

Whalers set to begin new era with new coach, lineup

By C.J. RISK
cjrisk@home.com.net

The start of the Ontario Hockey League initially was pushed up two weeks, to mid-September. Now, due to the tragic events of the week, it's been delayed for a few days. The Plymouth Whalers' opener scheduled for today in Windsor was cancelled and rescheduled for 6 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 30, in Windsor.

The home opener, 7:30 p.m. Saturday against Erie, is still on. The delay will probably be beneficial for the Whalers, who could start the season with a very new lineup — not the way Mike Vellucci, in his first year coaching the Whalers, would like to start.

"It will take us a while to assemble this team," Vellucci, who succeeds Pete DeBoer, said. "We probably won't know until the day before the home opener (who will be on the roster)."

That's because a dozen Whalers were either drafted by NHL teams or invited to their tryout camps. As of Wednesday, seven of those players were still attending those camps, leaving their future with the Whalers very much in doubt.

Too bad, considering the Whalers have reached the OHL finals the past two years. Last season they had the second-best regular-season record in the league at 43-15-5.

Matching that won't be easy. Among the missing is Stephen Weiss, Plymouth's top scorer last season with 40 goals and 47 assists (87 points, excluding the playoffs). Weiss was drafted fourth in last spring's NHL Entry Draft.

"I don't know what to expect," Weiss said prior to leaving for the two-week camp. "The main camp should be fun."

"Just getting selected fourth was quite a relief. It really was something special, something you never forget."

Weiss has tried to prepare for the camp, adding 17 pounds (he's now 186). As far as coming back to Plymouth, which is a possibility, his feelings are mixed. His memories of the Whalers are fond ones, but the NHL is his main goal.

"The first year, especially," he said of his two years in Plymouth. "We weren't even supposed to get to the playoffs."

Also missing from last season's team are Preston Mizzi, 27 goals, 33 assists, and Stacey Britton, 24 goals, 27 assists, both over-age players last year; forwards Chad Wiseman (San Jose), who had 26 goals and 45 assists last season; Damian Surma (Carolina), 26 goals and 35 assists; Chad LaRose (Detroit), who had 18 goals and seven assists; Tomas Kurka (Carolina), who netted 16 goals and 29 assists; Karl Stewart (Atlanta), seven goals and 14 assists; defenseman Libor Ustup (Atlanta), three goals and 13 assists; and goalie Rob Zepp (Carolina), who had a 34-18-3 record, a 2.26 goals-against aver-

Twisters whip Grizzlies, 35-0

Storms racked the area last Saturday, but the skies cleared long enough for the Wayne County Twisters to clinch a playoff spot in the Lakeshore Football League.

The Twisters improved to 5-1 with a 35-0 shattering of Toledo's Glass City Grizzlies.

Quarterback Rob Elawick completed three of four passes for 120 yards as the Twisters racked up 21 first-quarter points.

One was a 79-yard TD strike to Donte Hamilton, while the other two scores were on runs of 2 and 17 yards by Jason Gibson.

Gibson, who finished with 111 yards on 14 carries, added an 11-yard TD run later in the game.

Jaquan Wright then added a 4-yard TD sweep in the final period. He finished with 68 yards in four carries.

Formington's Corey Davis added 14 yards on four carries.

Chuck Pettipas (Livonia) hit 11 five extra point attempts.

The Twisters piled up 438 total yards, while Elawick was 5-of-7 for 164.

The Grizzlies' only threat came in the second quarter when they reached the 9 after the Twisters were penalized 30 yards for protesting a call.

Three plays later, the Grizzlies were a yard further away and attempted a field goal, which was blocked by linebacker Bob Pensari (Canton).

HOCKEY

age and a .916 save percentage.

In addition, goalie Jason Benashihus, signed from the NAHL's Chicago Freeze, was drafted by Dallas in the first round in June. His status is uncertain.

Which pretty much describes Plymouth's outlook. Still, a few of the other players who attended NHL camps have returned, bolstering the Whalers' hopes.

Among the leading returnees is defenseman James Wisniewski, from Canton. Wisniewski was the Whalers' first draft choice in 2000, and he made his presence known last season with a solid first season on the blue line. The 6-foot-11, 190-pounder finished with six goals and 23 assists. He won't be eligible for the NHL draft until next year.

Some of the better news for Whaler fans was that Wisniewski's partner on the blue line, Cole Jarrett, will also be back.

