With a renewed commitment to excellence, Arizona State is changing the perception of local college hockey.

- CAHA’s Kundla makes jump to Chang’s
- Coyotes optimistic as new season begins
- Smith’s leadership unrivaled at Horizon
- Champs crowned at Labor Day tourney
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Inside
The development Mission continues for Bantam Bobby Nagel and the rest of the program’s “Red Army” (see story on Page 19).
Photo/Dave Getz/A-ZPhoto.com

On The Cover
From left, ASU players Pat Lind, Mark Chadwick, Nate Hogge, Coach Jeremy Goltz, Paul Scola and Matt Mackey
Photo/Dave Getz/A-ZPhoto.com

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EDITOR’S COLUMN:
Goltz a master of the balancing act

There are plenty of hockey coaches and volunteers in Arizona who “do it right,” and it doesn’t take long to see that Jeremy Goltz, a tried-and-true Arizona hockey devotee if there ever was one, is one of those.

Don’t believe me? Just take a look at the odometer on his car.

By day, Goltz makes his way down to Oceanside Ice Arena to take care of his duties as the Division I head coach and director of hockey operations for the Arizona State University Sun Devils hockey team (to read this month’s cover story on the ASU program, see Page 8).

By night, he’s the head coach of the Mission Arizona Ice Tier I U18 Midget team (on top of being the Mission program’s overall top administrator) and heading back to Polar Ice Peoria, where Mission’s “Red Army” makes its home.

On weekends, your guess is as good as mine. For Goltz’s sake, let’s just hope the schedule gods were in a good mood this year.

Goltz’s dedication to growing two of the highest levels of hockey in our state deserves our attention and praise, as does that of any other coach who not only attempts to double-dip, but is willing to spend even the slightest amount of time helping our favorite sport continue to cultivate.

But just Goltz’s commitment alone isn’t the entire story.

Albeit by his own volition, Goltz has put himself in as tough a coaching spot as could be with ASU and Mission, and it has little to do with how many hours there are in a weekend or how quickly he wears through a set of tires.

Goltz said that more than 100 students-athletes showed up to tryouts during the summer for the ASU hockey program in Tempe, admitting right away that more than a couple were recent graduates of the same Mission team he coached out of Peoria.

So what’s a coach, just a year into the job at ASU, to do when he has an allegiance to a small group of players, yet a duty to the larger cause?

Get tough - not just on the players, but himself. Goltz said riding the fine line between Mission coach and ASU coach really is a matter of practical application. When he’s at ASU practice, it’s all maroon and gold, all the time. When he’s with Mission, it’s red and white, and the ASU gear stays in the bag.

“There has to be that distance kept, otherwise it won’t work,” he said.

In the end, two Mission players - standout goalie Clay Taylor and forward Cameron Morgan (see more on Morgan on Page 23) - ended up making the ASU Division I roster, and their resumes likely speak well enough for themselves that Goltz doesn’t even have to justify their positions.

But that doesn’t mean the coach isn’t careful to make sure nobody gets preferential treatment, and that nobody - Mission players included - are treated unfairly, either.

“I want to do this right all around,” Goltz said.

Reach Brett Fera at brett@arizonarubber.com
High school season promises plenty of excitement

By Ryan Casey

In trimming from three divisions to two, the Arizona High School Hockey Association sought to adhere to national USA Hockey high school divisional formats. But in doing so, AHSHA's level of play should also see another jump this season.

No longer sporting the Varsity A, B and C divisions, AHSHA instead went with a pure division of schools pulling its roster from one school (Pure Varsity), and another division of schools which draws from multiple campuses (Mixed Varsity).

As a result, the former Varsity A grew by five teams to 10. What was left of Varsity B and C was then combined and is now the 13-team Mixed Division.

The early reviews have been good.

"Some of the teams that they moved up, you look at the players on their roster, they’ve got good teams," said Desert Mountain head coach Barry Harcus. "I think they’ll be competitive out there. I think it’ll just make for a much better league."

Desert Vista head coach Steve McGinn agreed.

"I’m ecstatic," he said. "If you want the best, you have to compete at the highest level, no matter who you have that year."

Added Notre Dame coach Mark Ciaccio: "There were some teams in that Varsity B division (last season) that legitimately should’ve been in Varsity A."

"You’re trying to be the best and you’re trying to put the best product on the ice," Ciaccio said. "And you try to play against the best level at all times."

The early-season favorite in Pure Varsity is Pinnacle, which returns arguably the deepest roster of the bunch. The Pioneers are ranked No. 1 in Arizona Rubber’s preseason poll (for the full polls, visit ArizonaRubber.com).

"I think these are the best, from the top players to the bottom players, Pinnacle's ever had in my tenure," said Pinnacle head coach Glenn Karlson.

Notre Dame, led by captain John St. Thomas, is also expected to challenge for the Pure title.

"My goal is to win the last game of the season, and that’s the championship game," Ciaccio said. "If I go undefeated, I go undefeated. If I don’t, I don’t. But I want to be peaking at the right time, and I want to be peaking in the playoffs so I can win the championship."

Desert Mountain, meanwhile, loses all six defensemen from a season ago, but is still No. 2 in the Pure Varsity poll. As defending champion, they’ll have a target on their back.

"We actually talked about that the first few practices," Harcus said, "but I think that’s a good challenge. Hopefully, we’re up to it."

In Mixed Varsity, Mesquite – runner-up a year ago and champions two years before that – is the preseason No. 1 in the Arizona Rubber poll.

“When all my players are there at the game, we should be hard to beat,” said Wildcats head coach Kevin Furia.

For extended coverage of the AHSHA, including polls and team previews, visit ArizonaRubber.com.
The Phoenix Coyotes found themselves in a strange arena north of their home in late September. No, they weren’t in Ontario, the proposed destination for the franchise should a sale to Canadian businessman Jim Balsillie pan out. Rather, they were in Loveland, Colo., for a pre-season game against the Tampa Bay Lightning on the day it was announced the franchise would stay put for the 2009-10 season.

Hockey, henceforth, would be the focus.

“I think it’s going to make us more calm,” newly acquired forward Radim Vrbata said after the game in Loveland. “We will know that we’re going to be staying, and we won’t have to worry about that and just play hockey.”

Still, even the day following that announcement, there were more off-ice issues. A summer-long courtroom saga unresolved – at press time, no decision had been made on the team’s messy ownership situation in U.S. bankruptcy court – Wayne Gretzky stepped down as coach, and was replaced by former Dallas Stars boss Dave Tippett.

No matter the outcome of the proceedings, those issues will undoubtedly follow the team during the season, hanging over the locker room like a rain cloud. But while the bankruptcy was a handicap to building the roster in the offseason, general manager Don Maloney retains a young core many are comparing to that of the Chicago Blackhawks, who finished fourth in the Western Conference last season.

Forwards Peter Mueller, Martin Hanzal, Mikkel Boedker and Daniel Winnik, as well as defensemen Keith Yandle, Kyle Turris and Viktor Tikhonov will start the AHL San Antonio, but figure to play big roles for club in the months to come.

“I really like some of their young players,” Tippett said at his introductory news conference. “I really think there’s some great upside to this group.”

Last season, that youth ultimately played a role in the Coyotes’ post-All-Star break slide from fifth place to 13th. A year older, a year wiser, the Kid Coyotes should contribute more this season.

“This year, the expectations might be lifted off them a bit,” said Coyotes captain Shane Doan.

“We’ve got some guys that are in their third year and they might not have had the years they wanted to last year. This year, they’re stepping up and we’re going to expect a lot of them. Some of the pressure has been removed from them a little bit, and hopefully that helps.”

Of course, returning Doan – he of 31 goals and 73 points – is a major plus, both in terms of production and as the face of the franchise. Other veterans, like defensemen Ed Jovanovski and Kurt Sauer, and forwards Scottie Upshall, Petr Prucha and Matthew Lombardi are also back.

Still, sparked by last season’s slide, Maloney set out in the offseason to acquire even more veteran leadership.

Forwards Vernon Fiddler and Taylor Pyatt, defenseman Jim Vandermeer and goalie Jason LaBarbera were all added via free agency. Vrbata came via trade.

“Adding a guy like Fiddler and bringing in some other guys like that, that makes a huge difference,” Doan said.

Vrbata had an abrupt departure from the Lightning during the middle of last season, leaving the team for his native Czech Republic. He played only 18 games for Tampa Bay after signing as a free agent.

Tampa Bay traded his rights in exchange for forward Todd Fedoruk and defenseman David Hale this summer. Vrbata spent the 2007-08 season with the Coyotes, notching career highs in goals (27), assists (29) and points (56).

“When that trade happened this summer, I was excited,” Vrbata said. “I feel really good on this team. I like the people on this team. I feel really comfortable.”

The front office has acknowledged a misstep in jumping a lot of the team’s young talent directly to the NHL. Or, as general manager Don Maloney said, “We force-fed some young players into our team.”

Turris, 20, had just eight goals and 20 points in 63 games as a rookie last season. Likewise, the 21-year-old Tikhonov had 16 points in 61 games.

Which is why the start at the AHL level for those two this season might not altogether be a bad thing.

“It gives them an opportunity to play in key roles,” Doan said. “Playing in game situations is the only way you’re going to get better. For them to have the opportunity to be out there when the game’s on the line and to really take ownership of the team is big.”

Added Mueller, “Being sent down there, it was obviously tough for those two, but they’re going to be leading (San Antonio), they’re going to be first power play, first penalty kill. They’re going to get all the opportunities. It’s going to be good for both of their development.”

LaBarbera was signed to give the team a reliable backup to starter Ilya Bryzgalov, who played in 65 games last season, sixth-most in the NHL.

