remember, cell phone usage is not allowed inside the locker room.

THANK YOU

We are excited to provide the opportunities, programming, and positive environment that motivates players to reach their full potential and has become synonymous with the Shoreline

Sharks. Indeed, the COVID -19 situation adds a new dynamic, but we are committed to adapting as needed. Know that our goal is to have players continue to play and enjoy hockey safely.

We thank the families, coaches, team managers, volunteers, and Sharks Board for their shared passion for and commitment to the sport of girls hockey and the Shoreline Sharks. We couldn't do this without you.

Enjoy the season and good luck!

Ed Rodham
President