

# 'Integral' part of hockey operations



L-R) Brendan Painter, Bruce Jones and Alex DeVuyst sit on the Golden Eagles' bench before a recent game at the civic centre.  
Photographer: **Bradley Tonic**

Brantford's Golden Eagles are leading the Midwestern Conference of the Greater Ontario Junior Hockey League.

On the ice, it is the players and coaches that steer the success of the team.

But what people may not realize, is that the people behind the scenes allow the Eagles to play without worrying about what must be achieved off the ice.

For Golden Eagles' coach Scott Rex, volunteers are vital to the everyday operations of any hockey team.

"They do all sorts of things," Rex said. "It's not the most glamorous job on the team but they have to get done. It is a very integral part of junior hockey operations ... Hockey games and practices just don't happen without these kinds of volunteers."

Golden Eagles' volunteer Brendan Painter has been helping the team for two seasons and feels like he has an important place in the team.

"I feel like the help we give really allows the team to play their game without distractions and lets them focus on hockey," he said. "Last year, during the playoffs, they had me dress up a little bit and skate around the ice and throw out shirts. I really felt like I was apart of the team."

Painter, 18, also said he's never seen someone as dedicated to a team as Bruce Jones, who has been a volunteer with the Golden Eagles for 11 years and arrives at the civic centre nearly five hours before a game to get everything ready.

“[Bruce] is the most dedicated person I’ve ever met.” Painter said. “He shows up five hours early and is already filling up the water bottles and making sure everything’s ready for the players to go. His dedication is unmatched.”

Jones, now 29, first started volunteering in the 1998-1999 season when he was 18 years old.

The team wasn’t performing at its peak that season, he admits, but he stood by them and has been a fixture at the rink ever since.

“I love being around the rink and the boys, they were in really tough shape when I joined, but I’ve stuck by them,” he said. “I was optimistic about the future when I started volunteering, but the one true reason I joined was for the love of the game.”

Jones is the official timekeeper at the Eagles’ home games and couldn’t be happier in his role.

His love of the game and the city are what keeps him going. Of his 11 years with the team, winning the GOJHL Sutherland Cup championship last season was definitely his favourite moment.

“Last year’s Sutherland Cup was far and away the best moment I’ve been a part of since joining. I’m hoping for a repeat this year,” he said. “We definitely have the talent to do so, and I’ll be here helping out wherever I can the whole way.”

Managing the Golden Eagles’ equipment is 16-year-old Alex “Tiny” DeVuyst, who has been volunteering with the team for six years.

“I feel that the help we give here really facilitates the team and allows them to not have to focus on the things we do like getting everything ready from equipment to water bottles,” DeVuyst said. “I think that the people that help here have a bigger impact than one would expect.”

Painter, Jones and DeVuyst are just three of the many volunteers that make junior hockey run smoothly in Brantford, and according to coach Rex, hockey wouldn’t be possible without them.

“We’re very lucky to have them, and our players are definitely spoiled. Volunteers are a very big part of every organization. We all have our duties and they do their part very well.”