



## Newsletter #6

### Winter Edition Newsletter – 2026

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#### Letter from the President

Dear SASA Families,

Thank you for the incredible energy, support, and commitment you continue to show SASA this season. Our rinks are full, our community is engaged, and there is so much to be proud of.

This is what I like to call **our building year**. We are laying a strong foundation, celebrating what's working, and identifying opportunities to continue growing and improving together.

We truly appreciate the positive feedback we've received and the thoughtful ideas many of you have shared. Your voices matter, and we encourage you to **attend a board meeting, join a committee, or reach out to ask how you can get involved**.

SASA is powered by volunteers who love their community, the game of hockey, and—most importantly—their kids. Because of you, SASA hockey continues to move in a positive direction.

Thank you for being part of the SASA family and for everything you do to support our players and program.

With gratitude,

**Kevin Smith**

President, St. Albans Skating Association

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#### Player Development & Ice Scheduling

SASA continues to focus on providing equitable access to ice and meaningful development opportunities across all age levels.

- Our goal remains **two practices per week per team** whenever possible.
- Some teams currently receive **one on-ice practice plus one dryland session** due to ice availability.
- Younger teams skate earlier; older teams skate later.
- T2 teams receive slightly more ice overall due to higher fee structure.

- 8U ice touches can appear skewed because approximately **72 players are on the ice at once**, while most other age groups average around 36 players.

## Ideas Being Explored

- 50-minute practices to allow an additional weekly practice
- Moving Friday Night Lights to Saturday to free up Friday practice ice
- Creating consistent dryland/chalk-talk sessions for each team
- Continuing and expanding morning skates

We also recognize the importance of improving communication around scheduling and development initiatives so families better understand what is being done and why.

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## Bylaws & Governance

Revised SASA Bylaws are under review with guidance from legal counsel and are available in the Teams Channel under **Bylaws**.

Areas of focus include:

- Clarifying Executive Committee vs. Director roles
- Improving transparency in decision-making
- Clear organizational structure and communication flow

Board members will continue to review over the coming weeks. Member questions will be directed to SASA leadership.

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## Officials, Safety & Facility Updates

- SASA has **five new officials** this season.
  - At the 10U level, new referees will work alongside veteran officials to gain experience.
- Referees are independent from SASA.
  - **Mark Deso** is the primary contact for officiating.
  - Franklin County officials are expected to staff the State Tournament.
- Reminder: Any player with a suspected concussion must have a **medical clearance form** completed before returning to play, per State requirements.
- SASA is forming a **Policy Working Group** to update or create:
  - Concussion Policy

- Attendance Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Player Discipline Policy
- A new **scoreboard and controller** have been installed.

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## Coaching, Evaluations & Feedback

- SASA is working to secure **Friday ice at Palace** for next season.
- Coaching feedback surveys will return this spring.
- Coaching applications will open earlier (target March).
- Coach evaluation process details will be shared at the February meeting.
- Coaches will review the **State Tournament Binder**.
- Continued use of **GameSheet** is encouraged to support seeding and statistics.

## Player Evaluations

Evaluations are right around the corner! This year, evaluations will be held at **Gutterson Field House**, and parents will be allowed to watch.

We kindly ask that all parents **remain in the bleachers** and **do not come down to the glass** to distract players during evaluations. While it can be tempting to watch closely, some athletes perform better without parent pressure in the stands.

Registration for evaluations can be found on the SASA website.

**Girls 10U, 12U, and 19U will NOT have evaluations this year due to roster numbers.**

More information regarding commitment fees for these teams and all other teams will follow.

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## State Playdowns & Tournament Hosting

SASA will host:

- **Feb 13–15:** Youth 14U T3 Playdowns
- **Feb 21–22:** 10U Playdowns

In addition, SASA will proudly host the **Vermont State Tournament on February 27, 28, and March 1**.

This is a major event for SASA and our community, and we will need **many volunteers** to help with admissions, rink operations, hospitality, and logistics.

