

BAHL Historical Timeline – From ATB

Please note that over the years the local TV stations and the Gazette have done several feature articles on the BAHL, Billings Bulls, Centennial Arena and the growth of Hockey in the area. I would recommend searching their archives.

**1972** – Open skating and hockey at Veteran’s Park

Merle Delaware

Frank Farnum

Andy Laszlo

**1975** – Leased acres on King Ave behind Onstad Tire Supply. Purchased Frick Compressors from

Burlington Northern ($1.00). Laid pipe on gravel – Arena West (outdoor rink with refrigeration)

was born. Volunteer driven

Merle Delaware

Frank Farnum

Andy Laszlo

Gary Giesick

50 Players

METRA was completed and open (Mike McCormick – County Commissioner)

**1976-77** - BAHL incorporated 501 C3 – registered with AHAUS (Amateur Hockey Association of

United States).

Frank Farnum - President

Al Bloomer – Head Coach - Director

Merle Delaware - Director

120 players

**1979** – BAHL Arena West – AHAUS (Amateur Hockey Association of United States)

Al Bloomer – President

Joe Studner -Director

Si Ryan - Director

Andy Laszlo – Director – Rink Manager

Gary Giesick - Director

Jim Scott – Director

200 Players

**1980-82**- BAHL growing – Marvin Onstad expanding business need to move. Began building

campaign – Herb Brooks visits in 1981. Built Centennial Arena and opened for play in February

1982. Volunteer driven fund raising and construction. County and City participated. $975,000

Project – ($500,000 in cash & $475 in VIK). Reportedly the only rink in country owned and operated

by a non-profit volunteer youth program. The building committee included:

* Al Bloomer – President

Jack Keneally –

Jim Fagan -

Craig Peterson – Figure Skating

Si Ryan -

Joe Studner -

Tim Dernbach -

John Cook -

George Hatch -

Conrad Burns – Yellowstone County Commissioner at that time.

235 Players

**1990-91 –** MAHA Affiliate formed (see attached) – accepted by USA Hockey (Formerly known as

AHAUS).

Al Bloomer – President

Bob Fain – Billings

Wayne Thompson – Great Falls

Bob Bushmaker – Butte

Raleigh Nordhagen – Havre

It was around this time that Montana began to have impact on Coaching & Referee development and education.

Gordy Lingel – referee development

Al Bloomer – coaching development/coaching education

**1991-92 –** Billings Bulls Tier II Junior Team – Frontier League / America West

Eric Bonanno – President - Owner

Bliss Littler – Head Coach

Al Bloomer – Associate Coach / minor owner

**1995 –** Billings Bulls join NAHL Tier II Junior Hockey League.

373 Players

**1998 –** See attached - Open Letter to BAHL – ATB – 25 years in business

378 Players - As per USA Hockey this was the BAHL’s highest youth registration.

**2000** – Billings Community Youth Foundation (see attached)

339 Players

**2002** – BAHL – Bruce Bekkedahl pushing for redistricting – see letter of opposition attached.

274 Players

**2005** – Billings Gazette Article dated January 19, 2005 – summarizes history of junior hockey in

Billings.

259 Players

**2006** – Billings Bulls sold to Doug Strong – they re-classify as Tier III (pay to play). Move from Metra

Auto Park to Centennial Arena.

Doug Strong – President

**2007** – USA Hockey grants redistricting. Montana, Wyoming, North & South Dakota form the

Northern Plains District.

Bruce Bekkedahl – BAHL President

229 Players

**2012 –** Jeff Wilson BAHL President – Completed BAHL Strategic Plan.

Ray Svenson – Planner

Al Bloomer – Facilitator

Shane Coleman

Several Board Members Participated

202 Players

**2014** – ASA completes Facility Evaluation of Centennial Arena.

Ty Newberry

Joe Robillard

Leslie Albright

Al Bloomer

220 Players

**2016** – ASA completes a second Facility Evaluation of Centennial Arena (34 years of operation)

Ty Newberry’

Traver McLeod – MAHA President

200 Players

**2017 –** BAHL – 45 Years

Centennial Arena – 35 Years

137 Players

**2018** – BAHL – 41 Years

Centennial Arena – 36 Years

102 Youth Players

102 Players 2017-18

50 Players 1975-76

Peak @ 378 1998-99

75-76 90-91 95-96 00-01 02-03 10-11 15-16 17-18

Emergence ->**II**< Prominence >>>**II** << Irrelevance >> **I I** << Obsolescence>>>

Initial Registration 1975 ~ 50 Players

**Peak Youth Registration 1994 – 1999** – Highest was 378 in 1997-98

Tipping Point @ 173 players in 1990-91

Turning point @ 378 Players – 1998-99 - Peak Registration

Tanking Point @ 241 Players in 2013-14

Data from USA Hockey Department of Member Services. Youth covers 18 U and younger.

Note registration records went electronic in 1991. Prior to that all records were paper.

Questions or Comments please contact Al Bloomer - atbloomer@hotmail.com