

K.B.H.L.ORG

League History



From 1970-71 to 1995-96... that's a quarter of a century of recreational, church-oriented hockey... IT'S THE KAWARTHA FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST HOCKEY LEAGUE'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY!

The seed-thoughts were sown the previous winter, when a few exhibition games involving guys from the Cannington, Fenelon Falls, and Little Britain Churches.

In late October on 1970, Ed Barkey and Roy Good representing a team ready to play from Cannington Baptist Church...

Pastor Goodhand and Jim Jackett on behalf of a line-up from Fenelon Falls Baptist Church..

and Lloyd Graves and Art Barkey of Lindsay's William street Baptist Church squad, met to formulate a few playing rules and a schedule for the coming winter.

On that occasion it was spelled out what the 3-fold aim of the league would be: 1. To provide another vehicle for evangelism 2. To open doors for church-going fellows, teens and men who have no opportunity to play organized hockey. 3. To present an alternative to Sunday hockey!

The initial schedule featured a double home on home format

And on Nov 17 the opening game of the season saw Fenelon host Lindsay. Newly-appointed Referee-in-Chief, the late Carl Sornberger, officiated. The score was 2-2.

Greg Mckenzie of Lindsay won the scoring hours with 9 goals. That first campaign saw games comparatively free of penalties, with the bulk of skaters having either no minutes in the sin-bin, or a paltry two minutes to pay for their misdemeanors.

Cannington were the first champions. They actually tied in points with Lindsay, but the rule-of-thumb is that the team with more goals in that situation is given the nod. At a rather informal banquet that spring they were presented with a trophy donated by Sider Jewelers of Fenelon Falls.

Jim Connelly, then a candidate for missionary service, and a former member of the Allan Cup Champion Chatham Maroons, and a member of Canada's 1960 Olympic team was the guest speaker for the occasion.

Even though it was agreed that it was a successful first season, the league nearly expired before the commencement of the proposed second year. Cannington decided not to enter a team, and Little Britain, while interested, could not come up with a full compliment of players.

But the plans were salvaged, when a few from those two churches, plus the overflow of the Lindsay squad, joined together to form the "Combines".

Both this team, and the Lindsay contingent made the old Oakwood rink their home ice. Built in 1920, it was one of the first enclosed arenas in the area. The ice surface was small, and the lights hanging from the lowly-strung rafters often seemed to be targets for shots higher than the skaters heads.

The remainder of the matches were staged in the comparatively-modern Fenelon Falls facility. They DID find an advantage or two since the arena manager was the netminder that winter.

The guys from the cataract village captured the Sider trophy with double the points of their nearest rivals, again based on the season standings, with no play-offs. Team member Freddie Jones topped all scorers with 24 goals in 8 games, with no minutes in penalties.

Maintaining the organization during that uncertain period paid off. Because when the 1972-73 schedule was struck, Cannington was back in full force; their arena, and Fenelon Falls, provided the necessary ice time for the league. This 2-rink format carried on for several seasons.

Little Britain now boasted a full roster.

...and Port Perry led by the Payne brothers, and a future brother in law, Mark Scott, iced a competitive sextet!

This time Lindsay, now Fairview Baptist, sporting their Boston Bruin replica jerseys, weren't taking any chances of tying anyone in the standings, winning every contest rather handily. It didn't hurt that Greg McKenzie again was in full stride, bulging the twine 31 times in only 7 games.

Strangely enough, even after their banner year they didn't compete in 1973-74! SO, was Little Britain's year. Only their 2nd season in the loop, everything clicked just right, and they lost only 2 games. Gord Archer and Ron Gilson tied for the scoring lead with 14 goals each, and Ron became the first to have his name engraved on the new trophy recognizing the scoring champ.

For the first time an "All Star" game was scheduled following the regular schedule, with Champion Little Britain taking on the best of the other 3 line-ups. The team reps voted on those choices.

During the off-season something happened which would affect the KFBHL for the next 21 years! The Michel family began attending the Baptist church in Port Perry, and joined the Black and Gold for the first time. Rob tended the net expertly,...the defense was tightened with Ed and Harry guarding the blue line, and John and Bert knew how to put the puck in the net.

As well as winning the scoring crown, John became the first recipient of the Most Gentlemanly-Player Award. He had 17 tallies and no penalty minutes.

