

Young hockey teams will compete to 'Be the Leafs' for a day

Can you keep up with Kessel? Do you dream of lacing up your skates with the Leafs and taking the ice at Air Canada Centre? Under Armour and the Toronto Maple Leafs want to make that dream a reality for young hockey teams across the GTA. Bantam teams can sign up now at www.stormthecentre.ca to participate in a series of challenges to earn their spot in the Armour Cup, a regulation game at Air Canada Centre where they will meet Phil Kessel and spend a day working with Toronto Maple Leafs staff. 'At Under Armour, our vision is to make all athletes better,' Director of Marketing Corey Friesen said. 'Storm the Centre is a unique opportunity for youth players to play like the pros for a day. To earn their spot at Air Canada Centre, teams need to show us how much they want it through a variety of on and off-ice challenges!'

In order to participate, Bantam team coaches must register at www.stormthecentre.ca

Pre-registration is open now.

The contest runs until December and is divided into three periods, which will narrow the field down to two winning teams.

First period (Oct. 1 to Nov. 12): Over six weeks, competing teams must earn points by building their fan base on the Storm the Centre microsite and participating in a variety of on and off-ice challenges. The 10 teams with the most points after the first period will move on to the next period.

Second period (Nov. 21): Ten teams will lace up their skates for a Skills Gauntlet at the MasterCard Centre for Hockey Excellence. They will need to show grit and teamwork in drills such as accuracy shooting, puck control, shootouts and average team speed. Two teams from the Skills Gauntlet will move on to the third period.

Third period (Dec. 7): This is where the hard work pays off. Two bantam hockey teams get to Storm the Centre and be Leafs for a day. They will play in the Armour Cup 'a regulation game played on the same ice as their heroes, meet Phil Kessel, spend a day working with Toronto Maple Leaf staff and win Under Armour Baselayer apparel and gear for their team.

'The passion young Maple Leaf fans have for the game is incredible,' Kessel declared. 'I hope they put that energy and enthusiasm into their campaigns to Storm the Centre. I'm looking forward to sharing the ice with the two winning teams when they play the Armour Cup at Air Canada Centre.'

This is the second year of the Storm the Centre contest. Last year's winning teams were the Whitby Wildcats and the Aurora Tigers. 'Storm the Centre was a fantastic experience for our team,' said Wildcats Head Coach David Demarinis. 'The challenges and Skills Gauntlet brought our team together on and off the ice. The day we spent at Air Canada Centre will probably go down as the highlight of our players' minor hockey careers. Playing on the big stage was an eye opening experience. The whole day our players were treated like professionals. It was a great experience and I recommend all bantam teams to participate.'

Bantam teams within a 50-mile radius of Toronto are invited to register at www.stormthecentre.ca

Pre-registration is open and teams can register until the end of the first period in mid-November. Teams that register by Oct. 1 will be eligible for a random draw in which two clubs will win tickets to a Maple Leafs game for their entire team.