

PLAY ON! BUILDING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITY (A)

Ken Mark wrote this case under the supervision of Professor J. Robert Mitchell solely to provide material for class discussion. The authors do not intend to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The authors may have disguised certain names and other identifying information to protect confidentiality.

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INTRODUCTION

“I failed” said Scott Hill, founder of the Play On! street hockey tournament. It was April 1, 2006, and, over lunch, Hill was catching up with a former classmate from the Richard Ivey School of Business. Hill had secured a consulting position at Deloitte Consulting’s office in London, Ontario, and would be reporting to work first thing on Monday. And although Hill was looking forward to steady employment — and a steady income — for the first time since he completed his MBA in 2002, his thoughts were still with the national street hockey tournament that he had run since leaving school.

“I keep wondering if there was anything more I could have done to make Play On! work,” he added.

Winding everything down a month ago means that there will be no more tournaments, it means that my investors will have lost all of their money, and I have little to show for nearly four years of effort. While it’s too late to revive anything now, I’d at least like to figure out where I went wrong.

Hill finished his lunch and leaned back in his chair. “Assuming you were in my position, would you have done anything differently?”

SCOTT HILL

For as long as he could remember, Hill had loved playing team sports. Growing up in Kingsville, Ontario, he had been passionate about hockey and participated in the youth leagues during the week, even adding on extra practice time on weekends to improve his game. But when he was 12 years old, Hill had suffered a concussion during a game, which put him in a coma for three days, essentially ending his hope for a hockey career. When Hill recovered, he switched to basketball.

Hill had always been very persistent. He begged his high-school basketball coach not to cut him from the lineup just because he was shorter than the rest of the players. His coach relented and, within a few months, Hill had become one of the team's most important starting players. He approached practices with at least as much enthusiasm as games: he had learned early on that time and effort had to be invested if he wanted to improve at anything, whether it was school or sports.

In 1999, Hill graduated from the University of Alberta with a bachelor of science degree in physiology and a minor in business, and started thinking about his career. He had just gotten married and was planning to move back to Ontario.

Because Hill was not sure what career path he wanted to take, to hedge his bets he took a series of graduate admission tests, including the MCAT (Medical College Admission Test), the GMAT (Graduate Management Admission Test), the LSAT (Law School Admission Test) and the DAT (Dental Aptitude Test). Surprisingly to Hill, he did not do well in the very areas he had excelled in during his undergraduate degree. He scored poorly on the biology section in the MCAT, and, in the DAT, although he had very good hand-eye coordination, he managed to fail the soap-carving test when he broke the carving into two pieces (which disqualified him despite having done exceptionally well on the biology section of the test). Fortunately for Hill, he did well in the GMAT and the LSAT. Because he liked business and did not have the funds to pay the deposits for law school, he decided on business school. After working at Xerox for a year, Hill was able to enter the MBA program at the Richard Ivey School of Business (Ivey).

2000 TO 2002 – IVEY MBA PROGRAM

Although Hill was the youngest student in his class, his age did not diminish his enthusiasm for the program. During his MBA, he founded the Ivey Cup, an MBA ice hockey tournament, which still bills itself as “the greatest annual MBA hockey tournament on the planet.” Between his classes and studies, Hill reached out to all North American MBA schools' student associations. On the basis of the initial feedback, which was very positive, he recruited other students to help him run the event. Hill organized it as a weekend tournament, booked the appropriate ice time and coordinated the logistics of hosting 10 different teams in London, Ontario. The event was a success, and a hockey club was formed at Ivey to continue the tournament.

Because of his role in launching the Ivey Cup, Hill became known as the “sports guy” by his classmates at Ivey. He enjoyed his MBA experience and developed a network of friends across the world. But, as Hill entered recruiting season in early 2002, he realized he would have a difficult time finding a job that he was excited about. The North American economy was suffering as a result of the bursting of the “dot-com” bubble, and companies seemed to be pulling back on their recruiting efforts.