Brother Rob won the goalie trophy with a stingy 2.0 goals against average..

These honours were presented at an awards banquet, which by now had become an established part of the leagues format.

Incidentally, they ended up in first place, and took home the recently redesigned Sider Trophy, the handiwork of Chris MacAleese.

Chris also fashioned the new designs of the rest of the individual player awards!

Over the years various formats were tried regarding officiating the games. At first players from the home team were responsible, and from time to time OMHA referees were engaged. Then players not active on a given night were handling the whistle-toting duties. Occasionally things got really desperate.

In the late 70's Chris MacAleese was made referee in chief, and he and Pastor Goodhand looked after most of the games.

But neutral, trained officials proved to be the best, and that remains the approach even to this day!

The same 5 teams, Cannington, Fenelon Falls, Lindsay, Little Britain, and Port Perry took to the ice for the 6th campaign with the Lake Scugog gang having an even more successful regular season.

But this was the first year for play-offs, and Lindsay surprised regular seasons victors with their 2nd crown in 4 years.!

A new trophy for the League's Best Defenseman, donated by the Mabley family, in memory of the untimely death of the daughter, Laurie Ann, was awarded to Lindsay's Ron Eastman.

But Port Perry owned the rest of the decade, winning 4 titles in a row. Strengthened by a scoring whiz, Dave Harris, they ended each season on top, and breezed through the play-offs as well.

But all was not predictable! Cannington withdrew from competition for several seasons... and Peterborough, with a new athletic young pastor, David Payne joined the on -ice fellowship in 1977-78.

Not a few will remember when big Ian Armstrong pulled on the white and red sweater. Seeing him coming toward you on the ice was like being met by a one-man herd of buffalo. It was a good thing he had a gentle spirit.

That same year Little Britain and Lindsay joined forces for the second version of the “Com-bines”. Like their predecessors, they found themselves looking up... to the rest in the standing! In 1980-81 Fairview was back in place, but no one represented the Sports Capital of the Kawarthas.

The 80's began with a first... one church with 2 teams. With their congregation growing, Port Perry divided their talent into the Juniors and Seniors, with the latter donning the colours of the Chicago Black Hawks. But the old black and gold still held the victory magic for 2 more years.

Lindsay became the next KFBHL dynasty, winning it all for 3 seasons in a row. With Dave Harris switching uniforms, and former pro Dusty Papke (Papkey) wearing the big “C” on his sweater, they overpowered even Port’s strong rosters.

After 16 years of unbroken representation Fenelon dropped out of the circuit. But a more serious concern had developed. The long-lasting fraternity once more stood on shaky ground. This time it was not related to man-power, but to “won’t power”! Play began to get chippy...

Then downright over-competitive. The Kawartha Association of Fellowship Churches took steps by forming a hockey supervising committee and making the League accountable to that body.

In a fast-moving game like hockey it will always be difficult to remove every knee-jerk (or elbow jerk) reaction. Discipline has had to be periodically handed down... but that intervention made an improvement!

But all the damage has not been restricted to the over-exuberance of opposition players. This enthusiastic competitor nearly launched himself right out of his trousers. He forgot his wife’s warning: “You rip-eh-dees, you mend-ah-dees!”

In 1985-86 Port Perry made a come-back. At one time they not only had three teams, but between those 3 they made another run of three straight Sider Trophy wins.

Meanwhile Little Britain returned to the scene...

And Cannington re-organized, taking a page out of Port Perry’s book. The desire of some guys from Fair Havens Community church to get involved in the Christian league, fostered the formation of two teams. The Gold team accommodated some of the Fair Haven’s skaters...

And the Red club was fondly called the “Farmer’s Team”, because they found it almost impossible to make the early time slot at the arena’s due to chore duty around the barn.

In 1990-91 the Golds became strictly the Fair Havens contingent, and had their uniforms altered to fit the change.

Meanwhile that farmers forum had copped the cup two years running.

Peterborough re-entered the competition in the fall of '91, after a two year sabbatical,... and, much to everyone's surprise the gang from the shores of Lake Scugog iced only one lineup that same year.

Lindsay earned the victors honours that winter... and by now the bulk of the trophies were also awarded were given to teams rather than individuals,... another measure to cut down on creeping emphasis on competitiveness!