Prospects Al Montoya and Josh Tordjman could also provide depth at goalie.

To make a jump in the standings, Phoenix will need to better its specialty teams. The Coyotes were 28th in the league in both the power play (14.5 percent) and penalty kill (76.8 percent) last season.

“It’s one of those things that as you go throughout the regular season, specialty teams are going to be huge and you know you have to get better at them right at the start,” Doan said.

As the season kicks off, and the focus around the franchise slowly returns to the on-ice product, many view the Coyotes as too young, too inexperienced, to make a serious run at a playoff spot. Not Vrbata.

“I don’t think we have that bad of a team that everybody’s saying,” he said. “I think we have a lot of good guys here and if we play the way we should, I think we could surprise a lot of people.”

Not only does the hiring of Tippett give the Coyotes “great credibility as an organization,” as team president Doug Moss said, it should speed up the rebuilding process.

“He knows what we have here, he knows what we’re building,” Maloney said. “He knows the future. We’ve got a lot of work to do.

“We know there’s work ahead, but we’re on the right track. I think Dave is the right chemistry fit to make it happen for us.”

By Ryan Casey
In the Central Hockey League, it helps to have current and former players do some of the recruiting.

High-scoring Danish elite league forwards Steve Potvin, 35, and Linus Fagemo, 32, heard their Herning Denmark teammate, former CHL All-Star Brent Kelly, say how much he liked playing for the Arizona Sundogs.

Now the two will bring their years of experience to Prescott Valley to help lead a revamped Sundogs offense.

“He (Kelly) was one of the biggest influences,” Potvin said, but it didn’t hurt that he already had a home and relatives in the Phoenix area.

Potvin played 11 years in Danish, Swedish and German elite leagues and admits the North American game will be an adjustment for him at first.

“I play with energy, but having to face back-to-back games will take some getting used to, I’m sure,” he said. “There are similar-sized rinks in Denmark, but I haven’t played on a smaller rink for some time.”

The Toronto native began his pro career in the ECHL and spent two years with the Montreal Canadiens’ AHL affiliate, the Hamilton Bulldogs, before going to Europe.

Potvin said Sundog fans can expect to see a complete player that does a bit of everything in the style of former NHL forward Michael Peca.

“I try to play a well-rounded game,” Potvin said.

Potvin said fans should also enjoy the straightforward style of play of Fagemo, his Herning teammate. “He’s never been in North America and wants a shot here,” Potvin said.

As one of the league’s mandated five allowable veterans on the roster, Potvin knows he’ll be counted on to set an example for younger players.

“We’re expecting his style of play and character to provide leadership both on and off the ice,” said Sundogs head coach Marco Pietroniro. “His ability to produce offensively in the top leagues in Europe will certainly translate well here with our team.”

Potvin said a strong work ethic is what has allowed him to play to age 35 and it’s a characteristic he’d like to pass along to his son, Max, 6, who is already enrolled in a Coyotes’ Mite hockey program at the Ice Den in Scottsdale.

“He’s bananas for hockey. He’s already been skating for a long time and can really handle the puck,” he said of his young son.

The Sundogs open the season at home against the expansion Allen (Texas) Americans on Oct. 16 at Tim’s Toyota Center.
Sunny Days Ahead for Devils

Back at Oceanside and under new direction, ASU heads for the big time

By Brett Fera

I t’s a blistering 106 degrees on a mid-September Wednesday morning in Tempe, and the 2009-10 college hockey season is still a full three weeks from the time the first puck drops. And yet, anxious as he appears to be, second-year Arizona State University head coach Jeremy Goltz is smiling ear-to-ear.

“Come on in!” Goltz yells as he motions to one of his players to kick open the door to the coaches office, located in back of the ASU hockey program’s shiny new locker room. “Isn’t this place great?”

Goltz, a former Arizona college hockey icon himself - a captain as a player and former assistant coach with the rival Arizona Icecats, no less - before playing pro ice and inline hockey, begins to talk about his team and the ASU program as a whole, and it’s a good three minutes before anyone else says a word.

The guy is flat-out amped.

But even as his excitement for the upcoming season is hard to quell, all it takes is the slip of one simple phrase and the pleasantries will be over, with the proverbial welcome mat ripped right out from under the door.

“Club hockey,” he says, matter-of-fact, shaking his head in disapproval.

Yes, club hockey.

Serious Business

It’s a new era of ASU hockey under Goltz, and despite “club hockey” being the official distinction placed upon the program by the university (if only because the Sun Devils program doesn’t serve as a direct arm of the ASU athletic department), there’s nothing “club” about the way Goltz and the program plan to do business here on out - on and off the ice.

“That’s something parents ask me all the time. ‘Why club hockey?’ I squash that right away. This is not club. This is not intramurals. This is not something you join,” explained ASU assistant coach Greg Powers, a former ASU goalie himself. “This is something these players earned.”

To Goltz, Powers, and the players, this is serious business.

“We’re providing a big-time hockey experience here,” Goltz said. “This is Division I hockey. It’s ACHA hockey, but it’s Division I hockey.”

Goltz adds that the stigma associated with the phrase “club hockey” isn’t a fair one when you look at everything the ASU program has to offer.

“This team has been competitive for a long, long time,” Goltz said, noting the Division I program’s string of national tournament berths over the last two decades.

And it goes beyond just D-I, he adds. In all, more than 100 players showed up for tryouts this season, and with the Division I program, Division II team and a third feeder team that will participate in local men’s leagues and tournaments, more than 80 still-huddling hockey players now have a place to play this season, wearing Sun Devil logos and colors on their chest.

“We’re proud we can give that many guys a chance to keep playing,” Goltz said.

Home Sweet Homecoming

So maybe you can go home again.

After spending much of their history playing just up the street from ASU’s Tempe campus at nostalgic Oceanside Ice Arena, the Sun Devils program most recently called the shiny Ice Den – to be fair, a building considered among many circles as one of the top facilities in the country – its home.

There was just one catch, however, to playing on the far north edge of Scottsdale: Being so far from Tempe, any semblance of a true college atmosphere - a raucous home-ice advantage filled with screaming 20-somethings - all but vanished.

That’s why Goltz and Co. put into motion last offseason to move the team back to its old digs at Oceanside, with ASU taking center stage alongside the Desert Youth Hockey Association Firebirds as the facility’s primary tenants.

“This place has charm,” said blue line newcomer Rodney Stewart, a transfer from fellow ACHA program Eastern Michigan.

Stewart admitted that Oceanside is little more than ice, a pro shop, some bleachers and a few locker rooms. But that, Goltz added, is exactly what gives it charisma as a perfect setting for college hockey - just a few miles up the road from the primary ASU campus.

“When I come into this rink, I know I’m going to work. We’re not pampered here, but we know we’re coming to play hockey,” Stewart noted. “What more could we want?”

“Old rinks like this, they’re barns,” added junior Pat Lind, a local product who grew up as a Firebird in this very rink and is one of the Devils’ offensive superstars. “But that’s the appeal.”

That’s not to say that a few subtle upgrades to the three-decade-old facility haven’t done anything in terms of prepping it for a re-introduction to the college hockey scene this fall.

Goltz and the ASU boosters, along with the help of Oceanside general manager Adam Mims, have renovated locker rooms and decked out the...
building’s interior in splashes of maroon and gold, including logos on the ice and a “Hall of Fame” wall along the rink’s southeast corner.

A student seating section was in progress as well, and a media tower, where ASU student journalists will broadcast every game this season via some form of radio, Internet video feed and tape-delayed cable broadcast, was erected above the benches along the building’s south wall, overlooking the ice with a bird’s nest feel to it.

“We want this place to have it all,” Goltz said.

Looking, Feeling the Part

“I’ll tell you exactly where it started last year,” Goltz explains. “We were on a road trip, and it was frustrating. We were riding buses around, guys didn’t have matching bags - it just felt second rate.”

From that point on, it’s been Goltz’s mission to give his players as close to an experience that any NCAA Division I ASU athlete on campus gets in any other sport.

Jerseys. Jackets. Workout gear. Gear bags. Sure, it won’t change the way they play on the ice, but it’s the stuff of big-time college athletics, Goltz contended. And, to boot, it should help breed camaraderie and dedication amongst the players translating indirectly to on-ice success.

“We want these guys to know they’re playing for a major university,” he said.

The crown jewel – even if the public likely won’t ever see it – is the newly renovated ASU-only locker room, adjacent to the arena’s east bench.

Eventually, Goltz said he’d like to see the building pushed out to build an ASU Division I locker room from scratch, giving the current incarnation to the Division II program in the process. But for now, the current hub serves as the nerve center of everything Sun Devil hockey.

Maroon and gold paint from top to bottom. Images of Sparky the Sun Devil adorning nearly every door and wall. Flat-screen televisions. Coaches offices. Individual lockers with custom nameplates.

“Here we are and I’m giving the guys the ‘blood-and-guts’ speech about college hockey and being a successful student, and these kids have nothing tangible. We had to give them something tangible,” Goltz said. “This is their place, a place they can take ownership of. “I want these guys to feel like what they are: Division I, big-time college athletes.”

The Sales Pitch

By now, Powers, also the program’s director of recruiting, is well-versed in the sales pitch to players and parents, and it goes well beyond dispelling that despised “club” notion.

“It’s pretty straightforward,” he says, beginning his checklist while noting that ACHA hockey is often comparable – if not better – than the level of play found at NCAA Division III schools.

According to Powers:

- 60 to 70 percent of ASU’s Division I roster has played Tier I, AAA hockey
- At the NCAA Division III level, teams are limited to 28 games, plus playoffs. At ASU, they’ll get upwards of 40 games, plus nationals.
- NCAA D-III teams are relegated primarily to regional travel in front of sparse crowds. ASU, players have aspirations to play pro hockey beyond college.