Hill, determined to find a job with a sports organization, nevertheless approached all of the NHL teams in North America. Lacking any senior-level contacts, he telephoned the receptionist at each team's headquarters and asked to be put through to the human resources (HR) recruiting manager. Despite his efforts, only two teams responded — the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Calgary Flames. Hill was excited about his meeting with the HR manager of each of the two teams. He spoke about his passion for hockey and his willingness to give 100 per cent to helping to build the organization. He noticed, however, that the HR managers seemed disinterested. They looked as if they were merely extending him a favor by listening to his pitch. Hill closed by stating, boldly, that he was likely the best candidate they were going to come across.

Hill's chances were not promising. For example, he was offered a front-office receptionist position in Toronto paying \$12 per hour. The teams received thousands of résumés a year, both HR managers told him. They did not lack for interested candidates who would work for much less than he needed and, besides, no other positions were open. But Hill would not accept the offer to start at, literally, the very bottom. For one, by the time he completed the MBA program, Hill had two children and a third on the way. In April 2002, Hill thus decided he needed to find employment that would pay him at least \$90,000 a year.

He applied for many positions but secured only two interviews. The first was for an analyst position with EPCOR, a utilities provider in Edmonton, and the second was for a brand assistant position with Maple Leaf Foods in Toronto. Hill traveled to both sets of interviews and received an offer from EPCOR immediately. At EPCOR, Hill would be employed in its strategy department, helping the senior team to research energy trends and formulate energy policy. EPCOR was offering Hill an entry-level position at \$70,000 per year.

The Maple Leaf Foods job opportunity also seemed promising. Hill was interviewing for a position in the pork division, where he would be assisting marketing managers in developing advertisements for Maple Leaf Foods' packaged meats. It was an entry-level role in a large organization and, because it was located in Ontario, Hill was more interested in it. In addition, verbal discussions with Maple Leaf Foods suggested to Hill that the company would be willing to meet his request for \$90,000 as a starting salary. In June 2002, as he was waiting for the Maple Leaf Foods offer, he received a telephone call from Sujoy Pal, an MBA classmate who was looking for Hill's advice.

JUNE 2002 – SUJOY PAL'S QUESTION

Like Hill, Sujoy Pal was also not yet employed. In fact, at least half of the MBA class that year had yet to find employment by July 2002. In doing his research, Pal had come across an opportunity to purchase an indoor hockey league in Toronto. He called Hill to ask for his advice on the opportunity. The league had been in operation for three years and had 35 teams, each paying in the range of \$2,500 per team. The league hosted a fall/winter season of approximately 20 games and a championship tournament in March. The league had local sponsors, but sponsorship merely covered the cost of purchasing T-shirts and renting facilities. Pal could see great potential in the league but Hill was unconvinced.

Hill took a day to look into the opportunity and reviewed his findings with Pal over the telephone. "It's an all-right idea but there are several things I'd do differently," Hill recalled saying. Hill believed that confining the league's operation to Toronto would not draw the type of sponsorships an owner required to earn a living. He advised Pal to inquire about the types of marketing the league was undertaking, aside from handing out flyers to previous participants and posting ads at sports equipment stores, and whether the league could handle more than 100 teams. When asked for a straight "go" or "no go" answer, Hill replied: "I wouldn't do it."

The next day, Hill received his Maple Leaf Foods offer and began to review it. He had until the start of August 2002 before he had to get back to either EPCOR or Maple Leaf Foods. Because it was a warm weekend in late June, he made plans with his family to attend the local NBA Hoop-It-Up basketball tournament where his brother was competing. In 2002, the NBA Hoop-It-Up tournament had attracted 21,000 participants and 121,000 spectators in eight Canadian cities. It was Canada's largest three-on-three basketball tournament. The tournament had sponsors such as Gatorade, Juicy Fruit, Nike, Nintendo,

Rogers AT&T Wireless and Speedstick, and onsite sponsors such as Molson, Spalding and TSN. The tournament was managed by a company named Host Communications, Inc.

