

## OMHA BASE CATEGORY “A” REPORT

NOV 2022

### ISSUE:

- The OMHA has announced that St. Marys Minor Hockey has been recategorized to the base category “A” for the 2023-24 season
- This change only affects OMHA based programing (ie. Boys hockey only)
- SMMHA has the option to file an appeal with the OMHA to maintain “B” categorization before Dec 31<sup>st</sup> 2022
- The result of the potential appeal would be announced by March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023
- SMMHA can file a base category appeal for any future season, ie. This decision is not final if it is not appealed for the 2023-24 season

### SMMHA SCHEDULE:

- September 13th general meeting, introduction and discussion of the issue
- October 4<sup>th</sup> general meeting, answer any questions/concerns arising from the September meeting, further discussion of the issue
- November 1st general meeting, final discussion on the issue and vote whether to accept or appeal OMHA’s decision (if ready)
- December 6<sup>th</sup> general meeting: Motion and vote. One of 2 motions will need to be brought forward:
  - o 1. accept the OMHAs base category reclassification without further action or
  - o 2. appeal OMHA's decision to reclassify SMMH.

### HISTORY:

- OMHA has a policy in place to review base category categorization every 5 years.
- Due to COVID, the review has been delayed, however OMHA is preparing to conduct a full review of base categorization in 3 years
- SMMHA has historically (pre-COVID) seen growth in the program numbers and has had success with many teams competing well at our current classification level. Registration numbers and competitiveness are 2 items that OMHA considers when reclassifying a center.

### POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF BASE CATEGORY ‘A’ ON SMMHA PROGRAMMING:

- Base category “A” centers must run “minor” and “major” 1<sup>st</sup> entry representative programing at all age groups (eg. U10A, U11A, U12A, U13A etc.)
  - o A center can appeal to have a specific team/cohort placed in another category either higher or lower on an annual basis, similar to what SMMHA did with U16A for 2022/23 season
- Each 1<sup>st</sup> entry Rep team has the option to carry up to 3 Non-Resident Passport (NRP) players from other centers, these players can be cuts from “AA or above” or players from “below A” that wish to tryout with our teams. NRP players can be accepted/rejected on a per team basis
  - o NRP Players must tryout for the top Rep team in their age group and return to their home center if cut
  - o Unlimited NRP players can tryout, but only 3 can be signed by each team

- SMMHA Players who do not make a Rep team in St. Marys are entitled to a “Reverse NRP” to go and tryout with another centers’ top Rep team. A player can only tryout at 1 other center and must return to home center if cut.
- NRP Players only apply to U12 and above, U11 and below must play in home center
- If SMMHA runs 2<sup>nd</sup> entry Rep teams (formerly ‘AE’ more recently ‘C’) they would now be categorized ‘BB’ (formerly known as AE1 and AE2), these teams could be formed with “major” and “minor” aged players as they are now, and would ONLY play against other 2<sup>nd</sup> entry rep teams from other A centers.
- Current Local League (LL) programming would not be impacted by a change to “A”
- Current size of our program may make it difficult to run a major team, a minor team, a 2<sup>nd</sup> entry rep team and a local league team at each level.

### FACTORS FOR CONSIDERATION

- OMHA is planning to run an ‘A’ loop for 2023/24 that will consist of Tillsonburg, Dorchester, Mt. Brydges, Strathroy, St. Marys. 2024/25 would see the addition of St. Thomas. OMHA has expressed optimism that other ‘A’ centers such as New Hamburg might move to this new league
- OMHA has been strongly recommending for a few years that small associations start to look at amalgamation to form regional ‘A’ programs in an effort to offer more complete programming. So far, the associations in the Shamrock region have been resistant to this idea despite many other regions in the province making these changes.
- Base category ‘A’ centers have the option to run 2<sup>nd</sup> Rep “BB” teams or “MD” teams. MD is a regionally restricted category (like rep) that typically doesn’t have body checking at U15 and above. SMMHA would need to align with the other centers in the creation of any 2<sup>nd</sup> rep teams.
- If we were to appeal, and remain as a “B” center, it does not change the outcome that our 2<sup>nd</sup> entry rep teams (classified as C) would still be forced to play 1<sup>st</sup> entry rep teams from other C centers.
  - The issue resulting in this structure is a separate issue that SMMHA has also expressed concerns to OMHA about, and we currently have a motion in front of the OMHA competition committee seeking change, to create a more appropriate competitive matching for all players. It is not likely to see change on this matter in the 2023-2024 season.
- SMMHA currently does not accept any NRP players from other centers unless the addition of those players specifically helps to stabilize the overall numbers of an age group.

