



Skills Academy Newsletter

February 2015



Renney excited to face new challenges

By Laurence Heinen

When Tom Renney took over as Hockey Canada's president and chief executive officer in July, he welcomed the new challenges that he will face in the position.

Boasting a wealth of hockey experience at both the international and professional levels, Renney previously served as vice-president of hockey operations with Hockey Canada from 1997-99, during which time he coached Canada to a silver medal at the 1999 IIHF World Junior Championship.

"It helped me understand the width and breadth of the organization and not just from an on-ice perspective either," the native of Cranbrook, B.C., said of his previous experiences with Hockey Canada. "It was becoming more of a business at that point of time with a lot of sponsorship dollars, but also the function of partnering up with other constituents like the NHL, the NHLPA and the IIHF"

During his short time at his new job, Renney has enjoyed getting reintroduced to Hockey Canada's day-to-day operations.

"It's at a different level for sure, but I love it," said Renney, who also served as head coach of Canada's National Men's Team from 1992-94, guiding Canada to a silver medal at the 1994 Olympic Winter Games in Lillehammer, Norway. "The whole idea behind me doing this from a personal perspective was just to broaden my scope again and not be defined only as a coach quite honestly. I want to be more than that."

Back in 1999, Renney took part in the Molson Open Ice Summit on Player Development, which produced 11 recommendations for change and gave Hockey Canada the mandate to execute a plan and address those needs.

"Any time you take stock and be introspective and really ask yourselves the tough questions and then ultimately collectively start to work on solutions, it can't help but be good," said Renney, who served as an associate coach with the NHL's Detroit Red Wings in 2013-14 following head coaching stints with the Edmonton Oilers (2010-12), New York Rangers (2004-08) and Vancouver Canucks (1996-97).

One of the recommendations from the Open Ice Summit was to promote cooperative efforts between school boards, minor hockey associations and sponsors, to better utilize ice times and school facilities and move towards development of sport schools, which led to the development of the Hockey Canada Skills Academy program.

"We all see the potential for it and the ability to really put it in front of the eyes of a lot of children and a lot of families," said Renney, who took time out of his busy schedule to talk about his new position and the challenges ahead. "It's not easy to deliver the game from coast to coast to coast here, but the fact of the matter is the school system can be very helpful along those lines."

Q: How has the transition into your new position as president and CEO of Hockey Canada been?

A: It's been really good because of a great staff. Certainly the game's in good hands, no matter who's in this position, to be honest with you, as much as it requires leadership. There are just outstanding people here in the game from a staffing perspective - not just here in Calgary, but across the country and with each of our branches. To top it off, you have probably the best group of volunteers in sport in the world.

Q: What are you looking forward to the most about the position?

A: I'm looking most forward to and I think my greatest demand, my greatest responsibility is to make sure that kids are playing hockey, that the numbers do in fact increase for all the right reasons, because we did make it accessible, we have made it safe, it's not the time commitment that maybe it used to be, people are having an easier time playing the sport. That's priority No. 1 for me. The rest of it will take care of itself.

Q: How different it is this new position from coaching?

A: In lots of ways it's similar. I still feel like I'm a coach. That's kind of how I operate anyway as a leader, for lack of a better word. I like to empower people. I like to make sure I'm in communication with them, that they know exactly what it is that's expected of them and vice versa, what their expectations are of me, and I think that's kind of coaching in lots of ways. At the same time, it's different too. You're dealing more with the legislation of the game, for example, and the



bureaucracy that's involved from coast to coast to coast and how we deliver the game, no doubt about that, and then again getting reacquainted with the volunteer. You don't have an awful lot to do with volunteers when you're coaching in the NHL. So, that's been different for me, but also very enlightening.

Q: Are there experiences from your coaching career that you draw on in this position?

A: I think so. Again, it's coaching people and empowering people. I think there's certainly a level of excellence that you pursue every day and as a coach you do that. You want to make sure that your team is trained well, prepared well, organized well to have success and all of that takes interaction. It takes some type of an ability with interpersonal skills to command, demand and get the most out of all your people, but do it in a way that I think that they feel that it's fair, but also a challenge. So, that's certainly very much a lot like coaching for me. When I look back on my history as a coach, one of my better assets has been that ability to communicate with people and that's very much what we do here.

Q: How important is development, grassroots hockey and recruitment to the growth of hockey in Canada?

A: All of that is huge. Development, grassroots, recruitment – that's the game in my mind at this point in time. When you look at the history of the game and what's required of all of us in order to grow it, we have to appeal to little athletes – the little participant – more so than ever before. There's competition out there and it's not just through other sports. There's competition out there for time, there's competition out there because of technology and what kids are lining up with nowadays – what inspires them, what they enjoy to do. With that being said, we have an awful lot of work to do to make sure that kids continue to identify with sport in Canada first and foremost and in our minds the best sport to play is hockey. If we don't pay attention to doing that first and foremost as you look through the streams – the recreation stream or the competitive stream – both will diminish in

numbers if we don't really appeal to families, to new Canadians, to young people choosing to play the game in the first place.