“I don’t tell kids this is a launching pad to play pro hockey. They’re here to get a degree; they’re here to play college hockey,” he said. “But absolutely, unequivocally the dream does not have to stop here, because it has happened before.”

Valley native Dan Anderson, a freshman forward, spent his recent formative hockey years playing nearby for the P.F. Chang’s Tier I AAA program.

“Goltz was in my ear all year last year,” said Anderson, who added he had junior hockey opportunities in the EJHL and NAHL if he wanted them. “But I wanted to stay local. To have that opportunity, staying in Arizona, I couldn’t pass that up.”

While staying close to home sold Anderson on the ASU mindset, it was a change of pace that did the trick for fellow junior transfer Stewart and freshman forward Patrick Rogan.

Rogan, who prepped at the prestigious Shattuck-St. Mary’s school in Minnesota before playing junior hockey in British Columbia, said getting the opportunity to enjoy the weather, the campus and hockey at the same time was all he needed to see when he came to visit ASU.

“I came and I toured the school, and it really was awesome,” he said.

Beyond selling incoming players to the ASU campus, the Sun Devil brand and the program’s future, Goltz said that every effort taken prior to this season - from the locker room upgrades to the atmosphere in the rink to the creation of a full-scale management team (led by new general manager Ken Lind) to run hockey operations, booster clubs, alumni relations, broadcasting and more - was done with the intention of keeping Sun Devil hockey as a major player on the ASU campus and in contention for a national title for the long term.

“(Powers and I) both have had very positive experiences in this league, both playing and coaching,” Goltz explains. “We both know what it takes to be successful at this level.

“And we know this program has what it takes.”

Head coach Jeremy Goltz was at the forefront of ushering in a new culture for the Sun Devils hockey program. Photo/Dave Getz/A-ZPhoto.com

- NCAA D-III teams are relegated primarily to regional travel in front of sparse crowds. ASU, However, travels nationwide, playing in front of crowds of more than a few thousand spectators.

- “You get a better life experience going to ASU,” he notes, comparing the size of ASU’s multi-campus system to those of smaller NCAA D-III campuses. “Where else can you study by the pool, put on your flip-flops, and go to practice?”

Powers said it’s simple math, really: There are only 35 NCAA Division I programs, he explains, adding that “after that, if this were football, we’d be compared to like a mid-major. We can still compete at a very high level.”

Powers said his pitch hits a fine line when looking, feeling the part.

"Here we are and I'm giving the guys the nameplates. Coaches offices. Individual lockers with custom nameplates. Images of Sparky the Sun Devil adorning nearly Maroon and gold paint from top to bottom. Flat-screen televisions. Coaches offices. Individual lockers with custom nameplates.

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"And we know this program has what it takes."
Heat teams get off to promising starts

By Brian McDonough

The Arizona Heat’s Pee Wee B team made history last month at the Sonoran League’s Made in the USA Labor Day tournament, becoming the first team in the program’s history to take home a championship banner.

The Pee Wees skated to four straight wins to capture the crown, including a 7-3 triumph over the Inside Edge Runners in the title game.

“I was really proud of how the kids played and how they handled themselves in their first tournament this year,” said head coach Mike Vukonich. “This is a special group of kids that really loves to compete.”

The Pee Wees, who have opted to declare “A” status for the rest of the season, are in good hands under the direction of Vukonich. A Minnesota native, he played college hockey at Harvard University helping lead the Crimson to an NCAA championship in 1989.

Vukonich, a 1987 draft pick of the Los Angeles Kings who played professionally in the U.S. and Europe, couldn’t be happier with his team’s early-season effort.

“It’s a great sense of accomplishment for the kids and the coaching staff to bring home the first championship banner to the Gilbert rink,” he said. “They worked very hard in the months leading up to this tournament.”

The Heat’s Bantam B team, coached by Steve Andrews, fell in the semifinals of the Made in the USA showcase.

“We’re very excited to get off to such a positive start,” said Heat president Stacy Shupe.

AZHeatHockey.com

Squirts take home Labor Day banner

By Brian McDonough

Two of the Phoenix Polar Bears’ teams took to the ice for the Sonoran League’s Made in the USA Labor Day tournament with the program’s Squirt A team capturing a championship banner.

The Squirts opened the showcase with a 5-4 victory over the Inside Edge Runners before blanking the VOSHA Mustangs and the DYHA Firebirds. In the semifinals, the Polar Bears bested the CAHA 2000 team, 4-1, before doubling up the CAHA AA squad in the finale, 4-2.

“What an exciting way to start the season,” said head coach Ed Kastelec. “This is a great group of kids who worked very hard, pushed through and earned that banner.”

The Polar Bears’ Bantam A squad also participated in the Made in the USA showcase and advanced to the championship game.

The squad opened with a 3-3 tie with VOSHA before rattling off three straight victories against Inside Edge, the Gila Monsters and a team from Las Vegas. In the semifinals, the Bears shut out Las Vegas, 4-0, before falling to DYHA in the title game.

“It was a tremendous effort by our team,” said head coach Keith Hicks. “They gave it everything they had and just came up a little short, but nonetheless I’m very proud of what they accomplished over the weekend.”

For the organization, the Labor Day festivities marked an exciting kick-off to the 2009-10 campaign.

“We’re very proud of both teams,” said Polar Bears president Kristy Aguirre.

PhoenixPolarBearsHockey.com

HOODY HOCKEY: A hockey perspective renewed

I had a great summer recharging my hockey batteries during a five-month journey that began in Minot, N.D., and concluded in Dallas with an opportunity to guest coach with the NAHL’s Topeka RoadRunners.

Here are just a few of the memorable highlights I heard during that time:

“I like my Alpha d-man to be in a real bad mood when handling the rush.” - Al Bloomer, USA Hockey’s national coach in chief

“I watch that young d-man and his lack of details are a reflection of his coaching last year.” - John Becanick, former head coach of the WHL’s Everett Silvertips

“One thing’s for sure, fat equals slow and skinny equals slow.” - Jed Ortmeyster, head coach of the Omaha Jr. Lancers’ U18 AAA team

“Play for the (USHL’s) Omaha Lancers, you need to be a great citizen, student and committed to playing hockey late into May of 2010.” - Lancers head coach Bliss Littler

“In hockey, there are a lot of great people, but for whatever reason, everyone is an expert.” - Norfolk Admirals general manager Mike Butters

“It’s a lot better to be committed rather than just dedicated.” - Craig Sarner, director of player development for the Lancers

“I want to have a competitive hockey team, but equally important I want to entertain our fans.” - Don Stone, owner of the RoadRunners

“Fellas, if you are not stressing education as No. 1 priority to your players you’re cheating them.” - University of Wisconsin men’s head coach Mike Eaves

“If you guys want to play junior A, college or professional, it’s never going to happen if you’re not going to work and play with courage.” - New York Rangers scout A.J. Toews

“Guys, if you aren’t going to bust your butt to the net and get your nose dirty or rearranged, we’re never going to score.” - Mike Alkens, head coach of the Russell Stover 16 AAA team

“The work you do in the gym will make the difference today, tomorrow, and for the rest of your career.” - Todd Ferschweiler, head coach Russell Stover’s U18 AAA team

“When you’re on a team, loyalty is not an option, it’s expected.” - former University of Minnesota head football coach Glen Mason

“By the age of 14, 68 percent of players who began playing hockey at ages 5-7 in the USA have quit.” - Ken Martel, USA Hockey’s American Development Model director

“There’s not a day that goes by that I don’t think about the 1980 (Miracle on Ice) game against the Russians.” - University of Wisconsin women’s head coach Mark Johnson

“You have to create a fear-free environment for your skilled players to play within.” - Brian Burke, general manager of the Toronto Maple Leafs

“It’s important to create conflict amongst your players; it breeds accountability.” - John Tortorella, head coach of the New York Rangers

“When your teams backcheck, they need to funnel back through the middle with sticks and legs taking away passing lanes.” - Mike Sullivan, New York Rangers assistant coach

Harry Mahood is the head coach and general manager of the Phoenix Polar Bears’ Junior A team and director of hockey operations at Polar Ice.
Phoenix Polar Bears back to defend another title

By Matt Mackinder

Even after winning their sixth Thorne Cup last season, the Phoenix Polar Bears have their sights set on making it No. 7 next spring.

That said, and even with a revamped roster, head coach Harry Mahood believes success can be attained once again in the WSHL.

“We’re excited to start the season with nearly 20 new faces and see how this group develops over the next seven months,” Mahood said. “I’m very excited to have some veteran leadership in Elliot Repka and Rick Wozniak. Both are proven veterans and have their eyes set on playing NCAA hockey in the future.”

Being an elite team every year, there will always be a bull’s eye on the backs of the Polar Bears, and that’s exactly how Mahood wants it.

“In the last few seasons, there have been no nights off in the WSHL,” he said. “The depth of the league is very impressive.”

Phoenix is also stressing the importance of getting off to a fast start this year.

“While, as they say, it’s a marathon and not a sprint, but the first part of the season is critical for the development of fitness and team tactics,” said Mahood.

When the Polar Bears hosted their final camp in early September, the amount of talented players that showed up in Phoenix made it very difficult for Mahood and his coaching staff to whittle down the roster for the start of the season. Even so, that’s a good problem to have.

“We had some tough decisions, especially in net, but my opinion at this level is that it’s important to let players play at the proper level so they can optimize development,” said Mahood. “We have an ambitious community service plan and a goal to help all our players prepare for college. We’re excited about this opportunity once again.”