The 2002 event in London, Ontario, was, apparently, the largest event in the entire NBA Hoop-It-Up schedule. It was held in the streets surrounding downtown Victoria Park, a highly visible downtown location. From speaking with a few individuals, Hill learned that many of the costs to run the event were fixed: a location had to be secured, approvals were needed from City Hall, washroom facilities and security needed to be arranged, and an effective audio system and “event headquarters” needed to be acquired. All these arrangements needed to be done whether five or 500 teams showed up. “This is, for basketball, quite a popular sport,” he said to his wife as they watched his brother’s team compete. “But hockey is much more popular and there isn’t anything like this for street hockey. There could be an opportunity here.”

JULY 2002 – INVESTIGATING AN OPPORTUNITY

Hill spent the next few days researching everything about street hockey and ball hockey in Canada (see Exhibit 1 for background information). Hill was not too surprised to discover that Canada had few street hockey tournaments and those that did exist were local tournaments directed toward youth. One reason for this, he believed, was that the current tournaments required players to use inline skates, which players could find difficult to use if they were out of practice, and which appealed only to a finite demographic. “Why not allow teams to play in running shoes,” he thought as he browsed the Internet. “It could be safer, more culturally significant to Canadians and would thus appeal to the larger demographic” (see Exhibit 2).

The opportunity seemed vast: perhaps five million Canadians comprised the target market, most of whom had played ice hockey or skated when they were younger. An informal survey of neighbors seemed to confirm Hill’s findings: it did not matter if someone did or did not play ice hockey as a child because almost every Canadian-born male he interviewed had played some form of street hockey. All had fond memories of playing with favorite jerseys on their backs, shooting pucks into makeshift nets (or garbage cans).

Given the hockey-centric element of Canadian culture, Hill was especially excited about what he saw at the NBA Hoop-It-Up basketball tournament in London, Ontario: 1,150 teams, paying upwards of \$170 to participate. He figured that by relying on the same basic economics, a street hockey tournament could be profitable. After all, Canada had an estimated three recreational hockey players to every one recreational basketball player. Moreover, Hill saw the advantage to being the early mover in setting up this kind of street hockey tournament.

In mid-July, Hill started to work on a business plan to further assess the feasibility of the idea. Because he was to have been the sole breadwinner in the family, he was drawing down his savings to feed and house his young family. Fortunately, his father-in-law was posted to Dubai and offered Hill and his family the use of his house for the next year. In total, Hill estimated that they lived on approximately \$700 a month.

AUGUST 2002 TO DECEMBER 2002 – PLAY ON! STREET HOCKEY BEGINS

By the start of August, Hill’s enthusiasm for and confidence in the street hockey tournament was such that he decided to decline both the EPCOR and Maple Leaf Foods job options. Instead, with his personal savings running out, Hill generated some short-term income by writing case studies for the Richard Ivey School of Business and by refereeing in local hockey, basketball and soccer leagues.

After deciding to start a national street hockey tournament, Hill brought in Jim Warrington, an MBA friend, as a partner in the venture, offering him 30 per cent of the business (which was later raised to 45 per cent as a result of negotiations between the two founders). By October, Hill's 90-page business plan was ready, and he started to seek funds from friends and family. Warrington suggested that the structure of the firm would matter to potential investors because they were likely interested in generating personal tax credits given that the venture was likely to lose money for the first few years. Because Warrington was an older, more experienced executive who had close contacts with legal counsel at a large firm in Calgary, Hill went along with his suggestion. They engaged a local law firm to prepare documents relating to this special tax structure for their startup.

