

Hespeler Minor Hockey - Celebrating 80 years of Hockey in the Community

Originally By Paul Langan, December 1st, 2012



I always get a kick when some city wins Hockeyville Canada or claim to be a hockey town. You would be hard pressed to find anywhere in Canada the hockey tradition that is associated with the community of Hespeler and the Hespeler Minor Hockey Association.

As early as 1910 photos exist of new Irish “home children” immigrants to Canada playing hockey on the Coombe residence on Guelph Avenue.



In the photo you will notice the kids using hockey sticks made a block away at the Hespeler Wood Specialties factory. Opening in 1905, it still operates as Heritage Wood Specialties Incorporated. It is the oldest operating hockey stick factory in the world.



In the 1960s and 70s you would be hard pressed to find someone that did not use a Hespeler brand hockey stick made at the Sheffield street plant.

Before the Ontario Minor Hockey Association (OMHA) was formed, local teams from around the Hespeler area like Beavertdale and Roos Hill played each other in the 1920s. Here is a photo of the Roos Hill team from 1922.



It is noted that the Hespeler Minor Hockey Association (HMHA) in the 1945-46 OMHA Manual of Operations listed the Hespeler Juvenile "B" and Hespeler Midget "B" teams as having competed in the 1944-45 season. However further research from OMHA archivist Jim Kinkley revealed that the HMHA is significantly older than that.

He uncovered [a player list for a Hespeler Juvenile team](#) for the 1936-37 season. From this it can be determined that the Hespeler Minor Hockey Association first appeared in OJHA (OMHA) competition as early as the 1936-37 season.

This indicates that the Hespeler Minor Hockey organization is in the 76th year of operations.

This would mean that Hespeler is one of the oldest organizations in the OMHA which first formed in the 1934-35 season.



In the early days they played on the open air rink on Kribs Street. The original arena was built in 1947 and replaced with the double pad rink on Ellis Road West. It is hard to estimate how many youth played their house league and travel hockey in the HMHA.

People in Hespeler today remember playing HMHA house league in the late 1940s. That would mean there has been over six decades of youth playing lacing up the skates to playing house league hockey. Add on the hundreds of travel teams the HMHA has entered since 1936 and you have thousands of youth who have played minor hockey in Hespeler.

COMPETITIVE TEAMS

The travel teams in HHMA have captured approximately [40 OMHA championships and finalists league titles](#). Below is a photo of the 1947 Hespeler Juvenile team.



Here is a photo of the Hespeler Midet "A" OMHA Champions from 1969



HESPELER OLYMPICS

The HMHA is well known for its Hespeler Olympics tournament that has been held for the last 50 plus years. They have also added a March House League Tournament the last 6 years.

Hockey superstar Wayne Gretzky had one of his many legendary hockey moments while playing at the HMHA Olympics.

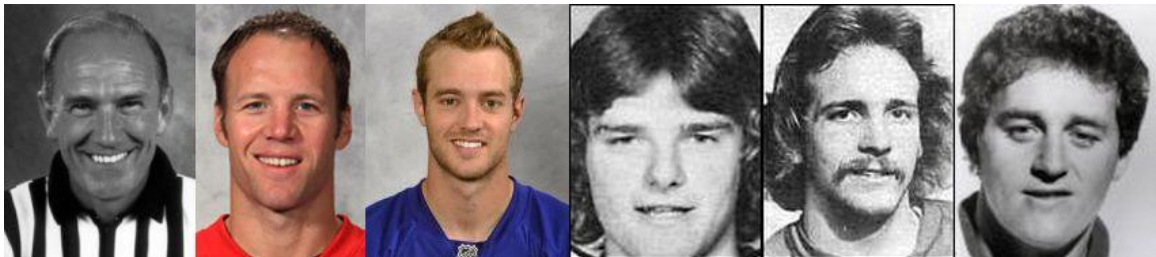
In the Olympics of 1970-1971, Wayne played 9 games, scored an amazing 50 goals and gathered 16 assists.



HESPELER IN THE NHL

Even before the HMHA, Hespeler native Clarence “Dolly” Dolson was a goaltender from the then Detroit Cougars of the NHL in the 1928-1930 seasons.

The HMHA has a rich history of players who were in the National Hockey League including: Paul Woods, Kirk Maltby, Ken Ellacott and Red Laurence, as well as NHL linesman Bob Hodges. Even today, Hespeler’s favourite son, Tim Brent played for the Toronto Maple Leafs and other big league teams.



HESPELER MINOR HOCKEY NOW

The Hespeler Minor Hockey Association today has a complete Learn to Play and house league program from CHIP through to Juvenile Divisions. Their travel teams complete in the OMHA

Like many hockey associations, the HMHA are faced with the challenge of getting people new to the community and who are unfamiliar with hockey to come out and try the sport.

With over 80 years of providing hockey to local youth, Hespeler Minor Hockey Association has a proven record that will help them today and in the future continue to give youth a chance to learn this great game of hockey in a fun and safe environment.