Mahood even spent his off-season preparing a little extra for the 2009-10 campaign as he was invited to participate as a coach at the main camp of the NAHL’s Topeka RoadRunners in late August.

Mahood was invited to join the camp by Topeka head coach Scott Langer earlier in the summer when the two worked together at the Omaha Lancers’ (USHL) main camp.

“It was a thrill to work with Coach Langer and the entire RoadRunners organization,” said Mahood. “I learned more in a week from him and his assistant, R.J. Enga, than I’ve learned in 10 years. These two coaches really understand what it takes to build team culture and develop players for the NCAA.”

Langer was as equally impressed with Mahood.

“Hoody has run a very successful program and we’re both on the same page,” said Langer. “I feel we’re both very comfortable not only utilizing one another’s staffs for development, but also with future player movement.

“He demands receptiveness with the way he carries himself and with his knowledge of the game. My players were sponges to Hoody’s teachings. My staff benefited a great deal as well, and it truly allowed us to stay sharp at a time when mental fatigue could easily get the best of us. Hoody is considered a very important extension to Topeka’s family and staff.”

Mahood also said some of his players have the potential to wind up in the NAHL, possibly with the RoadRunners.

“Our guys would be fortunate to have the opportunity to play in Topeka in the future,” he said.

Arizona Polar Bears.com

Union, Polar players welcome new ‘big brothers’

By Brian McDonough

With players from all over North America moving to Phoenix to chase their collegiate and professional hockey dreams with the Phoenix Polar Bears’ Junior A team, a number of families in the Arizona Hockey Union and Phoenix Polar Bears youth association have generously opened their doors to house these out-of-towners for the year.

Known in the hockey circles as “billeting,” it’s an experience that benefits both the player and the housing family, according to Harry Mahood, head coach and general manager of the Junior A team.

“The players get to have a comfortable home for the season and the support of the family and the kids,” he said. “On the flip side, the family, especially the kids, gets a big brother and a role model to learn both hockey and life lessons from,” he said.

For the Quinn family, this marks the second season in a row in which it is billeting a junior Polar Bear. This year, California native Derek Champlin is now a regular, contributing part of the Quinn clan.

“Our kids begged us to house a junior player for months last year and we’re so glad they did,” said Gina Quinn, who also serves as president of the Arizona Hockey Union. “It’s a tremendous experience.”

Having Champlin, a highly touted defenseman who played junior hockey in Canada the last couple of seasons, live with the family was music to Colin Quinn’s ears. A defenseman on the Polar Bears’ Bantam A team, he’s instantly picked up a new hockey role model.

“Derek not only gives him hockey advice, but he even helps him with his homework,” said Gina Quinn. “The relationships that are formed at the rink and at home are special. These players really are a part of the family.”

This year’s Polar Bears Junior A Union/Polar Bears combinations include: Ryan Killeen (Nebraska)-Hunter Dragosh (Polar Bears Bantam A); John Marsters (Massachusetts)-Kyle Echeverria (AHU Bantam AA ’95); Joe Alexander (California)-Anthony Caruso (AHU 18AA); Anthony Brennan (Manitoba)-Johnny Walker (AHU Bantam AA ’96); Joe Nelson (Minnesota)-Alex Aguirre (AHU Pee wee AA); Colin Fredrickson (British Columbia)-Charlie Allen (AHU Midget 16AA); Derek Champlin (California)-Colin Quinn (Polar Bears Bantam A); Caleb Brueher (Illinois)-Collin McHugh (Polar Bears Squirt A); Jonny Heidbrink (Nebraska)-Jackson McBride (Polar Bears Mite); Casey O’Connor (Minnesota)-Samuel Kany (AHU Bantam AA ’96).

“Most families don’t totally understand that when they host a Junior A player, 99 percent of the time they’re getting an extended family member for life,” said Mahood.

And because the Arizona Hockey Union extends from Mites through Junior A, it’s the perfect opportunity for the junior players to serve as meaningful mentors.

“There’s no such thing as too much hockey for Caleb Brueher, right, a Phoenix Polar Bears Junior A player from Illinois, and billet brother Collin McHugh, a Squirt A Polar Bear. Having Champlin, a highly touted defenseman who played junior hockey in Canada the last couple of seasons, live with the family was music to Colin Quinn’s ears. A defenseman on the Polar Bears’ Bantam A team, he’s instantly picked up a new hockey role model.”

Arizona Hockey Union extends from Mites through Junior A, it’s the perfect opportunity for the junior players to serve as meaningful mentors.
Kundla takes a giant leap with U18 team

By Brett Fera

Go out and get noticed.

At this level, Nathan Kundla knows how the system works; that’s why he put the system to work for him.

When the P.F. Chang’s U16 AAA team - the same team that cut him during preseason tryouts - needed an extra body during a few practices last year, it was Kundla, a lifelong Arizona native now hailing from Anthem, who conveniently made himself available to step in and fill a spot.

Kundla, a defenseman, was also around for camps offered over the last 12 months by current P.F. Chang’s U18 AAA head coach Mike DeAngelis and P.F. Chang’s program director Jim Johnson.

So when the U18 team opened itself up for tryouts early this summer, guess who had a leg up on the competition for one of the 19 coveted roster spots on De Angelis’ Tier I Midget team?

“Once it came around to tryout time with the U16 team, they pretty much knew who I was,” Kundla said.

“Once I got to the U18 team, they pretty much knew who I was,” Kundla admits.

And that was the point.

Kundla said the relationship between the P.F. Chang’s program and the CAHA youth association played a role in his continued ascent to the 18 team, they pretty much knew who I was,” Kundla said.

“Once it came around to tryout time with the U18 team, they pretty much knew who I was,” Kundla said.

“Once I got to the U18 team, they pretty much knew who I was,” Kundla admits.

And that was the point.

Kundla said the relationship between the P.F. Chang’s program and the CAHA youth association played a role in his continued ascent to the U16 AA head coach Dennis Leclair served as perhaps the greatest motivator.

“He works a hard team,” Kundla said of Leclair. “It might say double-A, but that as close to triple-A as it gets.”

Kundla said that doesn’t mean the jump to the AAA level wasn’t still more of a leap.

“It was still a big step,” he said, adding that P.F. Chang’s assistant coach Brian “Shadow” Smith has been instrumental in guiding his adjustment to a faster, stronger set of opponents at the AAA level.

Kundla said that while the majority of players on this year’s Chang’s U18 AAA team are program returnees – either to the same squad or call-ups from U16 – he still felt welcome from Day 1.

“They were really accepting. I was really nervous going in there the first couple of times,” he admitted. “But it really showed in that first tournament. We were willing to sacrifice for each other.”

In addition to the development of his skills as a player, that same initial notion of being noticed still drives Kundla now that he’s finally a member of the P.F. Chang’s program.

“Playing on this team, there are a lot more eyes looking at me - at all of us,” he said, adding that the chance to play in front of college and junior scouts everyday is a huge opportunity. “If I keep working at it, the sky is the limit. I feel confident that I’ll be seen.”

Discipline reaches far beyond the ice

Coaches always preach to their teams the importance of discipline out on the ice. We’ve all seen too many times when taking bad penalties changes the shape or momentum of a game and causes teams to succeed or fail at the finish line.

But some of the great coaches I’ve learned from have preached discipline as a complete lifestyle.

A young player’s behavior off the ice, in the classroom and around peers all factor into their ability to achieve a more structured way of life. I truly believe that an athlete’s decisions away from the rink have a direct correlation to the way they act and perform with their team.

When you think about a student-athlete who plays for a competitive team that requires them to be at the rink numerous days a week and, in most cases, travel around the country, study habits and time management become critical for success. The instruction players receive from their teachers and parents set the foundation for these habits, which usually spill into their athletic world.

The amount of homework kids are required to complete each day eats up a lot of free time, which might include watching TV on the couch and hanging out with friends.

That means the player must learn good habits and strict discipline that will allow them to participate and thrive in their demanding hockey endeavors.

Like anything else, the sooner these habits are instilled in a child, the easier it is for them to adapt and react to challenging playing and class schedules as they get older.

Balancing both in junior and college hockey, for example, is a tall order.

It’s also important that players take time when they get to the rink to allow themselves to properly prepare for practices and team meetings.

It’s a discipline that goes unnoticed, but has tremendous significance when it comes to properly developing into a player and a person.

Once a player hits the ice, it’s the referee who is the judge and jury. As a player, it’s sometimes tough not to retaliate to a rough play and to stay composed during that shift, but it’s what can easily define success and failure at the end of the game.

We’ve all seen kids who lose their cool and attack an opponent and, consequently, are the only ones to receive a penalty. As a coach, I teach my players to play hard and smart, but not to allow frustration or emotions spill onto the ice as unjust as the situation may appear.

The team that does its best to stay out of the penalty box usually gives itself an edge over its opponent. Undisciplined and reactive teams typically find themselves behind the eight ball, always playing catch-up hockey.

Discipline goes far beyond untimely penalties and starts at home, where parents should be preaching structure and responsibility, which in most cases carries over to their child’s participation and level of success - in athletics.
Coyotes Amateur Hockey Association

**Triple crown celebrated at Sonoran tourney**

By Brian McDonough

The Coyotes Amateur Hockey Association certainly flexed its muscle at the Sonoran Made in the USA Labor Day tournament last month, as three of its teams - Pee Wee A, Squirt B and Mite A - skated away with championship banners.

The Mite team showed no mercy on its opponents, outscoring them 55-1 in the four games. Given its early dominance at the Mite level, the team has since moved up to the Squirt B division.

“We’ve worked on a lot of passing, positioning and puck-pursuit drills, and for the first tourney of the year the team was great in all these areas, especially considering the bad habits that can be picked up playing in these type of games,” said coach Jason Craik.

