

## Junior A hockey returning to Ontario next month

Written By ROBERT BELARDI

The OJHL released an update on September 5, announcing the return of junior A hockey in Ontario.

The league is set to return in October or November with alternative start dates as well depending on the advice from provincial authorities and townships amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

The OJHL is prepared for multiple options and altering playoffs should the league be fully operational or be shorted.

As for now, teams have been given the go-ahead to get back on to the ice this month to begin Phase 1 training. The league, is asking teams to follow all protocols entering arenas, provincial and municipal guidelines through this time.

According to the commissioner of the league, the OJHL is not factoring fans in the arenas as a predominant force to hold back the OJHL; much like other leagues have.

?The OJHL can appreciate that a number of junior leagues have made decisions to not start until a determined amount of fans are allowed in buildings, however, this will not be a factor in the opening of the OJHL's season,? Commissioner Marty Savoy said.

The league has worked closely with Hockey Canada, the Canadian Junior Hockey League, the Ontario Hockey Federation, local health authorities, civic municipalities and the Ontario Hockey Association to structure a safe and functional league this season.

According to the release, the league plans to conduct regular season schedules with a ?full-inter league format to conference or divisional-only play. Playoff formats include the traditional 7-game series and 4 rounds to reduced games per series and possible elimination.?

OJHL Chairman Marc Mercier confirmed that all teams were very well informed of the return to play plan with monthly calls and meetings. He also confirmed in his quote, the league worked with Athletic Therapists and COVID-19 ?Team Liaisons? to ensure the safety of everyone involved.

On September 10, the Ontario government is set to invest \$21 million dollars to aid athletes and their coaches in Ontario.

OJHL Director of Communications Jim Mason confirmed via email, this will not apply to the league.