Q: What are the differences between development and grassroots hockey?

A: Grassroots hockey is where you get your start. Development is making sure that you're providing the time, the coaching and the teaching to acquire the proper skills in order to do it for a lifetime. So, they kind of follow each other in terms of a progression through the stream of recreational or competitive hockey.

Q: If recruitment strategies bring new players and families to the game, what programs are directed at retention strategies?

A: I think every program should be geared towards retention if we're doing it properly. It doesn't matter whether it's the National Coach Certification Program, whether it's the Speak Out Program, whether it's Respect in Sport or whether it's our school programs, the bottom line is that it's all in the delivery, the sincerity behind it and the organization and preparation that goes into it. It's all about making sure that the people are the ones delivering the message and I think that's recruitment and retention. There's recruitment and retention across the board from beginning to end, quite honestly, from cradle to grave as they say. Every program is a recruitment and retention program if it's done properly and if we pay attention to why we're there in the first place.

Q: What is your impression of the Hockey Canada Skills Academy program?

A: Outstanding program and a great opportunity through the school system to deliver the game, to deliver those lifetime skills that allow you to play it forever. The fact that we have educators teaching the skills – people that have that acumen – is vital, of course. With that, there's the by-product of doing it in the first place and that's the ability to probably be more engaged scholastically and physically engaged, of course, developing leadership in kids, because of the organization and structure of our programs. To

me it's a can't-miss program. This is a holistic approach to developing our people through hockey. There may not be a better environment than the school system, to be quite honest.

Q: What value can young players experience in the HCSA school-based programs?

A: They just get an opportunity to excel, feel good about themselves, gain confidence and understand the value of discipline. Being a student-athlete is not an easy thing, but being able to juggle that is important. There's so many ways to look at our school program in terms of developing the whole person that really do a better job than we might be able to do in minor hockey. That being said, the minor hockey association is vital because of the certification of our coaches, officials and managers. So, you've got kind of a two-pronged approach here where really nobody should be left behind.

Q: What other steps should be taken to engage the school system in grassroots hockey?

A: Just continue to reach out and involve ourselves in the tutelage of kids and the education of educators and how we can use hockey to deliver great people to our citizenship in general. I think the big thing for us is to make sure that we show an open mind to how school can house the sport for us and make sure that we identify with pilot programs across the country to allow us to do that even better.

Q: What challenges face Hockey Canada in your efforts to grow the game of hockey in Canada – now and in the future?

A: The biggest challenge that we have is to make sure that hockey appeals to everyone – boys and girls. I think we've got to make sure that with that we make the game accessible in terms of keeping costs to a minimum, that we can keep the game accessible with respect to the time it takes to participate as a family, making sure that we pay close attention to the safety of the game and that it can be played in a safe environment. ■



Rising through the ranks

By Laurence Heinen



By the time he entered high school, Dean Stewart showed he has what it takes to play hockey at a high level.

That didn't stop Stewart from enrolling in the Portage Collegiate Institute Hockey Academy in Grade 10 last year.

Born and raised in Portage la Prairie, Man., Stewart took up the game at an early age and rose through the minor hockey ranks to play for the Central Plains Bantam AAA Capitals in the 2012-13 season. His solid play prompted the Saskatoon Blades to select the right-handed defenceman in the sixth round (127th overall) of the 2013 Western Hockey League Bantam Draft.

Although he cracked the roster of the Central Plains Midget AAA Capitals last season, Stewart still believed he needed to hone his skills some more, which led to his decision to enrol in the PCI Hockey Academy.

"It's really made a huge difference," said the Grade 11 student at PCI. "It doesn't matter what skill level you are, it's going to benefit you a lot. It allowed me to use some of the skills that I wasn't as familiar with in games."

Instructor Blaine Boyle said that Stewart possesses an immense drive to take his game to a high level.

"He's always pushing the pace at practice and he's always asking questions," Boyle said. "He's kind of like the ideal student, the guy that you really want to have in it, because he's got the skill and he's got the work ethic. He's just like a sponge trying to pick up information. It's a real treat to work him all the time. It's shown in his game. He's really improved over the last year and should be a really good junior player and who knows, maybe even a pro."

In turn, Stewart complimented Boyle for helping improve his skills.

"I have nothing but good things to say about him," said the 6-foot-1, 180-pound rearguard, who

has played for both the Portage Terriers of the Manitoba Junior Hockey League and the Midget AAA Capitals this season. "He's really good at bringing new drills into the academy.

"He'll incorporate drills where you get to work on different things and certain drills where you're only allowed to pass on your backhand or it has to be a saucer pass or backwards skating or walking the line. Whatever the goal is to work on that day, he'll make drills where it incorporates the skills that you're supposed to be working on."

Stewart played the first three months of the season with the Terriers – the No. 1 ranked team in the Canadian Junior Hockey League – before being returned to the Midget AAA Capitals.

"To be able to use some of the skills that I developed and got comfortable with in the hockey academy, if I didn't have the academy to be honest with you I don't know if I would have started with the Terriers," said Stewart, who will return to the Terriers following the completion of his season with the Capitals.