The Mite coaching staff, which includes Jason Wright, was also impressed with the team-first approach all of the players showcased at the tournament despite the lopsided scores.

“We wouldn’t stand for individual play and the boys bought into that philosophy and dominated the opposition in every game,” said Craik. “It was a lot of fun to watch.”

The game scores also allowed the Mites to experiment and learn at other positions on the ice, with all players contributing on the scoresheet.

“Once we had a good lead, which was fairly quick in most games, we moved all the kids around from ‘D’ to forward,” he said. “There were no real standouts; all the kids scored and made great passes.”

CoyotesIce.com
The new VAPOR X:60 stick with Intelli-Sense Shot Technology.

Dual kick points sense your shot type and flex accordingly to maximize power and accuracy. Exclusive TeXtreme® carbon fiber provides an amazingly light and incredibly strong scoring machine. See your shot respond at BAUER.COM.
So responsive, it finishes your thoughts.
Submit your favorite hockey photos at ArizonaRubber.com!
The Inside Edge Runners’ Pee Wee B team wasted no time tasting success this season, as the players took home second-place trophies at the Sonoran League’s Made in the USA Labor Day tournament.

“We’re very excited with the kids’ performance over Labor Day Weekend,” said coach Tim Durrer, who is joined behind the bench by Brett Sutton. “With the short amount of time we’ve had to work with them, there’s no question this group has a lot of promise and will be an exciting team to watch.”

The team, which is made up of a mix of returning and first-year Pee Wee players, opened the tournament with a 6-2 win over Mission Arizona White. After a 3-3 tie with the Flagstaff Northstars Red team, the Runners fell to the Arizona Heat. In the championship game, the Heat again defeated Inside Edge.

“We look forward to working with and watching this team become stronger and more competitive as the months go on and hope that it continues to excel, both on and off the ice,” said Sutton.

“The kids on this team have shown us the desire to learn and achieve great things. They really are a great group with a lot of heart and it’s already exciting to see the friendships and trust developing each time they’re together.”

Offensively, the Pee Wees pack a lot of power with Nick Portik, Brett Charron, Garrett Hummel and Fineberg picking up one assist, with Conlon, Sutton, Joralman, Thomas Wayne and Chase Sutton leading the charge upfront.

Hunter Feagins, Nico McCrossan, Jessica Conlon, Brandon Hummel, Matt Briody and Dylan Mattfeldt make up an equally strong defense, with the goaltending tandem of Cody Durrer and David Nelson delivering a formidable 1-2 punch between the pipes.

“Each player recognizes the true meaning of the word ‘team’ and is determined to go that extra mile to help improve their individual skills as well as the skills of the team as a whole,” said Durrer.

Portik and Briody each connected for three goals at the Labor Day showcase, with Briody notching a pair. Fineberg, Hopkins, Kramer and Joralman potted one goal apiece.

In all, the coaches were very impressed with how the kids were able to learn and deliver with such little time on the ice together.

“They truly are a great group of kids,” said Sutton. “They came out and executed very well for a new team. This is going to be an exciting season and loads of fun.”

A total team effort helped lift the IE Runners’ Pee Wee B team to a trophy at last month’s Made in the USA Labor Day tournament.

Fineberg, Daniel Hopkins, Joey Sorensen, Kylie Kramer, Hanna Joralman, Thomas Wayne and Chase Sutton leading the charge.

As the Labor Day tournament approached, there was a lot of anticipation building at the rink.

For the kids, it marked the beginning of another season. For the parents, it was an opportunity to see how far their kids have come over the offseason. And for the board members, it marked proof that we actually pulled it off.

A lot of people put a lot of hours and hard work in over the summer to ensure that everything was in place to make the Inside Edge Runners a reality. Now that the tournament is over, there’s a real sense of pride and accomplishment.

The jerseys look great, our teams are competitive and there’s so much to look forward to. Our players and coaches represented our organization very well at all levels. They played hard, played with class and, most importantly, they had a lot of fun.

It’s back to the drawing board now, as the coaches and I will get together and specify what their kids need to improve on as individual players and as a team. It’s another step for our program to help our coaches focus on the development of our players on the ice.

Our off-ice curriculum will also continue to advance as we continue to focus on specific areas appropriate to our players’ ages and levels.

I’d like to thank all of our opponents – players and coaches – for their sportsmanship during the tournament. Good luck to all and we’ll see you around the rinks! Brad Church is the head coach mentor of the Inside Edge Runners.

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2010 ARIZONA CACTUS CUP

Stake Your Claim To the Arizona Cactus Cup! Great Hockey Experience in Beautiful Arizona!

Plans continue for an exciting Martin Luther King Weekend of hockey here in the Valley. The Inside Edge Runners Tournament Committee is busy preparing for the inaugural Arizona Cactus Cup, which kicks off the evening of Friday, January 15, 2010 and runs through Monday, January 18, 2010.

This exciting weekend will feature a four-game minimum, awards for first- and second-place teams, pin-trading and other fun off-ice activities. Photographers and videographers will be on-hand throughout the weekend to capture the hockey-action.

A USA Hockey-sanctioned tournament, the Arizona Cactus Cup will feature A/B, as well as AA divisions from Mite to U18, and is being offered to teams throughout the U.S. and Canada. The committee hopes to field a very competitive tournament and is encouraging local teams to participate as well. Come join us for a fun-filled hockey weekend!

Interested teams can register for the Arizona Cactus Cup via IERunners.com or AZCactusCup.com. Registrations will be accepted until December 15, 2009.

For more information, visit AZCactusCup.com or e-mail the tournament directors at Taylor416@cox.net or RunnersMasten@gmail.com.
 Plenty of stock put in off-ice training

By Brian McDonough

Prior to their first tournament of the season late last month in Ohio, the VOSHA Lady Coyotes were pushing themselves hard off the ice, working out 3-4 times a week through a program put in place by the coaching staff and Phoenix’s Core CrossFit workout center.

“We’ve always emphasized a strong off-ice program for our girls,” said head coach Gayle Shalloo. “Not only are they getting faster and stronger, but they’ve also been able to compete for three solid periods of hockey without running on fumes.”

The training, which encompasses many ideologies of USA Hockey’s National Development Program, will continue throughout the season and into the off-season as the girls set their sights on landing a college or prep school opportunity.

“It’s a very important part of our program,” said Shalloo. “It’s key to making the girls successful on the ice.”

And that means performing well on a national stage.

“If you want to compete for regional and national championships, you have to put a lot of effort into off-ice conditioning,” said Shalloo. “That, in turn, leads to more exposure for our girls, which is equally important.”

This season, the Lady Coyotes program boasts girls from Montana, New Mexico, Texas, and, of course, Arizona, and expectations are high as it begins its fourth season.

“There’s a lot of talent here and a lot of hard workers,” said Shalloo. “We’re excited about the endless potential we have this year.”

Mike Bahn is the Coyotes’ strength and conditioning coordinator.

AWAY FROM THE RUBBER: Goalkeepers need specific preparation

One of the most important positions on the ice is, unfortunately, often the most overlooked regarding physical, technical and mental preparation.

A goalkeeper’s performance can have more influence on the outcome of a game than any other player on the ice. We’ve all seen it: Poor play by a team can be made up for by a stellar goaltending performance, and conversely, unfortunately, a very good team can be reduced to average when their goaltender can’t make a save.

When it comes to physical demands of the game, a goaltender is different than a forward or defenseman. Goalkeepers play the entire game (hopefully!) and while they do get intermittent rests when the puck is in the opposite end of the rink, they must be in a constant state of readiness for anything to happen.

Goalkeepers might not skate long distances, usually staying with 10 feet of their crease area, but the demands to stay in a loaded squat position, and move from side to side for long periods of time are incredibly demanding. Even the skating motion of a goaltender is different from that of a skater, with different skates and enormous leg pads restricting various motions.

It’s unfortunate that many times goalkeepers get thrown into off-ice workouts in the same groups as skaters, doing the same exercises and regimens. Off the ice, goalkeeper workouts should be as different as their position on the ice, from strength and agility development to energy system demands.

Strength and agility training should be based on maintaining a deep, loaded position for prolonged periods of time, being able to explosively move in any direction (usually for only a stride or two). A strong and stable torso is critical for a player to safely maintain such a position and makes it possible to perform amazing movements while off their feet. Hand-eye coordination movement should also be incorporated into drills.

Tennis balls are an excellent tool to keep in a training bag; they can be used to test the goalkeeper’s ability to catch (with either hand) while maintaining a loaded, ready position or while doing agility drills that required multi-directional, explosive movement, reacting to the movement of the ball.

The energy demands of goalkeepers are also distinctly different than that of a skater. Although there are intermittent rest periods, they vary radically from a skater’s in that those rest periods are spent in a standing position (with constant attention to what’s going on down the ice), and the rest periods can be random in duration.

A goaltender may get 20 seconds of rest or they may get a minute or two. The work demand of a goaltender can also be just as varied; a skater usually skates hard for a minute or less, whereas a goaltender may be forced to work hard for up to two minutes or more.

Preparing like you play is more than a motivational phrase; it means that players, including goalkeepers, need to prepare physically for the demands on their game.

LadyCoyotesHockey.com
Expectations remain high as season begins

By Matt Mackinder

Optimism is sky high in the Mission Arizona organization as head coach Jeremy Goltz looks to prepare his squads now for success in the spring.

“Our expectations are simple,” he said. “We want to win an 18 AAA state championship, an 18 AA state championship and a 16 AA state championship, along with seeing the Bantams and two Pee Wee teams grow and prepare to move up the chain and be ready for the next season.”

