

When Hockey Started in Parry Sound

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Hockey for kids started in Parry Sound as early as 1930 with the formation of a Bantam League. Until then organized hockey was played mostly by adults and Junior aged players. After the arena burnt in 1942 there was no organized hockey of any type played. All hockey was played on outdoor rinks.

When the Memorial Arena was opened in 1949, hockey of all types started to boom. The person most responsible for the organizing of minor hockey was Bill Peachey. The numbers of players grew from less than 100 in the late 1940's and by the mid 50's the numbers had risen to nearly 400 players.

The original constitution for the Parry Sound Hockey Club was signed by Alex Eager, Carl Groskorth, and John Murdock on February 28, 1953.

In the beginning the arena was leased from the Town and was run by the Hockey Club through volunteer work. The Town paid for the utilities and the capital costs of the Arena.

Originally most of the hockey was recreational league hockey and where you lived in the town determined what team you played on. Teams from Nobel and McKellar were included in the recreational league from the beginning. Once on a team, you always played on that team, so if you were a Squirt Canadian you then played for the Pee Wee Canadians. The registration fee was \$2.00 and the players insurance was the responsibility of the parent. IN 1953 the Juveniles advanced to All Ontario finals and lost to Elmira.

In 1956 William Peachey became the convener of Muskoka Parry Sound District of the Little NHL and the Little NHL tournament was organized in Parry Sound for the first time. Unfortunately all Parry Sound's teams had been eliminated in the district qualifying tournament in Gravenhurst. Also in 1956, Prime Minister recreational league proclaimed the week of February 4th -9th as Minor Hockey week in Canada with the slogan" Take Your Son to the Rink, Don't Send Him", a tradition that still continues.

All Star teams began to boom in the mid 50's. It was about this time that future NHL'er Terry Crisp moved to Parry Sound from Capreol. He led the 1958/59 Midgets to the OMHA All Ontario Midget finals, losing to St Mary's in five games.

In 1957 Bobby Orr began his hockey career as a Minor Squirt but was quickly stepped up to the Squirts as a Squirt Ranger in the house league. By 1960 it became evident of Orr's ability and Alec Eager and the Hockey Club executive decided to hire Bucko McDonald as the head coach for all the All Star teams in Parry Sound.

Beginning in 1960, through the work of ex Winnipeg resident Murray McKenna two Winnipeg teams stopped over in Parry Sound to play exhibition games. This tradition continued for four years.

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After the hiring of McDonald, Parry Sound had a string of very successful years with Orr and other players playing on as many as three rep teams at one time. Along with Orr such players as Neil Clairmont, Terry Ainslie, Roddy Bloomfield, Roger Galipeau and Jimmy Whittaker added to some extremely strong teams in the Pee Wee, Bantam and Midget divisions. In 1960/61 the Parry Sound Bantams won Parry Sound's first Little NHL Championship in Midland. A feat they repeated in the 1961/62 season in Bowmanville.

Under the leadership of Bucko McDonald, Parry Sound won their first two All Ontario Championships, in 1962 the Pee Wees and Bantams won and the Midgets were Finalists. In 1963 the Juveniles were Champions and in 1964 the Midgets won another title.

In the 1961/62 season, Nobel teams won 4 of the 5 Town League Championships. Approximately 250 spectators were on hand at the Memorial Arena to see the Championship games.

In 1961/62 was Parry Sound's was Parry Sound's most successful season as they won OMHA Championships in the Pee Wee and Bantam divisions and the Midgets were finalists. It was after the 1962 Season that Bobby Orr went to Oshawa to play Junior "A" and then to the Boston Bruins and became in all Parry Sounders opinion the greatest players of all time. Bobby was joined a year later in Oshawa by Jimmy Whittaker.

The 1970's were lean years for Parry Sound Minor Hockey as hockey was interrupted twice because of the arena being condemned in 1964 and the Memorial Arena burning down in July, 1973, causing teams to either play outdoors or travel elsewhere for their ice time.

In the 1980's the Shamrocks began to show some success as the Juveniles were "BB" finalists in 1984, in 1988 the midgets were "CC" finalists, and finally in 1989 the Pee Wees became All Ontario "BB" Champions.

The 1990's proved to be the most successful decade for Parry Sound Minor Hockey as they were All Ontario Champions seven times and finalists six times. The Champions were:

- 1993 Midget "B"
- 1995 Midget "B"
- 1995 Juvenile "B"
- 1996 Bantam "B"
- 1996 Novice AE3
- 1997 Midget "B"
- 1999 Juvenile "BB"

and the Finalists were

- 1990 Pee Wee "CC"
- 1991 Atom "B"
- 1992 Atom "B"
- 1994 Midget "B"

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- 1996 Midget "B"
- 1997 Midget AE3

In the new millennium the Hockey Club has shown some success, coming close numerous years and making it to the winners circle only once, that being in 2004 when the Novices won the "BB" title. In 2002 the Novice, Atom, and Midgets made it to finals, in 2003 the Pee Wees, in 2004 the Pee Wees again, in 2006 the Atoms and the Midgets, and in 2009 the Atoms all made it to the All Ontario Finals.

In addition Parry Sound teams have won three International Silver Stick Tournaments

- 1989 Pee Wee "B"
- 1993 Midget "B"
- 2001 Midget "B"