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Hockey academy gets high marks

Roy's school turns out well-rounded graduates

BY DAVE WADDELL, THE WINDSOR STAR OCTOBER 24, 2009



Windsor's Gwenne Attenborough, left, checks England's Laura Price during the Hocktoberfest hockey tournament Friday at Forest Glade Arena. The English team beat the Wildcats 3-2.

Photograph by: Dan Janisse, The Windsor Star, The Windsor Star

Former Philadelphia Flyers assistant coach David Roy wasn't shy about his goals when he left the NHL to set up his own hockey school in Kelowna, B.C.

The aim is as obvious as the title -- The Pursuit of Excellence Hockey Academy.

With a slew of players drafted into the Western Hockey League and several more being absorbed into the national program stream on the girls' side, it's safe to say Roy is making ground in his pursuit.

"We're not just a school for elite players," said Roy, who has brought the academy's midget AAA and AA girls teams east to compete in this weekend Hocktoberfest Female Hockey Festival in the Windsor area.

"We've got kids who were playing house league or single A travel.

"We do have some high-end players, but our goal is developing kids as hockey players and people. My wife and I have worked with kids all our life and thought hockey was a great way to help

accomplish both those goals."

Working with the public school system in Kelowna, players spend half the day in class and half the day working on their hockey skills. Their school day starts at 7:30 a.m. and training wraps up by 6 p.m.

They're on the ice two hours each day, but also go through dry-land training and workouts as well as clinics aimed at improving their skills and mental preparation.

The students, who range from 12 to 17 years old and attend Grades 8 through 12, get 1,000 hours of hockey instruction and training over the 10 months. The yearly program runs from September to June.

"Kids are motivated because of the hockey," said Roy, who founded the school in the fall of 2003. "But the bottom line is only a half a per cent will play pro hockey or make it into the Olympic program.

"We don't want them to be disappointed. That's why we emphasize academics, learning life skills and values.

But excellence does come with a cost.

Annual tuition is \$15,000 per year for Canadian students plus another \$4,000 to cover the seven to eight tournaments academy teams attend across North America each year. Tuition for international students is an additional \$6,800.

The cost of billeting out-of-town players for 10 months is \$7,000.

One of those is Jessica Campbell, a captain of the midget AAA team in Melville, Sask.

The 17-year-old forward is one of three team players who are members of the Canadian under-18 national program. Also on the U18 team are Christine Bestland and Bridget Lacquette.

"What I like about the school is I get to live and breathe hockey," Campbell said. "I came because I thought this was the best place for me to develop as a hockey player.

"It was hard leaving home, but I wanted to take the chance and I've loved it."

Campbell said the program isn't for everyone.

"The more you want it, the better you'll do," she said.

Roy, who was a trial lawyer before giving up law 15 years ago to work full-time in hockey, has also worked with the national men's and women's teams.

"Skating was my forte as player," said Roy, who worked with Roger Neilson, Bill Barber, Craig Ramsay and Ken Hitchcock in Philadelphia.

"I started my first skating school when I was 19. It got so big over time. When I came back from the Flyers in 2003, I thought the time was right to try this idea I'd had."

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