Hill and Warrington started pitching the idea to potential investors. Although they had few contacts who would be able to invest, they persisted, securing a few meetings through cold calls. One such meeting was with an investor in Toronto, who met them in boardroom in one of the bank towers. He impressed Hill and Warrington with what seemed like a large network of backers interested in the venture. He wanted to buy the entire rights to the street hockey series. "I'd bet \$600,000 is a lot of money to you," he told Hill. "Well, it isn't a lot of money for me." The meeting had taken place on a Friday, and Hill followed up the next Tuesday, only to discover that the gentleman had been arrested for tax fraud.

On another occasion, Hill and Warrington met a potential investor who was very interested in the idea and who was willing to put up \$50,000. But he had some conditions: he was only willing to pay in cash and he did not want any documentation or any paper trail of any kind. Hill and Warrington politely declined the investment.

In the end, Hill raised money largely from family and friends. His mother and father put in some cash, as did his grandparents on both sides of the family. His brother-in-law in medical school drew down his line of credit and put in a few thousand dollars. A few MBA friends chipped in \$5,000 each. In the end, Hill cobbled together \$120,000, far less than the \$600,000 he was seeking. Hill hired Pal on a four-month contract, paying him \$3,000 a month to help with some of the organizing details. The co-founders did not offer Pal any equity in the deal.

Hill also contacted the National Hockey League (NHL) to see whether they were interested in being the lead sponsor for the tournament. After extensive effort working his way past a few gatekeepers, Hill managed to secure a meeting with the NHL's board of governors in December 2002.

The board of governors was lukewarm to Hill's proposal, despite Hill's statistics on hockey participation in Canada and the potential for the NHL to broaden and deepen its brand with Canadians. But the board of governors told him that the NHL was interested in expanding its reach into the United States and it was not worried about Canada. They declined the opportunity to be Hill's lead sponsor.

Without the NHL as the lead sponsor, Hill believed it would be difficult to attract other marquee sponsors. Nevertheless, he went ahead to plan the tournament for summer of 2003. Meanwhile, legal fees — for the special tax structure — were in the range of \$80,000 to \$90,000. At the same time, Hill and Warrington's investor prospects seemed to dry up. They were left with just \$30,000 in the bank. To focus his efforts given his meager resources, he decided to hold just one event in 2003, in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

THE 2003 SEASON – JUST ONE EVENT IN HALIFAX

In his business plan, Hill had estimated he needed \$50,000 to run the event. But with only \$30,000, he would be forced to limit his expenditures. He would not, for example, be able to hire extra staff on the ground; and, instead of television and radio advertising, he had to devise a way to get the word out.

Hill spent the winter of 2002 on the telephone with Halifax city officials, equipment rental facilities and potential volunteers. Hill named the tournament “Play On!” in reference to a popular phrase used in street hockey when play resumed after a road vehicle had interrupted the game. Organizing that first event was very time-intensive as Hill had only a general knowledge of the NBA Hoop-It-Up model to follow. To market the event, Hill himself handed out flyers for 10 days, sleeping in his truck at night. Although he was expecting approximately 80 teams, he exceeded his own expectations by drawing 121 teams. In his first event, he was just 30 teams shy of the break-even level. Moreover, the feedback from participants was tremendous (see Exhibit 3).

At the end of the event, however, he and Warrington had not paid themselves anything, and they had no more money in the bank. At that time, Warrington decided to “cut his losses” and left the venture, finding employment in Winnipeg. Hill, alone, continued on with the venture.

THE 2004 SEASON – THE NHL COMES ON BOARD

At this point, Hill’s primary reasoning for the Halifax event was to illustrate the feasibility of the opportunity to the NHL. Because he was determined to make the venture succeed, after the Halifax event, he returned to the NHL with the results. The board of governors was thoroughly impressed and accordingly allowed Hill to use the NHL logo and name in his advertisements for the 2004 season. Even better, the license came at no cost to Hill! (Typically, the NHL required a licensee such as Hill to pay at least six figures for the right to use the NHL name and logo.) With the NHL as the lead sponsor, Hill was able to secure other NHL sponsors, such as Dodge (which offered vehicles for use by Hill and his volunteer team), Speedstick (which offered cash) and Dominos (which offered free pizza for staff and volunteers). In 2004, tournaments were held in five different cities. Each of the tournaments was a success, and two drew 150 teams. With sponsorship money adding another \$50,000 to the venture’s funds, the Play On! tournament was profitable, not including the cost of Hill’s time. In 2004, Hill took home a \$12,000 salary.

