

OCTOBER 2021

Dear Parents and Players:

As we hit our season stride, we want to pause and say thank you. Walk into Northford on a Wednesday night, and it's filled with smiling Sharks who are having fun playing travel hockey and bonding with their team. Stop by the Sand Sharks and Junior Sharks clinics on Sunday, and you will see 50+ girls ranging in age from 3 – 19 building confidence as they learn to play the sport. Your continued support and loyalty for the Shoreline Sharks allow us to deliver a high-quality and positive hockey experience for our members.

Whether it's our coaches, Board, volunteers, or operations team, our mission is to provide hockey opportunities for all our players that help them grow and reach their next desired level of play in our hallmark positive environment. Our values of teamwork, integrity, effort, accountability, and sportsmanship foster a strong, positive community and make us better people on and off the ice.

We're proud of our continued growth as an all-girls hockey association. With 300 players, 40+ coaches, 13 travel teams, two clinics, and 40+ hours of practice ice a week, we're proud of our continued growth despite the unpredictability and challenges caused by operating in a global pandemic.

A LOOK BACK

The 2020-2021 season was undoubtedly filled with starts, stops, and unexpected changes. COVID-specific protocols – masks, strict social distancing rules, arriving dressed, and the elimination of off-ice team events – changed the tone of the season and impacted the day-to-day bonding inherent in playing hockey. The State-mandated an eight-week hockey pause from mid-November through mid-January crushed the season's momentum. Thankfully, competitive play re-started on February 1st.

As the Spring arrived, USA Hockey changed the tryout timing and parameters, creating a challenging and anxiety-filled time for our players, coaches, and families. Finally, the CGHL canceled their season-ending tournament, leaving a large void in the schedule for most of our players.

We certainly showed our resilience and commitment to hockey. Families and players were diligent about following the guidelines and keeping each other safe. As a result, our players continued doing what they loved and appreciating the sense of normalcy when they were in the rink. Kudos to our coaches and team managers who were critical in delivering a great season, as they rolled with the changes and adjusted accordingly.

Despite the unusual circumstances, we had significant successes across all aspects of our program:

Programming & Infrastructure

- Hosted our largest tryouts in Shark's history with 273 participants, a testament to our strong reputation in the hockey community as a third were from outside our program
- Demonstrated loyalty to the program through retention, 99% of our eligible U8 – U16 players registering to try out for the 2021-2022 season
- Scheduled new development opportunities for players and goalies in collaboration with IPH Hockey and ProCrease Goaltending to overcome the cancellation of year-end tournaments.
- Garnered record attendance in our Junior Sharks and Sand Sharks Learn to Play Clinics
- Helped players of all levels achieve competitive success
 - U16 and U19 teams advanced to the Tier II semi-finals Beantown Classic
 - Six current players earned all-state high school team honors (SCC/FCIAC)
 - Six current players committed to play hockey at some of the country's top boarding schools, pushing the total to 36 such commitments since 2018
 - 12 current and former Sharks committed to playing in college (NESCAC, Ivy League, D3, or Club)
 - 13 Learn to Play Clinic players graduated to travel teams

Our continued growth and competitive success reflect the caliber and commitment of our coaches and operations team to provide development opportunities to all players, regardless of experience or competitive level.

A LOOK FORWARD

We are happy that the 2021-2022 season has been closer to "normal." The activities that create memories and strengthen team bonding - tournament participation, off-ice team events, and organization-wide activities - are back on the calendar, and our teams have adjusted to the CHC mandated safety precautions.

As we look to make enhancements, strengthening the organization to best serve our membership drives our focus and resources. Here are a few changes for this season:

- Increased competitive opportunities to our team structure with the addition of a new U12 Tier 1 team
- Organized three U16/19 split season teams to be aligned by high school affiliation versus our traditional Green/White designation
- Added 11 women to our coaching roster in support of our goal to surround our players with strong female role models, up from zero seven years ago
- Provide top-tier player development and goalie training program in partnership with IPH Hockey, Pro Crease, and MB Sports
- Added over 50 hours of standalone in-season skill sessions for our teams

- Designed a highly competitive tournament and showcase schedule providing our tiered players with opportunities for exposure with boarding school and collegiate coaches
- Continued focus on our grow the game initiatives through our best-in-class Learn to Play Clinic with its formalized skill progression system by adding cross-ice "game night" sessions for Sand Sharks and dedicated ice for our Junior Sharks

A critical part of our success as an organization is staying relevant, evolving, and aligned with the organization's purpose and values. A **strategic organizational priority is to expand our volunteer network in hockey operations, marketing, and Board Members**. Now that the 2021-2022 season is in progress and running smoothly, we will reach out with more details about opportunities as we look to fill our openings with like-minded individuals passionate about girls' hockey and our mission.

THANK YOU

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

Enjoy the rest of the season, and good luck!

Ed Rodham
President and Director of Hockey Operations