If you owe volunteer hours, the State Tournament weekend is a great opportunity to fulfill them.

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### Tournament Updates & Volunteer Appreciation

The **Andrew Irving, Rail City, and Maple City Tournaments** have all been extremely successful and run very well thanks to our incredible volunteers.

- Maple City Tournament: 211 players, 14 teams
- Andrew Irving Tournament: Over 75 games with 30+ teams

Without the donation of your time and effort, we would not be able to operate smoothly.

This is what makes us SASA: **community, support, involvement, and caring.**

Thank you for showing up.

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### Team Highlights & Player Achievements

-  **10U T4** – Gold Medal, CSB Winter Challenge
-  **14U T2** – Nickel City Hockey Bantam Division Cup Champions
-  **12U T3** – New England Sports Center Challenge Cup Champions
-  **12U T2** – Division Champions, New England Sports Center Challenge Cup
-  **Isaac Irwin, Remington Spear, Chloe Heald, Jillian Robtoy** – Selected for the **2026 New England District Futures Camp**
-  **8U** represented at the PYH Winter Breakaway Challenge

### Player Spotlight – Tucker Boutin

SASA's own **Tucker Boutin** was recently featured in the *St. Albans Messenger* after being selected as a **Boston Bruins Kid Captain**, giving him the unforgettable opportunity to take part in pre-game festivities and experience an NHL game from a special perspective.

We are so proud of Tucker for representing SASA and living out a hockey dream!

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### Girls 12U T3 Appreciation

SHOUT OUT to our **12U T3 Girls team and coaching staff** who played with the St. Albans Leaf's on Sunday, February 1st for an action-packed game!

Our SASA Girls and the Leaf's merged seamlessly and supported one another through a very close, exciting matchup. The stands were full, the energy was high, and the hockey was great — a true example of **community, teamwork, and sportsmanship!**

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## Girls Hockey

- 35 girls attended a recent three-team practice
- High school coaches assisted with station feedback
- SASA building relationships with T2 girls organizations throughout New England

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## Facility & Operations

### Sound System

A new sound system is shipping soon and targeted for installation before the State Tournament thanks to generous donations and partnerships.

### Cameras

Camera systems are being explored for the Skate Shack and Snack Bar to improve security and accountability.

### Skate Shack

Weekend staffing challenges continue. If consistent staffing cannot be achieved, hours may be adjusted. Paid staffing models are being explored.

### Snack Bar

Snack Bar is running well thanks to dedicated volunteers. A new operations binder has been created for consistency.

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## Communications & Media

- SASA remains active on social media.
- PicTime photo system is being finalized.

## Photographer Appreciation!

Thank you to **Kate LeClerc** and **Stina Booth** for volunteering your time and incredible talent capturing our players and events. The moments you preserve make this season even more special.

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## Fundraising

- Gun raffle and live auction are wrapping up.

- If all tickets are sold, approximately **\$17,500** will support SASA programs.

Going forward, SASA will work to better communicate what each fundraiser is designated to support.

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### **SASA at the Gut**

SASA families have been showing up strong in green and gold at **Gutterson Fieldhouse** for UVM hockey games.

We're also excited that **player evaluations will be held at Gutterson Field House** this year.

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### **Upcoming Events**

- **February 5:** SASA Night @ UVM — UVM Women's vs. BU @ 6:00 PM
- **February 7:** SASA Appreciation Night — Comets @ 5:30 / Bobwhites @ 7:30
- **Playdown Weekend 1**-February 13-15
- **Playdown Weekend 2**- February 20-22
- Tentative schedule has been posted on [vermonthockey.org](http://vermonthockey.org)
- **Championship Weekend February 27, 28 and March 1<sup>st</sup>-Hosted by SASA!**

### **Donations**

Thank you to all donors and partners who support facility upgrades, tournaments, and program improvements. Your generosity directly impacts our players and programs.

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### **Volunteers STILL Needed**

- Snack Bar
- Skate Shack
- State Tournament and playdown games

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Thank you for being part of the SASA family — and for making this season such a success!  