As Hill was planning ahead for further growth in 2005, he was informed by the NHL of the very strong possibility of a shortened hockey season due to labor negotiations. Shrugging off the thought of an owners’ lockout, Hill continued to work on expanding the series and continuing the dialogue with key sponsors.

In September 2004, however, the NHL announced that the players were indeed locked out. The lockout would eventually end in the cancellation of the entire 2004/05 hockey season and would lead the NHL to discontinue all marketing initiatives and licensing agreements in the United States and Canada. Moreover, the lockout was continually in the news and most of the publicity was negative.

THE 2005 SEASON – SCRAMBLING TO SALVAGE THE VENTURE WITH TSN AS A NEW SPONSOR

With the NHL out, all of Hill’s sponsors from the 2004 season — Dodge, Speedstick, Dominos and local sponsors — declined to participate in the 2005 season. Hill was desperate. He started contacting every organization he could think of. Most of them did not want to be associated with hockey that year. Finally,

he came across TSN (The Sports Network), which offered to be the title sponsor. TSN would pay Hill \$10,000 in cash and build a championship trophy for \$10,000. It would also give Hill 250 television advertisements to promote the 2005 season. Hill was elated.

But Hill, being new to the world of media, did not realize that all of the 250 advertisements would be run at TSN's discretion. The result was that the vast majority of the advertisements ran between 1 a.m. and 5 a.m. Hill was very disappointed, given that this had been his first opportunity to promote the series on a national basis.

Because Hill was not able to use the advertising time to leverage other sponsorships, no other sponsors came on board that year. Hill recalled: "I still have one of the T-shirts from that season. On the front, we had the TSN logo and on the back we had the website, but no other sponsor logos."

Play On! lost money in 2005, and Hill had no cash left in the bank. In late 2005, Hill was beginning to look for a way to reset the tournament. But during a meeting with TSN, he was informed that TSN would be dropping its support as lead sponsor for the tournament. Worse, the TSN director told Hill that TSN would be starting its own street hockey property. They had contemplated purchasing Play On! from Hill, the director mentioned, but in the end decided it would be more cost-effective to wait for Play On! to fail and then start from scratch.

THE 2006 SEASON – CANCELLED

It was December 2005, and Hill was facing the prospect of trying to run the tournament with no sponsors, with a major television network starting a competing franchise and with the NHL's reputation (and to a certain extent, hockey generally) tainted as a result of the lockout and lost season.

As he was thinking about his options, he solicited potential buyers. He was eventually referred to a group of investors that owned the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, a Canadian football team. The group was interested in the Play On! entity, and a price of approximately \$600,000 was discussed. But, in the end, the group decided to spend its money purchasing a golf tournament.

Hill believed that he would not be able to run a 2006 season and incur approximately \$200,000 in costs without sponsors. He had been out of school for nearly four years, and his family had subsisted on an income that was less than half the poverty level in Canada (referred to as the low-income cut-off [LICO]). Finally, in February of 2006, after examining every option he could think of, Hill decided to shut down the venture. He was able to sell off the sound system, the event trailer, and he paid off all outstanding invoices to suppliers. For sentimental reasons, he kept only the Play On! website live.

By March 2006, as the economy was picking up, he started his job hunt by calling his network of contacts. Finding that no one had any leads for him, he instead looked for job opportunities on local and regional job sites such as Workopolis.com and Monster.ca. He sent out three dozen résumés every week. Finally, he found a job with Deloitte's strategy consulting practice in Southwestern Ontario. Deloitte offered him a salary of \$70,000 to start as a consultant, one level below senior consultant which is where he would have started had he been a "newly-minted" MBA. His first day on the job was April 3, 2006.