Goltz said watching kids at all levels brings back memories. He also made mention of promising newcomers this season.

“We had some great pickups with Chace Jackson (Nevada Stars/18 AAA), Tyler Pride (VOSHA/18 AA), Zach Purcell (DYHA Bantam AA/16 AA) and a whole new cast of characters making up the new ‘Red Army’ at the Bantam and Pee Wee levels,” said Goltz.

“It’s fun to see all these little guys wearing the colors. I was at the first Pee Wee game and it looked like that old Frosted Mini-Wheats (cereal) commercial where they shrunk adults down to kids. It was hilarious to see all the young guns out there.”

Once the season starts, though, the expectations are turned up a notch.

“It’s tough to say what the measuring-stick games are,” said Goltz. “At the younger levels, consistently beating a team is tough because the maturity of the guys and focus is all over the place, so I think it would be safe to say consistently beating the same team is an accomplishment.”

Goltz then ran down each division and who he sees as the favorite.

“The 18 AAA is P.F. Chang’s for sure,” said Goltz, who has been coaching since 1994. “They won’t place us until playdowns, but that three-game matchup is our goal and why we prepare. We want to become the elite team and you have to beat them - they are the best right now.”

“The 18 AA is Kurt Goar’s ‘Purple Attack,’ the (Arizona Hockey) Union. Goar is an icon in this town and I, as well as our entire program, have a lot of respect for him.”

“16 AA is CAHA,” Goltz continued. “It’s been us and them so many years in a row in the final for the state championship that it just seems to be our rival. I have a lot of respect for Coach (Dennis) Leclair and what he’s done with his loyal crew at CAHA.”

And for Goltz, getting each of his teams down to 20 players was no easy task.

“Cutting kids is the hardest thing I do,” said Goltz. “When the guy who is looking at these kids in the eye and let them know it didn’t go their way, so you darn well believe I’m going to make decisions with integrity.

“I just want our 120 kids to grow, become better hockey players, better young men, and be prepared to compete as they advance through our organization and the opportunities after.”

“I personally want to have a smile on my face and enjoy the game I love. That’s sometimes not easy to do with all the pressure that comes my way, but the kids for me are the fun.”

Goltz also noted the Mission philosophy as it relates to the entire organization.

“It incorporates on-ice elements such as skill development, work ethic and healthy competition with off-ice values such as teamwork, community service, academic performance and family,” Goltz said. “Every young athlete in our program is more than just a hockey player. A Mission AZ Ice experience is about the whole child.”

Mission Arizona

Mission Arizona

Local Midget standouts decide on ASU

By Brian McDonough

For three local Tier I Midget standouts, there’s no place like home.

Forward Danny Anderson, formerly of P.F. Chang’s, along with forward Cam Morgan and goaltender Clay Taylor, both Mission Arizona alums, and all playing for Arizona State University’s Division I team as freshmen this season.

“It’s nice to see some of the top players in town start to look at ASU as an option,” said Sun Devils head coach Jeremy Goltz. “We’re dealing with guys who were monsters for their tier teams and with that experience they’ll hopefully make an immediate impact.”

Anderson has already proved that he’s a special player, according to Goltz, while Morgan, who was also named Arizona Rubber’s Arizona High School Hockey Association Varsity A Player of the Year with Pinnacle High last season, continues to improve on a daily basis. Taylor will serve in a backup role to sophomore Clay Taylor.

Mark Shacker.

“I’m glad to see these guys on our roster,” said Goltz. “They all have a lot to learn, but we’re really excited to have them in our (locker) room.”

Other Arizona-bred Tier I products on ASU’s squad include Jarret Costello, a junior defenseman, sophomore forward Jeremy Van Buskirk, junior forward Matt Mackey and junior forward Pat Lind.

“They paved the way for these young guys not only in Midgets, but now in their college careers,” said Goltz. “We have a great mix of local elite players and players from all over North America.”

Mission Arizona

Mission Arizona

Mission Arizona
Arizona State’s Division I roster takes shape

The Arizona State Sun Devils’ Division I roller hockey team was selected last month after a series of tryouts at Rollerplex.

Eleven players from Arizona and California with experience in top roller programs like the Tour Outcasts, Arizona Stars and Phoenix Dragons, as well as top ice programs like P.F. Chang’s, Mission Arizona and the Phoenix Polar Bears, made the roster.

Jeremy VanBuskirk (Phoenix) headlines the group of returning forwards along with Long Duong (Peoria) and Derek Bolls (Casa de Coza, Calif.).

VanBuskirk and Duong were the Sun Devils’ most prolific scorers last season, but both dealt with injuries and neither played more than six games.

One of the Sun Devils’ biggest recruits, Tyler Koressel (Prescott), leads a talented group of newcomers. Koressel has played at the highest levels of the game and won a PIHA national championship in 2008 with the Phoenix Dragons.

Also new to the roster is Will Heinze (San Clemente, Calif.), one of three California natives on the team. The second-semester addition of transfer Keith Patterson (Mesa), formerly a captain of the Phoenix Polar Bears, will also bolster ASU’s attack.

Returning on defense are Brian Ganz (Sunnyvale, Calif.) and Alex Dott (Tempe). Ganz led the team in goals, points and penalty minutes last year and carried the team offensively at Nationals.

Joining them on the backline are freshmen standouts Dan Anderson (Peoria) and Jordan Clarke (Chandler). Both Anderson and Clarke played AAA roller and have extensive ice experience as well. Clarke played Midget Major for the Polar Bears while Anderson played for P.F. Chang’s.

Starting in net again this year is Clay Taylor (Peoria), who led the nation in saves last season as a true freshman.

The Sun Devils open their season Oct. 17 in San Jose. They host their only home tournament of the year at Rollerplex beginning Dec. 5.

By Alex Dott

Last month, the Arizona roller hockey community - 20 kids in particular - was treated to an unparalleled all-day camp at Rollerplex run by Itan Chavira, arguably the most famous roller player in the world.

Although Chavira usually heads the camps himself, this group was lucky enough to have the added assistance of Itan’s older brother, Juaquin, a world-class player in his own right.

“This was a terrific opportunity for local kids to get a glimpse of the talent that’s out there,” said Rollerplex’s Karen Fullmer. “It’s a special thing to get personal instruction from such incredible players.”

Chavira, from California, has reached unmatched recognition primarily through the popularity of his YouTube videos. Like the great ones in other sports, he’s known simply by his first name to his fans and followers.

For those attending the camp who might have been awestruck about meeting and being taught by a couple of their idols, the experience was something they’ll never forget.

“I was a little nervous at first because I’ve always looked up to them,” said camp participant Jayne Haveman, 13, of Chandler.

“But they were probably the nicest people I’ve ever met.”

Surprised by the easy-going, humble nature of their instructors, camp participants were also surprised by the types of drills and concepts Chavira focused on over the course of the eight hours of rink time.

“I think some of us kind of expected to do a lot of the dangling,” said Haveman. “But we learned a lot from the clinic. Some kids were surprised at how much we worked on other important stuff.”

For Chavira, that’s nothing new. Kids amazed by his moves they see on the Internet often expect to be taught those moves all day. But the roller standout has his reasons for stressing the fundamentals, especially to those still learning the game.

“When I was younger, I played like that all the time,” Chavira explained. “But I was never on any good teams, I never won anything until I changed the way I played.”

Nobody in roller hockey today can execute Chavira’s moves with such consistency and little effort, but even the best dangler in the game learned when and when not to resort to that fancy style of play.

Today, he may be famous for his videos and his mind-boggling puckhandling skills but, on the rink, Chavira is a fundamentally sound and complete player – something he wants to instill in his campgoers.

“My favorite thing to work on with the kids is puck-control and passing,” he said. “Those two things are such a huge part of the game.”

For the four-hour morning session followed by four more hours in the afternoon, Itan and Juaquin drilled the kids on mastering all the fundamentals of roller hockey, including puck-control, odd-man rushes and skating – lots of it.

“I think the kids were surprised by how hard they worked,” said Fullmer. “So many of them were worn out and had blisters all over their feet from skating hard for eight hours.”

Surprise and doubt have followed Chavira’s ice and roller hockey careers. Many were shocked that he was playing pro hockey in the ECHL at the age of 20, only three years after playing his first season of travel ice.

He was a shining example of success to contradict the old-fashioned notion that the great ones in other sports do not play roller hockey.

Although Chavira usually heads the camps himself, he and Juaquin would welcome a return trip to Arizona.

For those attending the clinic who might have been awestruck about meeting and being taught by a couple of their idols, the experience was something they’ll never forget.

“I felt a lot of pressure being ‘the roller hockey guy,’’” he said of his time in the ECHL. “I think some people thought I’d get cut quickly.”

For now, Chavira is done with ice hockey and happy to make his living on the blue tile. Besides running successful camps all over the world, he is set to travel to Spain this fall to play in an elite roller league which pays all of its top players.

With trips to Hong Kong, Scotland and Spain on the horizon, Chavira is staying busy but says he and Juaquin would welcome a return trip to Arizona.

“We were really impressed here and loved the facility all around,” Itan said. “The kids all listened and worked hard, there was good talent, and we had a great time.”

Looking for pictures from the recent Labor Day and Ice Breaker tournaments?

E-mail A-Z Photo at pictures@a-zphoto.com or call 480-839-4611!
Most high school hockey teams have one person to thank, above all others, for the growth and success of their program. Few of these program leaders, however, are as young as 16-year-old Kevin Smith of Horizon High School. Although he started in ice hockey, Smith fell in love with the roller game when he began playing at the age of 10.

“When I was younger, roller was what I could afford to do and what was available for me to play,” he said. “And, after a couple of years, I was hooked.”

