

SPORTS

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OFSAA BOUND: At left, Bishop Reding's Erika Minkhorst gets under a shot during ladies doubles play in Golden Horseshoe Athletic Conference (GHAC) badminton play at E.C. Drury High School Thursday. Above, Minkhorst (right) and partner Michelle Serafini won GHAC for the second straight year, beating a duo from Iroquois Ridge 15-12, 15-12 in the finals. They're now bound for the provincial championships, slated for next week in Waterloo. Also qualifying for OFSAA for Bishop Reding was the mixed doubles team of Lee Mathé and Krista Dermott, who finished second and forced their St. Thomas Aquinas opponents to three sets in the finals. Mathé is only the second male player in BR history to reach the badminton provincials, with brother Sean doing so last spring.

RON KUZYK / SPECIAL TO THE CHAMPION

Novak re-hired as IceHawks' head coach

Returning bench boss eager to start new chapter

By Steve LeBlanc
CANADIAN CHAMPION STAFF

Randy Novak's return to the IceHawks seems more like the end of a lengthy interruption than anything else.

Officially brought back as head coach by new owners Dean Piatt and Rob DeVincentis Thursday, the seasoned Tier 2 Jr. A skipper's hiring came exactly two months after he was let go by then-owner Rick Heinz.

At the time it was believed the release stemmed at least in part from the fact that the team was poised to be sold and new owners would likely want to do their own hiring. That assumption essentially proved to be a moot point, with the 2004/05 Western Conference Coach of the Year —

then with the Brampton Capitals — now back behind the Milton bench.

"This (Thursday's re-hiring) seems more like a correction than anything," noted Novak, who served as head coach of the IceHawks through the second half of the season, after parting ways with the Capitals over a showdown involving the discipline of a player. "It's a new chapter that looks bright, and I'm real eager to get started. My initial impression of the new owners is that they're very professional."

According to Piatt, who's assumed the club president mantle, Novak met all of his and DeVincentis' expectations in terms of both an on and off-ice vision.

"He's certainly the right person for the job."

Not wishing to speculate on who'll be



Randy Novak

brought in to complete the coaching staff, the returning coach said he's submitting names for consideration and that a decision should be made in the next little while — perhaps in time for the May 14 to 16 rookie camp at Etobicoke's Westwood Arena.

Despite his two-month state of limbo, Novak said at least some of the scouting and recruiting work he'd done during his initial IceHawks stint has been salvaged and that about a dozen players from the 2006/07 squad are eligible to return. He was quick to add, however, that not all veterans will have an automatic spot on next season's team.

"The whole point is to get better and not be complacent, so some of these guys are

going to have to come in better shape this year," said Novak, referring to what he saw as overall sub-par conditioning when he first took over the reigns in December.

While the IceHawks' days of bringing in high-priced talent and loading up on OHL over-agers might be behind them, Novak doesn't figure that means their success is all in the past as well.

He points to his former Capitals, who under his development-oriented tenure went from basement dwellers to contenders, as evidence that 'buying' players isn't the one way to prosper in Tier 2 Jr. A hockey.

"I've always believed that success is a byproduct of development, and there's plenty of other top teams that have felt the same, like Wexford, Wellington and St. Mike's," he said. "The league has changed and more and more teams are shying away from that (buying players)."

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