

Coaches Rock Ringette

Regina Ringette Association

February 2021

Technology changing coaching

In this age of uncertainty one thing that has become certain is that the way we communicate has forever changed.

As people physical distance from one another, society has had to rely more on all sorts of electronic communication applications including Zoom, What's App and other forms of social media.

Electronic communication has also made its way into the realm of ringette coaching this season.

Tania Orr, head coach of the U14A Rivals, is one of Regina Ringette's coaches who have had to embrace technology this year.

"Communication has changed on so many levels this year," said Orr. "Coaches, players and parents have attended outdoor team meetings, pregame Zoom meetings and been forced to watch games from the comfort of their own homes."

Before game play was shutdown, Orr's U14A Rivals were playing against the U14AA BP Rush and U16A Regina Rath.

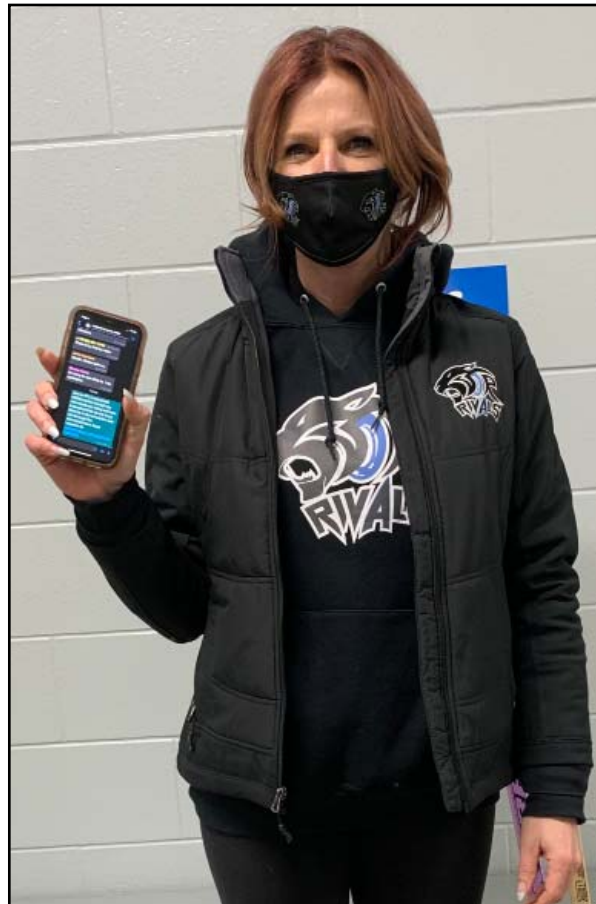
Orr says the three coaches in her bubble were relying on technology to chat with one another before the latest public health orders moved teams to eight person training sessions.

"This year... the rules are constantly changing so communication has been essential," she said. "We rarely run into each other at the rinks anymore so to have the ability to communicate via other channels is imperative. We can at least be grateful that we are living in an age of technology which has allowed some alternative means of communication.

"I think it just offers reassurance that we are all on the same page and all dealing with the same issues. It proves that we are not alone in our quest to try and make the best of the season while still taking all the necessary measures to ensure the safety of our teams and our families."

Before game play was halted, you may have noticed that most games had a dad or mom serving as videographers and even play-by-play commentators broadcasting games to various social media channels so parents, grandparents and other family members who were restricted from being at the rink could still watch, albeit online.

Orr says with so much game footage now on the Internet, it changed her coaching approach.



Tania Orr, head coach of the U14A Rivals.

"More games than ever have been recorded and coaches, players and parents have been able to go back and re-watch the games," she said. "I have watched the game between the Rivals two opponents, the U14AAs and U16As and have had some friendly banter with the coaches about studying their systems and having a plan to defeat them."

Orr admits she's even gone electronic when discussing strategy with her players.

"My first pregame talk was done via Zoom call," she said. "I prepared a PowerPoint presentation which included my lineups, a review of our top-secret plays, some reminders and of course, had our team logo on every page. I screen shared through Zoom and went through it with my team and then answered any questions they had."

All in all, Orr says that having to rely on electronic communication and technology this season has become an unlikely positive.

"I think I speak for many coaches when I say that at first we all resisted these new methods of communication and viewed them as unconventional and predetermined that it would be impossible to get our messages across especially as coaches. I since have changed my attitude and have chosen to embrace it.

"The truth is that as many of the other seasons will blend into one another, but this season is one that we will never forget."

Even the post-game handshake has changed

Before ringette game play came to a halt, public health orders meant that teams had to do even the smallest things different including demonstrations of sportsmanship.

Because of the pandemic, the traditional close contact handshake at center ice had to be scrapped.

Coaches in the U12B division came up with an old school salute to their opposition at game's end.

"A few of the coaches in U12 talked about doing 'three cheers,' and then lining the girls up across the blue line to raise their sticks in salute of the other team," said Scott McBeth, coach of the U12B Vibe. "I think that they all liked it."

McBeth says that ringette has always been about working hard while demonstrating sportsmanship.

"As coaches we all thought demonstrating sportsmanship with the other team was important," he said. "The girls all understand that it's a meaningful gesture to show your respect to the other teams, no matter the result.



Scott McBeth (right) poses with his daughter Abby.

"I prefer this new way actually, it has forced us to be more conscious about why we are doing it. I feel like ringette has always done this very well."

McBeth says that with so much change happening during this pandemic season, the new way to shake hands wasn't a big deal for his players.

"They were unphased, actually," he said. "They just needed to know what the new ritual was going to be."

Meanwhile, McBeth says the season has been full of challenges for coaches as they try to balance public safety with a meaningful experience for their players.

"We miss the connection to the girls (and parent group) that we've enjoyed in previous seasons," he said. "We have had to be more creative and intentional about how we make those connections or conversations. It's forced us to be more effective coaches I think. Ultimately, we are learning and growing as a team each time we're on the ice, and the girls are still having fun... so I think that's the important measuring stick for us!"