Synchro Report - Hazelridge AGM 2021

Before I begin, I just wanted to send a massive congratulations to our long-term synchro and star skaters who are graduating High School this year! What a year to graduate! You have all turned into mature leaders in your own right, and I think graduating in the midst of a year like this one has made you all the more able to handle whatever life throws at you! So Congratulations to Kara McMillan, Kolby Kosheluk, and Sarah Hameed. We wish you much luck in your next endeavors and I hope skating remains near and dear to your heart in the future.

We also would like to Congratulate, Karen Ballinger, our supporting synchro coach from previous seasons who is moving on to her next phase in her career to Philadelphia to do a fellowship in youth sports medicine. Best of luck on your new adventure!

Naturally, this was a season to, if I can quote the TV show Big Brother, “expect the unexpected”. We started the year hopeful that we might be able to compete and were able to complete 5-weeks of on-ice training.

For synchro, this meant social distancing and working on improving individual skills such as edges, turns, body positions, and speed.

We started with 14 youth and 9 adult skaters which were a bit down in numbers from the year previous due to new sports, new clubs, and some hesitation from adults with activities during the pandemic.

After Halloween, we were off the ice for what we thought was going to be the next 3 weeks. Which obviously, gradually turned into the rest of the season.

The club offered off-ice fitness and training twice a week for youth and once a week for adult synchro skaters. The youth classes were a combination of synchro and star skaters and the sessions were a combination of agility, strength, flexibility, jumping, and dance training. Coaches Laurissa and Jessica facilitated the sessions so we always had two adults in the youth calls as is required with the Rule-of-two.

We have been told the off-ice jump training really helped with on-ice jumps, and I even saw for myself my legs were much stronger and stable on the ice after working on squats, lunges, and other core exercises weekly.

We saw about 3/4 of our members participate in the first few weeks and 1/4-1/2 members participate over the long term. For some, these weekly sessions provided the opportunity to connect with friends, get moving with some activity, and stay motivated. For others, the zoom-style class didn’t work for their lifestyle.

Thank you to the skaters who stuck with it all the way through! We really came together as a team and held each other accountable. I wouldn’t have done it if you weren’t there!

We tried to keep the off-ice sessions fun and interesting. To get some fresh ideas, I registered and participated in the synchronized skating off-ice sessions offered by OneTeamMvmt. These were world-class sessions led by top athletes and coaches and I used many of the core training, turns exercises, and flexibility movements from these sessions in my off-ice classes.

Betty Ann kept us motivated in January and February with a kilometer challenge! This encouraged skaters to get outdoors, go for long walks/skates / or runs, and track their progress. It also encouraged families to get out together to help our club raise enough kilometers to get us all the way to Vancouver - and we did!!! This was a great mini-challenge to keep us motivated.

Learning at the end of January we wouldn’t be returning to the ice, the coaches began to think of what we could do to have some fun at the end of the year. Laurissa created some special awards to give to skaters who were still involved with off-ice and we hosted a talent show where skaters got to share skills and talents they have away from the rink. We also had a Synchro Showcase night where youth, adults, and coaches (coach Karen was able to join) were able to view favourite synchro programs from the past - mostly one’s from Hazelridge!

We had a small adult wind-up/reunion with a few skaters able to get together on zoom to talk about the season and answer some fun generational trivia.

We are still planning to have a youth synchro wind-up/reunion and hope that many of our skaters can attend. We were crossing our fingers to do

something in-person… but alas that may be ill-advised in our province's current state.

As for plans for next season, we are hopeful we can be back on the ice. I am hopeful for at least one youth group and one adult group. I would also like to find ways to create more of a team-y feeling that we can maintain through our whole season - no matter what happens in the world.

We did learn how valuable the off-ice sessions were for the skaters' body awareness, strength and flexibility, and I wouldn’t mind seeing something similar continue in addition to our on-ice offerings in the future.

Our teams and members are in a transition phase right now and I am eager to find a synchro rep that will help me with some coordination and be someone I can bounce ideas off of for the future.

As always, I am interested to know what skaters' hopes are for next season and would love for skaters' to send me their intentions.