The Terriers, who boasted an impressive 42-2-2 record as of Jan. 15, will host the 2015 RBC Cup, Canada's National Junior A Championship, at the PCU Centre from May 9-17.

"The year they're having is pretty remarkable," Stewart said. ■



Teachers vs. students

a success at St. Timothy High School

With the excitement of the holiday season about to begin and families packing up to head out on vacation, St. Timothy High School staff and Hockey Canada Skills Academy students took to the ice at Spray Lake Sawmills Family Sports Centre in Cochrane, Alta.

An annual highlight of the school year for the academy, this year it was decided to make the game a major fundraising effort, with all funds raised donated to the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre in Calgary.

The staff team included 13 male and female teachers, along with Kennedy, a former IIHF World Junior Championship gold medallist, and Canada's National Women's Team forward Jessica Campbell.

The student team consisted of 21 of the 24 junior high students registered in the academy.

The stands at the Spray Lake Sawmills Family Sports Centre were full, with more than 150 staff and students from St. Timothy, as well as fans from the Cochrane hockey community.

As part of the fundraising efforts, St. Timothy graciously received a number of donations, including an autographed Boston Bruins jersey courtesy of Bruins defenceman Adam McQuaid, an autographed Ottawa Senators jersey courtesy of Senators head coach Dave Cameron, two tickets to a Calgary Flames game courtesy of St. Timothy teacher Michelle Fior, and apparel courtesy of the Flames organization.

Through a raffle at the school, St. Timothy was able to raise \$2,000 to be donated to the Sheldon Kennedy Child Advocacy Centre.

In the end, the St. Timothy staff was able to squeak out a 15-12 victory in a high-scoring, entertaining and extremely enjoyable game to start off the holiday break. With the success of this game the past two years, it will certainly be part of the St. Timothy calendar moving forward.

Thanks to all who attended! ■



HCSA operators survey



We would like to thank all the operators that took the time to fill out our survey online. Hockey Canada would like to congratulate Bill Bradford of Centre Dufferin District High School for winning the autographed Marie-Philip Poulin 2014 Olympic Hockey Canada Jersey. A detailed report will follow shortly but here are 5 facts about the HCSA programs across the country:

Student of the game

By Laurence Heinen

Jacob Campol has noticed a remarkable improvement in his hockey skills over the past four seasons.

The 12-year-old Grade 7 student attributes most of that development to his time spent at the Hockey Canada Skills Academy at Osoyoos Elementary School.

"I think it's great," said Campol, who started with the program in Grade 4. "I've improved a lot. I've gained a lot more skill. I can skate faster. I've gotten some more confidence."

Campol said he enjoys all aspects of hockey from honing simple skills like passing and shooting to learning the best techniques to perfecting cross-overs.

"I just enjoy getting better at it - improving and going out on the ice," he said. "I learn hockey skills and then there's the confidence part of it - leadership, exercise and it's a bit of a physical workout"

Instructor Dean Rowland explained that Campol isn't a "typical minor hockey kid" and that he gets the majority of his on-ice experience at the Osoyoos Hockey Academy.

"He is also an academically gifted student who is very analytical," Rowland explained. "Over the past three years and into this one, he has used his classroom skills on the ice to improve his hockey skills. He has great listening skills as well as the ability to think about the bio mechanics of the skills we work on. He then can self-assess and make adjustments depending on instructor feedback."

Campol has enjoyed learning the finer points of the game from Rowland.

"I think he's great," Campol said. "He's my teacher too. He works on our technique a bit - how to

skate a bit faster, how to shoot better."

Being one of the older students, Campol has taken on a bigger leadership role with the academy this year.

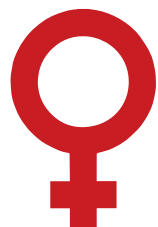
"It's a bit different," he said. "You just have to be a good role model - don't goof off or anything."

In his final year at Osoyoos Elementary School, Campol is looking forward to the hockey academy's annual event where he can show off his skills in front of his teachers and classmates.

"We have the Charity Classic coming up right before spring break, which is a game we play in front of the whole school," he explained. "There's a food drive with it. We've done it every year. The kids have to bring one food item to come. Pretty much the whole school is there and we play a full-length game."

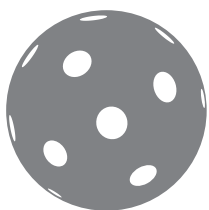
Jacob's dad Mike Campol said he's excited to see his son lace up the skates to take part in the Charity Classic.

"It'll be interesting when they play the charity game at the end of this year," Mike said. "I noticed last year he was engaging a lot more in that game. A lot of that came from confidence. Maybe that might be a turning point where he might be interested in playing in a house league." ■



16%

of all registered players are females



60%

of HCSA programs use Floorball in their off-ice sessions



70%

of HCSA offer more than 50 hours of ice time in their program



40%

of HCSA programs contract a goalie instructor



50%

of HCSA programs have at least 3 instructors on the ice during an instructional session.