PROS	CONS/CONCERNS
Less travel than current Shamrock loops	Competitive concerns due to our current size
SMMHA will be moving with the same “BB” centers we have competed with for the last numbers of years	Will SMMHA numbers grow? – Based on municipal and census forecasts... Not likely
2 <sup>nd</sup> Rep teams aren’t in “C” playing 1 <sup>st</sup> rep teams	SMMHA will attract more interest from NRP players (based on opinion, see pros)
SMMHA will attract more interest from NRP players (based on opinion, see cons)	Could be more challenging to find new coaches for cohorts as there could be minimal turnover year to year

SMMHA could be ahead of the amalgamation movement – becoming a topic with many centers	OMHA needs SMMHA to be “A” for the next few years
SMMHA has been competing at this level in Silver Stick for years	NRP Players are only available at U12 and above
The number of “A” teams in the province and area is likely to grow due to amalgamation	Some cohorts will struggle to have any success at this level...with only 9 years of eligibility it’s tough to sacrifice any seasons to try this out

#### **PROPOSED “B” CENTERS IN SHAMROCK FOR 2023/24**

Based on the OMHA’s proposed recategorizations the following centers will be competing in the “B” category for 2023/24:

- Lambton Shores, Ilderton, South Huron, Mooretown, Petrolia, Lambeth

Notes of interest:

- Mitchell requested to be moved from B to C for this season and were denied
- Collingwood requested to be moved from “BB” to “A” and were approved

#### **SMMHA REGISTRATION FORECAST**

This is an excerpt from a report prepared for SMMHA by the Town of St. Marys CAO, Brent Kittmer.

**Based on the data shown below the following population conclusions can be made for the Town of St. Marys:**

The Town is growing and has adopted a more aggressive growth target for the community as compared to its historical experience. However, this growth is occurring in older adults, and the Town’s youth population is in fact declining. This was first observed in the Town’s 2017 Recreation and Leisure Master plan which stated: “A closer look at St. Marys’ age profile reveals additional evidence of an aging community. Between the 2011 and 2016 Census, the majority of growth occurred among residents over the age of 50.” The Town’s growth profile reported in the 2021 census only further supports this observation and shows that the Town’s youth population that would support minor sports is in decline:

	<b><u>2011</u></b>	<b><u>2016</u></b>	<b><u>2021</u></b>
Children (0-9 years)	735	770	660
Youth (10-19 years)	805	820	810

Adults (20-34 years)	1075	1175	1120
Mature Adults (35-49)	1295	1245	1245
Older Adults (50-69)	1765	2055	2180
Seniors (70+)	985	1195	1375

This trend of youth decline and older population growth is not expected to change soon. The Town is an attractive community to move to, and the Town Planning department reports an increase in the number of building projects within the community. Town staff are reporting that those families moving to Town into new builds are typically from larger centres and in the 50+ age bracket. These observations are supported by the 2021 Census data above which shows continued growth in this demographic.

Growth in the younger populations is not expected to increase in the near term. As with many communities in Canada, the Town has a housing affordability issue and organizations like the United Way and the City of Stratford Housing are flagging concerns that prices may be unattainable for young families. The 2021 Census data seems to reflect these observations showing a population decline in the age brackets reflective of young families. Combined with a stagnated local birth rate reported by the Avon Maitland School Board, it does not appear as though any data supports a conclusion that there will be near-term growth in the Town's youth population that would support minor sports.

DRAFT – CENTER COMPARISON CHART								
CENTER	REGISTRATION 19-20	REGISTRATION 22-23	TEAM NUMBER BREAKDOWN (Per Center Websites Oct 24/2022)					
			U9	U11	U13	U15	U18	TOTAL
Dorchester	416 (513 in 21-22)	405	4	4	4	4	5	20
Tillsonburg		392 (80-U18)	3	4	4	4	5	20
St. Thomas	560		4	6	6	6	5	27
Strathroy	418	350	3	3	4	4	4	19
Mt. Brydges	486	600-700 est.	7	6	6	4	4	27
New Hamburg			6	7	7	6	7	32
St. Marys	350	310	3	3	3	3	2	14
Ilderton	307	357	4	4	3	3	3	17
South Huron	297	280	3	3	3	3	3	15
Lucan	236		3	3	2	2	2	12
Mitchell		244	2	3	2	2	3	12
Tavistock		290	2	4	3	2	2	13

**\*Historically, OMHA has used the target of 500 registrations as an unofficial marker for A level classification**

**\*Registration numbers do include all female players registered in U5 and U7 hockey (30 for St.Marys Minor hockey 2022-2023 season).**