

Aurora Tigers name new head coach

By Jake Courtepatte

The Aurora Tigers are hoping they have finally found the guy to right their ship.

Vince Bellissimo was named the new head coach of the Junior A club this month, bringing with him a wealth of experience as both a player and an executive.

His contribution to the OJHL began as a player in its predecessor, the OPJHL, splitting three seasons between the Caledon Canadians and St. Michael's Buzzers between 1998-2001.

After three successful seasons with the NCAA's Western Michigan Broncos, Bellissimo spent the next seven jumping around North American and European professional leagues, meeting Tigers owner Jim Thomson along the way.

He was also a fifth round draft pick of the Florida Panthers in 2002.

Most recently, he coached at the AAA level of the Greater Toronto Hockey League, where his 2000 Toronto Red Wings team's success got him and Thomson talking.

"I had spoken to him last year about coaching as he was aware of the things we had done with the 2000 Red Wings," said

Bellissimo. "I was a little late in speaking with him last year and they were set to go in a different direction. This year Jim called, as they again had a vacancy. My interview with Jim and (General Manager) Dermot Anderson went well and here we are."

Bellissimo was also the development coach for the Buzzers in the 2015-16 season.

The Tigers, who finished third last in the OJHL last season with a record of 9-39-2-4, are at the lowest point of a rebuilding franchise. Bellissimo doesn't try to paint a pretty picture of the situation, saying that "a lot has to change."

"In rebuilding the roster and the culture, we need to start from the ground up," said Bellissimo. "We can't afford to be satisfied in any area at this point."

Bellissimo is the third head coach of the franchise in under a year, replacing Brian Perrin after a four-day vacancy in the position.

Perrin took over from rookie Nikita Poliakov early in the 2016-17 season after a dismal start.

As for the present, with a roster undoubtedly set for a large turnaround like any junior franchise, Bellissimo says he will take things "one day at a time."

"Our primary focus right now is on rookie camp and the types of players and the type of character people that we are trying to bring in. We need people who want to be here, who want to compete and get themselves to the next level. We will have a very competitive environment at main camp as nobody is guaranteed anything."

Registration for development camp is already open for the 2017-18 season, available at www.auroratigers.pointstreaksites.com.