

Tigers fire head coach Joslin in early season shake-up, hire Milne

By Jake Courtepatte

New Aurora Tigers owner Jim Thomson has high expectations for his Junior A team, and he's letting that be known after a slow start.

Head coach Mark Joslin, just thirteen games into his tenure with the Tigers, was relieved of his duties last Tuesday along with several members of his coaching staff, including assistant coaches David Mooney, Peter McBride, and goaltending coach John Ceci.

Thomson, a former NHLer who purchased the team in the offseason, hired Joslin to replace James Richmond, who took a job with the OHL's Mississauga Steelheads over the summer. Joslin had previously been the bench boss of the OJHL's North York Rangers.

He coached the Tigers to a 6-5-2 record, good for second place in the OJHL's North East division. Expectations were high for the 2014-15 regular season champions, who have been riddled with discipline problems this season and are fourth in penalty minutes in the entire league.

"It's difficult to watch undisciplined hockey from a former hockey player's perspective," said Thomson, who spent the better part of a decade in and out of the NHL. "Discipline is so key to winning, and I just wasn't seeing it."

Despite the firing, Thomson praises Joslin for his ability to coach and lead a team.

"It just didn't work with this team. Something had to give, and I didn't see everything coming together after sort of unraveling." The firing came on the back of a 1-2-1 stretch for the Tigers.

A familiar face emerged as Joslin's successor the very next day, with Thomas Milne returning behind the Tigers' bench in his fourth stint with the organization.

In what is his first tenure as head coach of the Tigers, Milne is far from inexperienced in the world of junior hockey. Aside from his experience on the bench in Aurora beside Richmond, Brad Selwood, and Marty Williamson, he has enjoyed experience as head coach of the Orangeville Crushers, Stouffville Spirit and Couchiching Terriers, and was once general manager of the Spirit.

As a native to the area, he also has a son, Matt, who used to tend goal for the OJHL's Newmarket Hurricanes.

Milne said it was his experience with the team, as well as his hometown status, that provoked Thomson into giving him the position.

"I've been around this organization for many years and I've seen what works and what doesn't," said Milne. "They've put their faith in me and I'm hoping to help turn this team around."

Following a heavy turnover of last season's roster, Milne admits there are a lot of new faces he needs to become familiar with. He did bring back a familiar one, though, in immediately rehiring McBride in his role as assistant coach.

Milne was part of the 2004 Tigers team that won the Royal Bank Cup national championship, as well as the 2015 OJHL regular season champions.