



## Ottawa West Golden Knights U16 Coaches' Letter - 2026-27 Season

Dear Players and Parents,

We are about to embark on another hockey season, and I hope you are as excited as I am.

My name is Brent Vandermeer, and I will be the head coach of the U16 team this season. My first experience coaching this 2011 group was back in IP5/6, and I am very excited to work with these players again now that they're a lot bigger!

As the head coach, I have high expectations for myself regarding leadership, hockey strategy, practice planning, and effective communication. The team's culture is important to me. When we successfully build a strong culture, the result is extremely motivating to the players, and that motivation carries onto the ice. I recognize that the U16 to U18 ages represent a unique window in time and opportunity to help guide these teenagers into productive and respectable adults. It's an honour for me to participate in that. Some may say it's the most important thing for me.

Similarly, I have high expectations of my players on and off the ice. As OWGK athletes, they will be expected to arrive on time, build up their fellow teammates on and off the ice, work hard in practices and games, and be respectful to teammates, coaches, and especially to officials and opposing players. I expect our players to come to the rink with a great attitude, ready to contribute to a positive and competitive atmosphere.

I am looking for players with **high hockey IQ** (awareness, play-making, etc) and who are **unselfish** with the puck. I want players who play at high speed at all times (not just while on the rush), who make heads-up passes, and who realize that, at this level, it's important to minimize time with the puck on their stick. I am looking for grittiness in the corners and the forecheck, and the ability to play a physical game (i.e. confident hitting and with physical intensity). Lastly, I am looking for players who understand the importance of taking care of their defensive responsibilities so that our 'home base' is always protected.

Tryouts will be a little earlier than other years, given that the higher levels are done, and school starts before Labour Day. Conditioning skates could commence as early as August 31st, with nothing on the Friday through Monday of the Labour Day weekend, and tryouts starting September 8th. The exact dates will be posted to the OWGK website, so please watch closely for these. Tryouts will consist of intrasquad scrimmages, and for those chosen to progress further, exhibition games with other associations. The season starts right after tryouts, with games potentially as early as mid-October. The [www.ottawableague.com](http://www.ottawableague.com) website has more details, particularly under Important Dates.

To make this season as memorable as possible, I'm excited to share what I think is a solid tournament plan:

1. Senplex Capital Blues - October 2nd - 4th

2. Belleville Mid-Season Tilt - Oct 30th - Nov 1st
3. Ajax Raiders Winterlude - Dec 11th to 13th
4. Sensplex Capital Winter Classic - Jan 8th - 10th

Away tournaments are always a highlight, and while I appreciate that driving can sometimes be a challenge, the players love being away with their teammates for a dedicated time to focus on hockey and bond with their buddies. I've limited it to four tournaments, making it easier for the players to juggle school work, exams, part-time jobs etc. Expect parent fees (in addition to GK fees) to be around \$1,000 per player. I hope that a mix of fundraising and sponsorships could reduce the cost.

Through all this, we'll endeavour to have lots of fun, stay active, practice good life skills, and make excellent memories together. Thank you for giving me the privilege and opportunity to invest in the lives of your young adults and to play a small role in their journey.

If you have any questions, please reach out anytime.

Kind regards,

Brent Vandermeer  
Head Coach  
U16 Ottawa West Golden Knights

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