HILL REFLECTS ON PLAY ON!

As Hill sat with his friend that April Fool's Day, he mused:

If I had the chance to do it all over again, I'm not sure if I would have chosen differently, given the information I had at my disposal, at those times. But I still wonder. This failed venture consumed almost four years of my working and personal life and in the process put my family through financial hardship. It has been a rough go. I would just like to know if there was anything I could have done differently to have made the venture a success.

Exhibit 1**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON HOCKEY PARTICIPATION AND THE POTENTIAL FOR STREET HOCKEY IN CANADA**

The game of hockey was founded in Canada around the year 1800, and over the past two centuries has grown to become one of the most critical components of the nation's culture and identity. In fact, according to a recent poll conducted by *The Globe and Mail*, one of the greatest moments in Canadian history actually occurred during a hockey game. It was Paul Henderson's goal — scored against Russia during the 8th and final game of the 1972 Summit Series — that brought Canadians together in a spirit of unity unlike any other moment.

While captivated by ice hockey at the professional level, most Canadians' first introduction to the game of hockey is through street hockey, a modified game that requires less equipment and is played on roads or driveways. A game with simple rules, it is where the dreams of many Canadians begin! It is here, in the minds of Canadian youths, that deciding games of the Stanley Cup finals are played and where International championships are won.

In describing the vitality of this game to the great nation of Canada, former Toronto Maple Leaf great Dave "Tiger" Williams said it best: "Ball hockey, street hockey, ice hockey, it's the fabric of this country, it's what holds it together from one end to the other."

Source: Play On!

Exhibit 2

SCOTT HILL'S THINKING ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY

- The game of hockey is and has long-since been an integral and fundamental component of Canadian culture and recreation (especially considering the pride and euphoria as a result of the 2002 victory in both men's and women's Olympic championships).
- Street hockey is of interest to a vast array of Canadians, including individuals of all age, gender, ethnic origin, and socio-economic backgrounds.
 - Street hockey game is a grassroots activity that invokes sentiment and nostalgia within many Canadian adults. These individuals played the game as children and continue to feel drawn toward it. They encourage their children to play street hockey, and often enjoy building lasting memories while playing this game with their own children.
 - Many Canadian youths play the game year round for fun, and to help develop skills such as quickness, shooting accuracy, and eye-hand coordination — all of which are important and transferable to the game of ice hockey.
 - The number of Canadian female youths that participate in hockey is steadily increasing. CHA registration among females jumped from 43,421 individuals in 1999 to 54,563 players in 2001 — an increase of more than 25% over a 2-year period!
 - Enrollment in Canadian ice hockey in 2001 includes large numbers of youths from all ethnicities. Many adults of non-Caucasian backgrounds have adopted ball-hockey as the hockey game of choice. Individuals of non-Caucasian ethnicities are a dominant part of the Canadian Ball Hockey Association.
 - Compared to ice hockey, street hockey does not have high barriers to participation (e.g. the cost of acquiring equipment, the substantial registration fees, etc.). All that is required for street hockey is a hockey stick and a pair of running shoes.
- No other large-scale series of National street hockey events currently exists in Canada. The current market for ball hockey tournaments includes organized leagues (administrated by the Canadian Ball Hockey Association) and other small, fragmented, and localized events. Most of these events are hosted in gymnasiums or arenas, with very few building upon the fundamental Canadian tradition of hosting street hockey events where they belong: in the streets!
- Existing 3-on-3 basketball tournament events pave the way logistically for the smooth operation of these street hockey events. Currently, a total of 8 of these basketball-based events are operated in Canada annually, and most of these events require some form of street closures. Many of the Special Events Coordinators in various Canadian cities (as well as Departments of Tourism and Downtown Business Associations) have come to see the real value in these programs. Similarly, these 3-on-3 basketball events have also helped train and set the public expectation for the type of event that Play On! is.
- The NHL previously attempted to launch an effective grassroots hockey program (NHL Breakout) in the Canadian marketplace. The program was in-line (roller) hockey-based and was held in parking lots, as opposed to city streets. The Breakout program was prepared and packaged by the NHL (not a third party) and organized and operated in each respective marketplace by the six Canadian NHL teams. At least three of the NHL teams discontinued the program as a result of the effort associated with organizing an event of this magnitude. It simply was not financially viable to run these events without capitalizing on the operational efficiencies associated with running multiple events. As such, these teams have identified that they cannot run events like this in the future unless an independent third party agrees to spearhead them.
- If I don't do this . . . somebody will!

