

Energy introduce new general manager

The Edmonton Energy began preparing for the 2011 International Basketball League season last week, introducing Rick Stanley as their new general manager.

Formerly a basketball coach at Jasper Place high school, Stanley is presently coaching boys' hoops at St. Albert's Paul Kane high school and heads up the prep basketball program at Centre High, where he is an assistant principal.

"This is a new venture for me," says Stanley. "I'm just excited about working with the community and building that capacity and furthering those relationships. I think this thing can grow incredibly."

Stanley's first major order of business is hiring a coach. There are qualified individuals locally, says Stanley, who will consider high school and college coaches.

"I've had interest from various different levels," he says. "It's all about who has the time and energy for the Energy."

The new GM also must begin assembling a roster, and hopes to narrow the field to a pool of 18-20 players by the beginning of April, about six weeks before the season starts

Stanley would like the lineup to include about five Edmonton players. Local products Andrew Parker and Blain LaBranche are strong bets to be part of the team, while Jermaine Bucknor and J.R. Patrick may also suit up for the Energy, depending on other basketball commitments.

The Energy's 17-game schedule concludes on June 29 in Portland, Ore., where the annual IBL playoff tournament starts two days later.

That will allow the team to play in the tournament without any extra travel, thus preventing a situation similar to the one that arose last June, when the Energy's ownership group announced after the regular season that the team would not participate in playoffs because the owners could not afford the approximately \$15,000 needed to send the team to Portland.

"It's no longer a trip that's going to cost us a lot of money," says co-owner David Dorward. "We're going to be down there already."

Dorward apologized to fans and players for not better communicating their decision to skip the playoffs, but stood by the decision.

"We're not millionaires, we're not deep-pocketed owners, we're community (owners)," he says. "We've put a lot already into the team in the last couple years and there's a limit from a business perspective when you do that."

Paul Sir, men's basketball coach at Concordia and executive director of Basketball Alberta, coached the Edmonton franchise during all three of its seasons in the IBL and also served as GM last year. He says there were a combination of matters that led to differences between himself and the ownership group.

"It's an incredible amount of work and commitment of which I enjoyed almost every minute over the three years that I did it, but given the circumstances surrounding playoffs last year and differences in the vision going forward, I felt it was in everyone's best interests that I step aside," Sir says.

Stanley won two provincial medals and a city championship during a dozen seasons coaching at Jasper Place, but has no plans to add coach to his job title with the Energy.

I love the coaching, but I really enjoy (being GM)," Stanley says. "I'm better at it than some of our coaches would be and they're better at coaching, so let the experts do what they do best."

The Energy will play all home games at University of Alberta's Main Gym, beginning May 20 against the Bellingham Slam.