

Ex-Tigers coach Richmond lands OHL head coach job



By Jake Courtepatte

James Richmond is continuing his march up the junior hockey ranks with a familiar position behind the bench.

The Oak Ridges resident, whose tenures involve the head coaching position with both the Georgetown Raiders and Aurora Tigers of the OJHL, was named the head coach of the Ontario Hockey League's Mississauga Steelheads last week.

"I am very thankful for the opportunity [the Steelheads] have given me and I'm excited to build on the momentum the team showed this past season," said Richmond in a press release from the Steelheads. "We have some terrific returning players, and with some of the young prospects from our drafts the past few years the future looks great. I look forward to the challenge ahead and my family and I are honoured that I am the new Head Coach of the Mississauga Steelheads of the Ontario Hockey League."

James Richmond, affectionately known as "JR" in hockey circles, will take over the position from James Boyd, who is making the shift from behind the bench to the front office.

JR left behind an extremely successful tenure as head coach in Aurora, twice named OJHL Coach of the Year in 2013 and 2014. Although the Tigers bowed out of the playoffs unexpectedly early in his last season, Richmond led them to first-place in regular season standings with players taking home a handful of hardware.

Eric Williams was named the recipient of the Top Defenceman award while Cameron Morrison earned the award for top rookie.

Richmond joined the Tigers in 2010, improving their season record each year and bringing the team to the third-ranked position in minor junior in the country. Guiding the club for five seasons, the Tigers improved their regular season record throughout his tenure.

Although failing to take home a Buckland Cup during his time there, the Aurora Tigers went to the OJHL finals three years ago where they lost to the Toronto Lakeshore Patriots in six games.

"It's a great team with a great future," said Richmond upon leaving the Tigers organization, having turned the team from a sub-.500 season to a championship contender in his first year. "I've been given the chance to work for some great clubs. My time in Aurora was some of the best years I've had."

Mississauga will be looking to put their new head coach to the test immediately, as the Steelheads, having only made the transition from the St. Michael's Majors four years ago, have a long road to success still ahead.

The team went through a rebuilding phase as early as two seasons ago, improving in 2015-16 with Richmond behind the bench to a 33-30-5 record while returning to the playoffs for the first time in three seasons.

Finishing seventh overall in conference standings, the Steelheads took the powerhouse Barrie Colts to seven games in their opening round matchup, coming up just short.

"We have some good pieces, a lot of good young guys," said Richmond. "There's a lot of potential on this team."

Richmond's future as a member of the player development staff of the NHL's Los Angeles Kings remains to be seen.