By the age of 12, Smith began playing travel roller hockey for the Dexter’s Lab Rats. From there, he moved on to the Casey’s Crushers, Team Excalibur, and, finally, to the Tour Outcasts, with whom he has played the past three seasons.

Smith was always a natural leader on the teams he played for and those qualities were brought to the forefront last year when he became a freshman at Horizon High. It was 15-year-old Smith who played a pivotal role in getting the team going and keeping it focused, both on and off the rink.

Organizing the team off the floor and earning all-state honors on it, Smith led the Huskies to a second-place finish at the Arizona Inline Hockey Association (AIHA) state finals. He was also captain of the junior varsity Huskies ice team that won the state championship last year.

“Both teams achieved a lot last year,” said Smith. “With ice, we defended our title. On wheels, nobody expected us to finish where we did. It was a great end to a terrific year.”

While Smith does a lot of off-rink organizational work, his on-rink play can be forgotten sometimes, says AIHA tournament director Dean Koressel, who has seen firsthand many of Smith’s efforts.

“Horizon roller hockey only existed because of him last year,” said Koressel. “But he also led the team in assists on the rink. He does it all.”

Smith’s influence expands beyond Huskies hockey. His hard work has affected the growth not only of his school’s program, but other schools as well.

“Kevin has really stuck with this and has gotten a lot done,” added Koressel. “His work has directly led to increased participation in high school roller hockey in Arizona in general.”

Nick Boyarsky, Smith’s coach on the Tour Outcasts the past three years, has also been witness to much of the time and effort spent by the motivated teenager.

“It takes a very dedicated kid to not only gather his buddies to play, but also do the little organizational things required to make it work,” said Boyarsky. “The game could benefit from more young players like him.”

In addition to playing for and organizing Horizon hockey, Smith is also a certified referee for both ice and roller. In the future, he also hopes to get involved in coaching.

“I first got involved with off-rink stuff when I stepped up to make sure Horizon could have a high school team,” said Smith. “But the past few years, I’ve realized this game has given me a lot and I want to give back as much as I can.”

After all the giving he’s done, Smith figures to earn quite a bit back in 2010. The ice team is expected to compete for another state title while the roller squad is poised for unparalleled success.

Smith hopes to have enough players for two Huskies roller teams this season - JV and varsity - with high hopes for the top squad.

“That team should be able to skate with the best in Arizona and do well regionally if given the chance,” said Smith. “Only two of last year’s players graduated and we have some new faces coming out to play. It should be exciting.”

Along with getting the Horizon roller team on its feet organizationally last season, Kevin Smith was also a force on the floor.
An invention to help prevent recreational inline skaters from falling has turned out to be a groundbreaking training innovation for hockey players.

The Newron Trainon 4.0 is a chassis that is made to fit on any ice hockey skate boot. It allows a hockey player to execute a hockey stride on a hard surface such as a street, driveway or basketball court the exact way the player would on the ice.

The potential training uses for a hockey player are limitless, says Sebastien Fortier, the president of Encore Hockey, the company that also has introduced highly acclaimed training aids such as the Flypuck, the official off-ice pucks of the Anaheim Ducks, San Jose Sharks, Minnesota Wild and Chicago Blackhawks, and the Skate Slug skate weight system.

Teams from Arizona are strongly encouraged to contact Encore Hockey directly to have a representative come to their home rink and set up a comprehensive demonstration, Fortier says, adding that satisfaction is 100 percent guaranteed. There is a special online discount for readers of this magazine: Type in RUBBER MAGAZINE at the checkout to save even more money (visit EncoreHockey.com to order).

“The Newron was built for secure, stable skating for recreational skaters,” Fortier says. “But we realized, ‘This is like a hockey stride.’

“We did video tests of players on ice, then off ice with the Newron, and the Newron simulates the stride more accurately than anything on the market.”

Hockey and skating coaches have long debated the pros and cons of inline skating and its effects on their players’ ice hockey strides. The “roller stride,” as it’s commonly referred to, limits or eliminates a skater’s toe kick, meaning their stride extension, and thus speed and agility, is compromised.

The Newron addresses all of these concerns through its unique design, which allows for the same mechanical movements as ice skating.

Another huge benefit to players or anyone interested in fitness in warm-weather climates such as California and Arizona is that the Newron is perfect for training outdoors anytime. Rather than searching for and paying for ice slots at a rink, you can work on your speed, stride and fitness anywhere, anytime.

“The technology is pretty unique,” Fortier says. “It can help anyone.”

The Newron’s double tandem wheels allow users to skate over small objects without tripping and the chassis is made of an Anti-Abrasive Xylex Polycarbonate for long-lasting durability.

The Newron has several fans at the NHL level. Dallas Stars defenseman Stephan Robidas was so impressed after trying the Newron that he incorporated it into his training. Stars assistant coach Stu Barnes, a former teammate, and current Dallas forward Steve Ott have followed suit, as has Toronto Maple Leafs defenseman Francois Beauchemin.

“Every time someone tries it, they’re shocked for a minute, like they don’t trust it to do what we say it will,” Fortier says. “After that, we can’t get them to take the skate off.”

The Newron blade sizes are made specifically to fit the skates of any size and brand boot.

Encore Hockey also is looking for qualified representatives in the Northern California and Arizona markets.

To order your Newron system, to learn more about it or to inquire about one of those positions, visit EncoreHockey.com or call 1-888-784-6444.
Coming into tryouts, I didn't want people to look at me and even captained its U18 AAA team. Goltz had played for three years in Mission's travel program, and he was Arizona Rubber's Varsity A Player of the Year last season. Morgan had never been in a situation like he was recently at ASU’s Division I tryouts, a situation, as he put it, “where I really had to bite my nails to see if I was going to make the team.”

That took some getting used to. Game situations, and not drills, dominated the tryouts. There were three rounds of cuts. The 97 players that began the tryouts soon whittled to 36. “It’s like living on an edge, every day you had to be at your top because you didn’t want to get cut,” Morgan said. “I’ve never gone through something like that before, so it was new for me, but it made me work harder.”

The freshman also worked to move past an older and they’re bigger and they’re trying to make the same team you are, so there’s no buddies out there when you get on the ice. It’s every man for himself.”

He made a nice play to set up a goal in the scrimmage, and then waited on news of the final cuts to come down. Later that night, Morgan’s phone lit up. It was a text from Goltz.

A grueling ASU tryout behind him, Morgan isn’t ready to turn off the jets just yet. “Making the team was just the first step,” he said. “I don’t want to be that guy that’s in a suit up in the stands. I want to be on the ice. I mean, I’m going to accept any role that’s given to me, but I’m going to work my butt off in practice to make sure I get out there.”

By Ryan Casey

The Arizona Sundogs have finalized plans for the 2009-10 Arizona Sundogs Youth Hockey Program. Arizona Sundogs Youth Hockey will offer three programs as part of its overall function, including the Jr. Sundogs program, a skills clinic and a learn-to-skate program.

Sundogs head coach and general manager Marco Pietroniro will serve as director.

The Jr. Sundogs program will field teams separated into four age groups (Mite - 8 and under; Squirt - 10 and under; Pee Wee - 12 and under; and Bantam - 14 and under) to compete during the 2009-10 season.

Jr. Sundogs teams will have 20 practices and will compete in eight home games during the season. Away games may be added at a later date.

Per-player costs for the Jr. Sundogs program have been set at $390 and include a jersey and socks. The skills clinic will cost $160 for 10 on-ice practices and the learn-to-skate program will cost $99 per session.

Each session includes five on-ice practices. There will be four learn-to-skate sessions offered throughout the season. Payment plans and scholarships are available.

Arizona Sundogs Youth Hockey is currently looking for coaches and volunteers. All coaches must be certified through USA Hockey. If interested in coaching or volunteering or for more information, contact youthhockey@arizonasundogs.com.

For complete schedules, registration and payment forms, visit Arizonasundogs.com.
2009-10 Arizona Alumni

Note: Select team/league rosters for the 2009-10 season were not available at press time. Send additions/deletions/corrections to info@arizonarubber.com.

PROFESSIONAL HOCKEY
American Hockey League
Dave Spina (Mesa) - San Antonio Rampage

COLLEGE HOCKEY
 Division I - Men
 Athletic Hockey
 Jeremy Langlois (Tempe) - Quinnipiac University

Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference
Max Moley (Glendale) - St. Lawrence University

Hockey East
 Kyle Beattle (Avondale) - University of Maine
 Phil Samuelsson (Scottsdale) - Boston College
 Dave Stratham (Tempe) - Northeastern University

Western Collegiate Hockey Association
Andrew Hamburg (Phoenix) - Colorado College

Division III - Men
 Northern Collegiate Hockey Association
 Sam Eccles (Mesa) - St. Norbert College

Division I - Women
Hockey East
 Erin Wentes (Scottsdale) - University of Vermont

Division III - Women
ECAC East
 Kristen Gresko (Phoenix) - Southern Maine

ECAC West
Sydney Williams (Phoenix) - Chatham University

JUNIOR HOCKEY
 Atlantic Junior Hockey League
 Shane Gleason (Phoenix) – Philadelphia Junior Flyers
 Ben Oskroba (Tempe) – Walpole Express

Central Junior Hockey League
 Trevor Wilson (Phoenix) – Smiths Falls Bears

Eastern Junior Hockey League
 Michael Colantone (Cave Creek) – Jersey Hitmen
 Steven Edgeworth (Phoenix) – Jersey Hitmen
 Eric Ferber (Scottsdale) – Bridgewater Bandits
 Chris Walker (Phoenix) – Jersey Hitmen

