



February 8, 2024

A message from our new Chief Executive Officer of Hockey Operations and Coaching Development at LECOM Sports Park:

I would like to start by thanking Lake Erie Sports Alliance and the LECOM Sports Park for the opportunity to lead this organization, and the community at large, into a new era of hockey programming in Erie, PA.

This marks an exciting chapter for hockey in Erie, as we embark on a mission dedicated to revitalizing the sport through a dynamic development model. Our primary focus will be on enhancing fundamental skills such as skating, passing, and overall skill development. When I think about development at large, a fitting saying comes to mind: "It is not the beauty of a building you should look at; it's the construction of the foundation that will stand the test of time." These words ring true in hockey and player development as well. This will be done by making this an enjoyable experience for the player and the parents knowing their child is in good hands and getting the best development in the region. Each age group will be going through age appropriate training to ensure they are growing and developing every time they set foot on the ice. Every child will receive the same amount of attention and dedication to growing their game as the next, with an equitable focus on players at every level.

In addition to CEO of Hockey Operations, I am thrilled to also serve as the Director of Coaching Development. My own personal coaching career was advanced by many great hockey minds whom now I am very fortunate to call friends. It's a privilege to share the extensive knowledge and experience I've accumulated throughout my life in hockey by supporting our coaches and equipping them with the tools needed for their teams' success. I aim to make certain that every one of our coaches know they have someone in their corner who can support them and can also help them grow.

I look forward to getting to know all participants, prospects, and parents that will ultimately come through the doors at LECOM Sports Park. I'd like to share my background so you may all have a chance now to get to know a bit more about me:

Hockey is the family I grew up in. My father played in the NHL until I was 8 years old. Until the age of 9, I learned to play hockey in Minnesota. From frozen ponds to outdoor rinks every kid has access to playing this great sport. These early days play a major role in my passion to build a better system

here in Erie. My vision is to build a system that provides maximum access to the sport with financially responsible programming that provides everyone an opportunity to play, regardless of resources available to that player (financial or otherwise).

After the age of 9, my family moved to New Jersey, where my father began his 30 year career coaching in the NHL, OHL and WHL. Growing up with a father that was a professional coach had a profound impact on my own journey to pursue coaching as well. The rest of my younger developmental years were spent playing in the Little Flyers program then Guelph, Ontario. I spent additional years playing Junior hockey in Southern Ontario. At 17 years old I faced a difficult decision having to pick between playing in the OHL, USNTDP or pursue the NCAA route playing for Omaha USHL prior to attending college. I elected to pursue the NCAA route and played in Omaha of the USHL. After playing for Omaha, my hard work paid off when I was awarded a full scholarship to play for Colorado College as a true freshman. Playing for 4 years in college was an unforgettable experience in my life. I felt it was the best of all worlds, playing hockey for a consistently nationally ranked program, and pursuing academic success and obtaining a college degree. Drafted by the New Jersey Devils after my freshman year and then signing with them upon the completion of my Degree, I played the next 2 years in the AHL with the Albany River Rats. Later, as a member of the Colorado Eagles in the Central Hockey League I was a member of 2 Championship teams. Ultimately an injury retired me as a player, but the silver lining was it rocketed me into my next life chapter, coaching.

As a coach, I have been involved with numerous USA Hockey Selection camps at the 15, 16 and 17 levels and have been lucky enough to coach with Team USA at the Five Nations in Chomutov, Czech Republic and World JR. A Challenge in Bonnyville, Alberta. Coaching ultimately brought me to Erie. I spent 4 years coaching in the WHL as an assistant coach (09-13), 1 year in the OHL as an assistant with the Otters (13-14), 3 years as a Head coach in the USHL (14-17) and finally returning to Erie as the Head Coach of the Otters (17-21). In that time, I am humbled to have coached 20 NHL Draft Picks, 24 current and former NHL Players, and 50 D1 Scholarship players.

Erie holds a special place in my heart, and I am eager to contribute to the growth of hockey in a community that has become my home. I am eager to help grow the great game of hockey in Erie, PA and the surrounding region. And I am humbled to be given the opportunity by you, the parents, to be a part of your child's journey. I am incredibly appreciative of the opportunity to make hockey my life again and pass on my passion and knowledge to everyone who walks through our doors at LECOM Sports Park.

I am looking forward to building on the rich hockey traditions here in Erie and to share my passion and expertise with everyone at LECOM Sports Park. Together, we will elevate the game of hockey for our youth and create lasting impacts both on and off the ice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Hartsburg', written in a cursive style.

Chris Hartsburg
Chief Executive Officer of Hockey Operations and Coaching Development