

Hockey is back in King

By Robert Belardi

When the darkness of night rolls around, what makes it so beautiful? There are probably a few things that come to mind. But, all in all, it's the stars. The shape, the brightness and the constellations that make it worth your while. Only when the time is right. When winter rolls around in King City, hockey is the town's brightest star; the most beautiful constellation. It's what everyone waits for. It's what every child, wakes up for every morning. If a sport, defined a town, hockey defines King City. Ask a lot of people around ? they'll agree with you. When the King Weekly Sentinel spoke with King Minor hockey president Ilya Dagenais, he said it frankly. Hockey is King City. And now, this winter, despite uncertainties surrounding the ominous COVID-19 pandemic, King Minor Hockey is returning, but in a very different way. Dagenais has been working closely with the Township of King. He says the Trisan Centre is expected to open this week and Nobleton Arena will open in three weeks. ?As it currently stands, King City arena will not open,? Dagenais added. ?As it currently stands with restrictions of 50 per building and some sanitization that needs to be done, every 60-minute ice slot turns into 90-minutes. ?Normally, in any given winter, there would be 55 usable ice hours. But now with one arena short, there's going to be a drop to roughly 35 hours a week of ice time. This season will see less ice time for the players than before due to restrictions. This year, unlike any other year, will combine King City, NobleKing and Schomberg's teams together. Registration only dropped by 20 per cent versus last year. Before entering the building, everyone must complete a COVID-19 health checklist. All members must wear a mask while entering the building at all times and for the players, they must wear a mask until the moment they hit the ice. Change rooms will not be available for use and parents will be permitted to watch their child practice for the time being. There may be changes to this, depending on the situation of the virus. As for the players and coaches, everyone will be sequestered within their own bubbles. Major and minor league players will be combined in a non-age specific bubble of a maximum of 50. Players and members of staff may not interact with other members in other bubbles. ?The first two to three weeks, depending on when we get the second pad of ice, it will all be (player) development,? Dagenais said. ?By the third week of October, somewhere around there, we'll start phasing in the house league play. ?According to the Ontario Minor Hockey Association guidelines, teams will consist of nine skaters and one goalie within the bubble. Children will compete in three-on-three or four-on-four contests once a week. It is noted, teams may be reduced depending if the size of the bubble is less than 50. Scores, standings and statistics will all be recorded not only for a fun, but also a competitive experience. While understanding this is designed to be a fun and safe experience, Dagenais also understands financial implications families might be enduring. As a result of this, he has covered all he can and expects to dig into the reserves. ?We do know from our parents, some have had a rough year with lay-offs and financial situations in the world right now. We didn't want the financial situation to be an obstacle to be able to get their kids on the ice. We made the commitment unanimously as a board that those reserves are there for a rainy day and you can't get more of a rainy day than this pandemic. ?King Minor Hockey is paying for the ice, jerseys, socks, timekeeper and referees. It's a one-stop, shop and there's no requirement for fundraising. All costs are available online on their website. Dagenais says families have indicated their appreciation for this as families look forward to enjoying a winter season of hockey.