

JEFF BALON, Saskatoon AA Hockey
2022-23 Al Anderson's Source for Sports SMHA Coach of the Year

Congratulations to all of the Finalists for the 2022-23 Al Anderson's Source for Sports SMHA Coach of the Year Award:

- **Dean Lucier, Aces**
- **Billy Katelnikoff, Bobcats**
- **Brad Hutchison, Comets**
- **Trent Leffler, Flyers**
- **Guy Sveinbjornson, Redwings**
- **Booker Kenny, Renegades**
- **Adam Byblow, Wild**
- **Mike Delaire, City-Wide U15A**
- **Robin Ulrich, Female U18AAA Saskatoon Stars**

SMHA is proud to announce **Jeff Balon** from **Saskatoon AA Hockey** as the 2022-23 Coach of the Year Award winner.

Jeff Balon was a non-parent Head Coach on the U18AA Saskatoon Screaming Eagles in 2022-23. Jeff does an incredible job keeping minor hockey in perspective and ensuring the players and his fellow coaches enjoy the hockey season and have fun.

Below is some information from the nomination submitted to SMHA for Jeff from the parents and players on his team, including a few (of many) testimonials received:

We are pleased to formally nominate Jeff Balon for SMHA Coach of the year. Several letters of support from players and parents are also included as part of this nomination.

This is my son Drew's first year being on the Screaming Eagles. (Screags) Drew told me several months ago that this was his favourite team and Jeff was his favourite coach. I agree with him. Jeff is the best hockey coach I have met. His demeanor, communication style and sense of humour is perfect for players this age. I have never seen a parent group this happy before.

Jeff never loses his cool on the bench. NEVER. He never yells and always treats the officials, opposing coaches and players with respect. Jeff's expectations are high and he stated at the first parent meeting that he expects his players to be accountable. We are a very competitive team, and everyone gets to play. In my experiences in A, AA hockey and spring hockey, there typically are several players/parents that are unhappy with playing time. This comes from both the most skilled and least skilled players. Nope, not on this team.

Jeff has been a coach in Saskatoon since 2007-2008 (minus 2013-2014), first in the Flyers Zone and then in the U18AA league. Jeff has been a non-parent coach since 2019-2020. If you ask Jeff why he still does it, the first thing he says is that it keeps him young. I think the players do not want to disappoint him because they look up to him and he relates to them so well. On a lot of teams, in competitive leagues, the players are afraid of the coach losing it or punishing them with benching, berating them, etc. If SMHA could take what Jeff does and turn it into a coaching clinic for U18 we would be golden!

The boys that play for the Screags in their first or second year of U18 want to play for Jeff again. This is not a knock on any other current or former coach in U18 because there are and have been many very good coaches over the years. I have even heard of good hockey players trying to look bad in tryouts just to possibly have a chance to play for Jeff and the Screags. That's not good but pretty telling as to how much players love him as a coach.

Lastly, Jeff has a fun skate over the Christmas break for current and former Screags. My son Drew said it was optional and wasn't sure he should go. I said: "you need to go because there might not be enough players there". Anyway, I went with him and there were 30 players there including a lot of guys clearly well into their 20's. It was an eye opener and a testament to the positive and memorable experience Jeff has given to so many young men in their final 3 years of minor hockey.

- Jim Walters, on behalf of the parents and players of the Screaming Eagles

Jeff is by far one of the best coaches, if not the best coach who has ever coached me. I am grateful to have been part of his team over the last two seasons. He comes fully committed to everything, he is always prepared, he works us hard, he has fun and he absolutely makes sure that the game of hockey is always fun. I have no doubt that all of our team's past players have similar comments and feelings about Jeff as their Screaming Eagles coach. Thank you! There is no other way I could imagine ending my minor hockey experience than with you leading the pack.

- James Davidson, #21 "C"

I've had the best 2 years of hockey with Jeff and hope to have a great year next year with him again. I have developed a lot; my skills have increased and my passion and love for the game of hockey is higher than it has ever been while playing for Jeff.

Taelen Casavant

Jeff has the ability to bring the best out of each player and give them the opportunity to succeed. This truly is a gift. I have seen the players confidence as young men grow on and off the ice. Players who are shy are encouraged to speak up and become more vocal, players that play on the edge are pulled back from the edge. Jeff has built a special relationship with each and every player, and I know Christopher is a better person because of his relationship with Jeff.

Rhonda and Sean Coleman, parents of Christopher Coleman

Congratulations Jeff – 2022-23 Al Anderson's Source for Sports Coach of the Year!

SMHA has nominated Jeff Balon to Hockey Sask for their 2023 Coach of the Year Award.