Source: *Play On!*

Exhibit 3**EXAMPLES OF COMMENTS AFTER THE HALIFAX EVENT**

Hello! I would just like to say that I haven't had this much fun the whole year and that this definitely needs to be an annual event. Thank you for bringing this event to Halifax. I will be playing again every year, you have my guarantee!

– Shannon Cyzinski, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Our boys (aged 12) loved this tournament in every way! We had an absolute riot planning our practice times and jerseys beforehand, and the boys barely could sleep in anticipation of the event. We will make this an annual team event for my son and his friends. It was just really cool because they are just boys who love street hockey. I sure wish there were more tournaments like this. Thanks and see you next year!

– Miriam Rivard, St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia

I wanted to take a moment to tell you how impressed I was at the organization of this event. As a Principal, I have organized many school-wide events for up to 800 students; I cannot begin to imagine what an organizational nightmare this could have been. My son participated and I was so pleased with how well EVERYTHING was planned. From set up, to displaying promotional sponsors, to the referees to volunteers checking in throughout the day . . . it was fabulous! Thank you to Play On! for bringing this event to Halifax! I was happy my son had an opportunity to participate in it!

– Mark McCabe, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

Your tournament was mega . . . uber . . . looking for a word to describe all big words, of fun. Best weekend of my summer, by far. Thank you! Can't wait for next year!

– Harry Singleton, Halifax, Nova Scotia

I just wanted to thank you for bringing Play On! to Halifax. I'm a low income mother and my son can't play regular hockey because of the huge cost and transportation required to play. He plays floor hockey at a local community centre and also plays street hockey in the neighbourhood.

– Mary Abbott, Halifax, Nova Scotia

The beauty of this tournament is that it opens up hockey to every kid out there with a hockey stick and a ball. It really levels the playing field so to speak, for all hockey players. Our kids played hard, played their best and just enjoyed the whole event. Win or lose it was a positive experience for them. Again, thanks for the opportunity to get my kids out of the house on a weekend and to be out playing in the fresh air, like kids are supposed to be.

– Sarah McWilliams, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia

My two boys have been playing street hockey in front of our house for almost 10 years. To have four major corners in downtown Halifax closed to traffic for this tournament was pretty great. My son's team made it all the way to the finals in the 15&Under (Snipers) division. Though they lost the great time they had for the two days made up for it. What a great job!

– Debra Alstom, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

I am still in awe of what we ALL did this weekend. I have been involved in many special events and I have to say I have never wanted to hug the organizers at the end of an event like I did for this one. Not that the other events weren't successful but working with you your amazing crew felt more like an extended family getting together to throw a street hockey tournament!!

– Hunter Booth, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Thank You doesn't seem to be enough for what this weekend represented. We were privileged to be a part of it, and it was really appreciated to hear Thank You throughout the weekend back at us. So Thank You again for everything!!

– Jessica Richards, Volunteer, Halifax, Nova Scotia

I would like to thank you for organizing this event and allowing myself and countless other street hockey warriors a chance to play in such a fun and competitive environment. My team had a really great time and look forward to next year! Thank you very much for the chance to compete!

– Merrick Chen, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Source: Play On!