

Senior hockey team will compete at national level

By Brian Lockhart

If you're past the age of 70 and still playing hockey, chances are you've been a life long player.

However, playing against some hotshot 18 year-olds probably isn't a good idea, so many leagues have been formed based on appropriate age groups.

The Orangeville Mad Hatters are a hockey team comprised of players all over the age of 70 who will be competing in the Senior Canada Games in Saint John, New Brunswick on August 21 - 24, 2018.

Organizer Mark Bates, who moved to Orangeville several years ago, started an over 55 league in town.

After the first season with five players and one goalie, word got around and now they have over 50 players and six goalies.

With so much interest in the sport from older players who still enjoy playing the game, the Senior Games were a logical choice to enter.

"I'm the organizer here in town of the 55 and over League," Bates explained. "We play shinny three times a week. This year I was interested in the Canada games and the Provincial games. The Ontario Senior Games president called me and said he had heard I was inquiring about getting into the Senior Games. She said they have an opening in the 70 and over division. Every province is allowed to send two team in each division. Our team will be representing Ontario and Dufferin County."

The squad has 14 players and will be able to roll three lines during their games.

Bates also has lined up a coach and a manager for the team.

Putting together a full team of over 70 players who would be competitive wasn't easy. Bates pulled in players from the surrounding region to fill the roster.

The Canadian Senior Games got started in 1996 with the first games being held in Regina, Saskatchewan.

Since 2002, they have been held every two years. There are 25 sports listed for the event ranging from darts to track and field and a 10km race.

There will be hockey teams from every province represented at the Games so the Mad Hatters will have some good competition when they step out onto the ice.

The total cost of sending the team to the games will be about \$20,000 so they are actively seeking sponsors to help them get there and compete.