North American Hockey League
 Mike Kreig (Phoenix) – Alexandria Blizzard
 Duncan McKellar (Phoenix) – Wenatchee Wild
 Billy Mulligan (Chandler) – Janesville Jets
 Jordan Young (Cave Creek) – Wenatchee Wild

North American Junior Hockey League
 Western Junior Hockey League
 Sam Eccles (Mesa) - St. Norbert College

North American Junior Hockey League
 Mike Kreig (Phoenix) – Alexandria Blizzard
 Duncan McKellar (Phoenix) – Wenatchee Wild
 Billy Mulligan (Chandler) – Janesville Jets
 Jordan Young (Cave Creek) – Wenatchee Wild

ECAC East
 Kristen Gresko (Phoenix) - Southern Maine

Northern Pacific Hockey League
 Jeremy Hiltabidal (Tucson) – Butte Roughriders
 Bradley Hintler (Mayer) – Helena Bighorns
 Shawn Hunter (Cave Creek) – Yellowstone Quake
 Tyler Marek (Phoenix) – Missoula Maulers
 Barry Parker (Scottsdale) – Missoula Maulers
 Sean Sanford (Ahwatukee) – Missoula Maulers
 Joseph Summa (Glendale) – Rogue Valley Wranglers

United States Hockey League
 Aaron Ave (Chandler) – Omaha Lancers
 Richie Coney (Cave Creek) – Sioux Falls Stampede
 Preston Dekker (Phoenix) – Tri-City Storm
 Anthony Hamburg (Phoenix) – Omaha Lancers
 Danny Heath (Glendale) – Des Moines Buccaneers
 Colten St. Clair (Gilbert) – Fargo Force

U.S. National Team Development Program
 Zac Larraza (Scottsdale) – Under-17 Team
 Luke Moffatt (Paradise Valley) – Under-18 Team

Western Hockey League
 J.T. Barnett (Scottsdale) – Vancouver Giants
 Cody Castro (Peoria) – Lethbridge Hurricanes
 Kyle Verdinno (Phoenix) – Kelowna Rockets

Western States Hockey League
 Andrew Hamburg (Phoenix) - Colorado College

Western States Hockey League
 Anthony Cullen (Phoenix) – Boulder Jr. Bison

THE WHYTE STUFF:
Fresh approach at DYHA already paying off

Much has happened at Oceanside Ice Arena since last season. Many loyal members have put in a great deal of time and effort to build our association back up to where it used to be.

With all of their hard work and an amazing coaching staff, along with providing a program full of value, the Desert Youth Hockey Association has started the season on a very positive note.

Out of the 14 teams representing DYHA, nine of them competed over Labor Day Weekend, and, from those nine teams, two of them won the consolation game and three took second place. We were also fortunate to have two of our teams win championships (congratulations to our Bantam A and B teams on their success!)

All of our teams played extremely well and were very competitive, and this is because of a few key focal points that DYHA takes very seriously: development of the athletes, respect for the game, and building a family atmosphere.

At DYHA, every member has the opportunity to be on the ice two extra sessions per week, in addition to their regular team slots. Each week, our players can come to our skills session and powerskating session, both of which are run by professional instructors in an effort to improve their individual skills. This, in turn, allows our coaches to spend more time on team concepts and game-like situations than on basic skill development.

Each and every coach at DYHA has very similar goals that all revolve around developing good, upstanding people as well as athletes. We constantly preach to our players the importance of respecting the game and all who are involved in it. That’s one area where we, as an association, feel needs to be addressed and reinforced constantly by impressing upon our players how vital it is to show good sportsmanship. Win or lose, we always shake hands.

Success anywhere in life comes with solid leadership from the top down, and all of our coaches and managers have bought into that philosophy.

Although we’ve made some great changes at our home arena, such as new glass, a new electric Zamboni and new colors, we’re more importantly creating a safe, family environment for everyone who walks through our doors. When young children feel comfortable and are at ease, they’ll enjoy what they do, work hard, and learn more.

From the DYHA board members down to all of the parents, we challenge everyone to be solid role models. This, in turn, provides our players a fun-filled learning experience while they do what they can to reach their potential.

And now, with the Arizona State University Sun Devils program calling Oceanside Ice Arena its home, we’re calling upon these players to volunteer some of their time as role models and mentors to our DYHA players.

This will definitely help build a strong community between the two programs, and provide these young and impressionable Firebirds with people to look up to and players to emulate.

Sean Whyte is the director of hockey operations and coach in chief at DYHA.

Whyte
AZARCARA RUBBER & WARRIOR HOCKEY PRESENT...
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WAS YOUR TEAM ACTIVE DOING VOLUNTEER WORK IN THE ARIZONA COMMUNITY DURING THE 2009/10 SEASON? WE WANT TO HEAR ABOUT IT!

Submit your entry for the Community Service Team of the Year by sending an e-mail detailing all of your team’s charitable work, along with any photographs to:
COMMUNITYSERVICE@ARIZONARUBBER.COM

Along with being featured on an upcoming cover of Arizona Rubber Magazine, Kyle will also join the winning team for a pizza party, where players will receive a prize package from Warrior Hockey, including tickets to a Coyotes game for the entire team!

All amateur ice and inline teams in Arizona are eligible!

Deadline for entries is Monday, August 3. The winning team will be announced on Monday, August 10.

For more details, visit www.arizonarubber.com or www.warriorhockey.com
The 10K stick is the lightest I’ve ever used. The first time I held it, it felt like a feather. I also think it’s one of the better-looking sticks on the market, as well as being the most durable. I’m a pretty big 15-year-old boy (5-foot-8, 170 pounds) and I’ve snapped a lot of other sticks within days of using them, but I haven’t had this problem with the 10K. After long hours of aggressive use, the only wear on the stick are chips on the graphics. 

DURABILITY: It astonished me. To be honest, I thought the 10K would be another light stick that would break as soon as I took a hard shot or got slammed into the boards. On the contrary, it had no noticeable cracks after two months of use. My coach makes me practice one-timers all the time, and I remember after each one looking at the stick to see if I had broken it, but, as I mentioned, the only wear are chips on the graphics. From my experience, the durability will outlast most other sticks.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE: The Reebok 10K is exceptional. There’s nothing I don’t like about the stick. I still have the explosiveness of my shot, and at the same time the 10K also gives me the softness for good moves with the puck. The graphics are simple yet appealing, the durability is unmatched and it has tremendous feel. I’m not sure what else you can ask from a hockey stick. There are a lot of good ones out there, but it’s tough not to give this one very high marks.

SUMMARY: In my opinion, Reebok got it right with the 10K. All of the work and technology they put into it make it a great stick. Out of any stick on the market, I’d recommend this one first. I can’t name one person I wouldn’t recommend it to, unless you’re a beginner (I think everyone should start with a wooden stick, but that’s just me).

The Test Team is continuing to accept applications for the 2009-10 season! Those applicants with the BEST sample reviews will be chosen. To apply, visit BehindTheMask.com and be certain to fill out and answer ALL of the questions asked on the application.

Creating customer loyalty drives ASEC

While the dismal state of the economy is forcing many customer service-based companies into survival mode, such is not the case at American Skating Entertainment Centers. For ASEC, the largest owner/operator of ice skating facilities in the United States, business is booming.

With offices in New York and Phoenix, ASEC owns and operates the Westchester Skating Academy in Elmsford, N.Y.; the MVP Sports Factory, the Cary Ice House and the Garner Ice House - all in Raleigh, N.C.; and the Polar Ice House in Grapevine, Texas.

Under a long-term agreement with the Anschutz Entertainment Group, owners of the Los Angeles Kings, ASEC also operates the Toyota Sports Center, which houses the training facilities and corporate offices of the Kings and the NBA’s Los Angeles Lakers in El Segundo, Calif.

Considering that discretionary recreation and entertainment dollars are usually the first to be slashed in family budgets when money is tight, news that ASEC sales and profits have increased over the same period last year is indeed remarkable.

According to ASEC president Brad Berman, a Phoenix resident, there are several reasons why the organization is performing so well.

“Now more than ever before, consumers are being extremely careful as to where they invest their paychecks,” said Berman. “As a result, our staff and management teams have to work harder than ever to earn customer loyalty.

“We’ve accomplished this by creating a positive customer experience with every visit, getting to know our clientele on a personal level and having a consistently clean, warm and inviting environment while maintaining a superior ice product.”

A diverse program offering, including social-oriented activities as “Coffee Club” (for midday skaters) and broomball (for church groups, fraternities and sororities), complements the traditional industry staples of public sessions, skating school, figure skating and hockey at each ASEC facility.

Skating camps of all types - hockey, figure skating and Skate, Rattle and Roll Kids Day Camps - are strategically scheduled throughout the year and enthusiastically embraced.

Cultivating personal relationships and a friendly rapport with all customers are also vital keys for success, according to Berman.

“We want our skaters to feel like our facilities are their recreational home away from home,” said Berman. “Our managers make a concerted effort to know every regular who walks through the door. Being greeted on a first-name basis and taking a sincere interest in the day-to-day goings-on of a patron is integral in developing customer allegiance.”

In addition to operating year-round ice facilities, ASEC is developing seasonal outdoor rinks that operate during holiday periods. Two projects currently in development for the upcoming winter months include LA Live, located in front of Nokia Live Theatre and directly across the street from the Staples Center in Los Angeles, and at Waterford Lakes in Orlando, Fla. Acquisitions of existing facilities and management contracts with municipally-owned rinks are also in development.

The successful growth of ASEC at all its locations is also indicative of the tremendous passion patrons have of ice sports.

“The loyalty of our customers is actually inspirational,” said Berman. “It motivates our staff to go that extra mile in the name of customer service. To say the least, we appreciate their business and it will never be taken for granted.”

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