After an absence of 8 seasons, in 1992-93, the green and gold from Fenelon Falls entered the fray once more, sporting brand new uniforms.

Little Britain followed suit, and Port Perry returned to twin representation once again, with the Red and White teams entering strong line-ups as usual! But with the closure of the Peterborough church, the guys with the Edmonton Oilers jerseys were forced to withdraw.

One after another... first Ports white Squad...

..then the red... they had the honour of standing at center ice when the play-offs were over, to receive the applause which goes along with accepting the Championship trophy! Cannington won the consolation recognition in '93, and Fenelon in '94.

Those flashy Black, Blue and Silver Tampa Bay lightning replica sweaters, worn by Little Britain during their second year back, were missed as the 1994-95 scheduled 6 teams for competition. Port Perry 2 (more easily remembered as the Red Team) out-distanced their nearest rivals by 6 points during the regular season. But as is often the case, in the round robin playoffs that second place squad, Fenelon Falls, squeaked out the best record, winning top honours for the first time in 23 years.

A good-news, bad news scenario, the only individual trophy which is still presented, was won by Goalie Bobby Elliot from the Falls. I turned out to be the last season for him,... only in his early 30's, a chronic heart problem forced him to hang up his pads for good. At least he went out on a winning note, earning the goalie trophy for best average over regular season play.

Another human interest note is worth sounding. Over the years several father-son combinations have graced the rosters of KFBHL teams. First it was Neil and Larry Berry of Little Britains, followed by Fenelon's Pastor Goodhand and Jeff.

Lindsay have had the most such connections: Lloyd and Warren Graves, Don Wilson and his 3 sons: Steve, Mark & Tim: Clarke Zealand with Clarke Jr., Mike, And Matthew, Wayne Wilson with Kirk and Brad; Chuck Rainey and Chris; and Bill & Brian Donnan.

Port Perry has not been far behind with Michel family boasting 4 such combination: John, with Steve & Jonathan; Harry and William, Bert and Nathan, as well as Rob with Jeremy.

Fenelon Falls's family trees have included; Pastor Scott with Steve, Dave and John Colvert, Neil and Dan Sedore, and Dennis and Jason Sedore.

Pete Yates has two siblings which help to keep him young... Tim and Nathan. Its hard to get away with, "do as I say, not as I do", when a dad is on display like that.

...and Dave and Richard Cheel are current teammates with Cannington.

Besides the Berrys, Little Britain's former pastor, Roy Grant skated with his boys, John and Time; and Murray Teel teamed up with David. If the league has had no other value, the kind of bonding which comes from this kind of partnership is hard to beat!

As the 25th Anniversary season got under way a NEW TEAM joined the long lasting fraternity. Sponsored by Pioneer Baptist in Norland, they have some help from neighbouring Kinmount, and a player or two from Fair Havens on their roster. For the time being they are sporting Peterboroughs old sweaters.

And so with a rather insignificant beginning, a league which nearly expired before its second schedule was ever struck, the Kawartha Fellowship Baptist Hockey League surely holds some kind of record for longevity. Few church or Christian-oriented loops ever survive the very thing which has threatened the death-knell of this one, ...ringers brought in to beef up line-ups, and rough play which spoils the spirit of its existence. Indeed both have threatened from time to time, but have never gotten out of control. For the most part its purposes have been realized...especially in outreach. Each year several guys of various ages have begun to attend services so they can play hockey. Several have not only come under the sound of the gospel but have received Christ as Saviour. When we realize that Heaven rejoices over JUST ONE SINNER WHO REPENTS... it makes even the struggles all worthwhile.

It has not been easy for those who oversee the proceedings, from the Sept. Organizational meetings to the final trophy presentation in April. Not a few grey hairs have been produced, or lost for good... over dilemmas which arise.. Complicated, by the way by the fact that it is difficult to hold hard lines, and make ticklish decisions, which affect ones close friends. This has been the lot of the 8 Co-ordinators who have served over the years.

Perhaps its is not an exaggeration to suggest that they be nominated for the medal of valour... or the ULCER cluster!

Surely every one who has played, coached (maybe not refereed), or who has seen a son or a husband benefit from this league, hopes and prays that there will be a GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY as well...in the year 2021! We wonder if the leagues founder (Pastor Goodhand) will be around to attend THAT FUNCTION!