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New Home for Central Elgin Express

by Francie Dennison



Holding the promise of exciting new times, Port Stanley is now the official new home of the Central Elgin Express Junior hockey team. In an interview with Mike Herman, new Head Coach for the team, he said the Express are looking forward to becoming actively involved in the community and in assisting with the development of hockey skills and enthusiasm for the sport with the

Port Stanley Minor Hockey teams.

The Central Elgin Express are members of the Ontario Hockey Association (OHA) and the Southern Ontario Junior Hockey League (SOJHL). Mike Herman comes to the Central Elgin Express from having spent the last two years as Head Coach and General Manager for the Lambeth Lancers Junior team. He has been involved in hockey at this level for five years and has also been involved in Minor hockey, Triple A and Shamrock, as well as running hockey schools for thirteen years.

Mike does not believe in playing "goon" hockey. "Almost always in hockey, when a team starts losing they start fighting. I won't let my guys do that," he said. "At the end of the day the kids really don't have fun in the game if they're playing is goon hockey."

"That culture that's in the game, that's a big wheel that started rolling downhill a long time ago and you don't get that big wheel turned around overnight," he continued. "More and more coaches are buying into the idea that that's not the way the game is supposed to be played. The game is cleaning up every year. Our league used to be a goon league but it's not anymore. There's some good, skilled hockey in this league. We are recruiting players for hockey skills, not goon ability. Our focus will be on puck movement and puck pressure with speed."

"What will be taught, what will be enforced, what will be encouraged, will all be skill-based. It's not going to be hack and slash. It's going to be system-oriented, skill-based, speed hockey. I think the game would be unbelievable if they took hitting out. Body contact - leave it there - but take the hitting out. Creating more skills-based offence, you'd see scores of 6-5 and it would be a lot more entertaining." Mike said he has the full support of team owners to build an organization they can be proud of; that has a professional character and persona and of a high standard, where people want to be involved in that kind of program.

"We want to win. We want to compete. But we want to be seen as an organization that treats the kids properly. When you do that, you don't have to work too hard at recruiting because people come to you." he said.

Being split across two towns last year hurt and the team is looking forward to becoming

actively involved in the Port Stanley community. The team has plans to develop a mentoring role with Port Stanley Minor Hockey, making players and himself available for Minor hockey teams, and inviting some Midget level players to play some games with this Junior level team. They want to be not only an opportunity for local players to progress to higher levels, but also a team that younger players aspire to play for in the future.

Central Elgin Express players will also be made available to attend things like Christmas concerts at the school and other community events. "We're serious about that," he said. "We see that as a big part of developing these young guys, too. I know from my experience with other teams that my players got as much out of this kind of stuff as the little kids that were there. They had a blast. Part of the presence of a local Junior team in a community is when they go to stuff like the Christmas concert and the little kids think *Man, I want to play for that team some day.*"

The team is also looking for volunteers - game day volunteers to do things like throw t-shirts into the crowds, and people to act as a liaison between the team, the local Minor Hockey Association, the school and the community; people to co-ordinate the Express team presence at community events.

For the 2007-2008 season the Express have also entered into an affiliation agreement with the St.Thomas Stars WOHL Junior B Club, further establishing local flavor to both organizations and a commitment to finding and developing local talent for junior hockey prospects at both levels. "We look forward to once again having a strong and active working relationship with Central Elgin Head Coach Mike Herman. On numerous occasions last season many of our affiliated players had opportunities to both practice and play regular season and playoff games for the Stars," said Stars Head Coach Pat Powers.

The Express will be kicking off the 2007-2008 tryout process with an open "Local Player Prospect Evaluation Camp" in St.Thomas on Monday August 27th, 2007 at 8:30 p.m. at the Timken Arena in St.Thomas. Players born in 1990, 1991 and 1992 who played competitive hockey in Port Stanley, St.Thomas and Belmont will be welcome and the 44 spots will filled be on a first come, first served basis. Cost to attend will be \$20.00 per player. [More Info](#)

The budget to put a team like this on the ice is about \$50,000 and Game Day receipts don't cover that, so they are also running a big sponsorship drive. Visit [Central Elgin Express](#) to find out more about the team. If you have an interest in sponsoring this team contact:

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