Jarrett, drafted by Columbus in the fifth round, led Whaler defensemen in scoring with 12 goals and 38 assists.

Other top returnees are forwards Kris Vernarsky (14 goals, 21 assists), a second-round pick by Toronto; Greg Campbell (two goals, 12 assists); Rob McBride (15 goals, 17 assists); and over-ager George Nistas (10 goals, 26 assists); defenseman Nate Kiser (one goal, eight assists); a fifth-round pick of Phoenix; Andre Robichaud (one goal, 12 assists),

who was invited to Carolina's camp; and Jared Newman (four assists), a fourth-round choice of Carolina who has an injured shoulder; and goalie Paul Drew (9-1-1 record, 2.42 goals-against average, .901 save percentage). All of which means Vellucci will have to rely on his newcomers. The most promising are 2001 first-round pick John Mitchell, a center; 2001 third-round pick Tim Seastito, a left wing; 2001 import draft Jonas Fiedler, a left wing from the

Czech Republic; and 2000 seventh-round pick Brent Mahon, a center.

With such a changeover, what can one expect from the Whalers?

Answer: The unexpected. "Sarnia signed a lot of good people," said Vellucci. "I imagine Windsor should be very tough. They should be our biggest rival. It all just depends on who comes back."

And in the Whalers' case, when.

talk
all day



NOKIA

talk
all night

get up to 3400 minutes

Sign up now for the AT&T Digital Advantage \$39.99 monthly plan and get:

400 anytime minutes
2000 night and weekend minutes

plus choose one of these:

1000 Mobile-to-Mobile minutes
or
nationwide long distance included

Sign up for 1000 Mobile-to-Mobile minutes or Nationwide long distance and we'll waive the monthly fee for one year. Mobile-to-Mobile minutes apply to calls placed to and from other AT&T Wireless subscribers while you are in the Mobile-to-Mobile Calling Area and on the AT&T Wireless network. Night and weekend minutes, anytime minutes and Nationwide long distance available on calls placed from your Home Calling Area. 2000 night and weekend minutes are available at no additional monthly charge for one year.

And get up to \$80 cash back

It's like getting a FREE phone

Nokia 5165 purchase price	\$79.99
mail-in phone rebate	-\$40.00
mail-in service rebate	-\$40.00
final cost	\$ 0.00

Sales tax applies to original purchase price.

YOUR WORLD. CLOSE AT HAND.



AT&T Wireless

1800-IMAGINE®

attwireless.com

AT&T Wireless is now available in Lansing.

AT&T Wireless Stores

ANN ARBOR
525 W. East Tower Pkwy.
248-372-7901

FLINT
3292 Linden Rd.
810-733-1770

TOLEDO
4906 Monroe St.
419-473-9756

AUBURN HILLS
3922 Baldwin Rd.
248-475-3806

LATHRUP VILLAGE
27631 Southfield Rd.
248-772-7921

UTICA
13307 Hill Rd.
248-372-7831

BIRMINGHAM
34200 Woodward Ave.
248-372-7939

LIVONIA
37677 Six Mile Rd.
734-462-1110

BUSINESS SALES OFFICE
25877 Northwestern Hwy.
888-838-4650

MADISON HEIGHTS
32800 John R. Rd.
248-589-2770

CANTON
43241 Ford Rd.
734-961-2107

MONROE
2121 N. Monroe St. #K8
734-334-0573

DEARBORN
22137 Michigan Ave.
248-372-7991

NOVI
43267 Crescent Blvd.
248-372-7981

DETROIT
2660 E. Jefferson
313-961-5424

ROSELAND
31902 Gratiot
810-293-0142

AT&T Wireless Authorized Dealers

ALLEN PARK
Discover Communications • 313-294-1400

ANN ARBOR
Activia Cellular • 734-968-0926

ANN ARBOR
Activia Cellular • 734-327-5100

AUBURN HILLS
Activia Cellular • 248-637-5819

BELEVILLE
Metre Paging and Cellular • 734-899-0080

BRIGHTON
Cellular and More • 810-227-7440

CANTON
Cellular and More • 734-981-7440

DEARBORN
Activia Cellular • 313-583-1889

DETROIT
Central Data Systems • 313-582-8679

DETROIT
Discover Communications • 734-287-4200

DETROIT
I-Net Paging & Cellular • 313-538-7474

DETROIT
Interstate Communications • 313-584-7070

DETROIT
Interstate Communications • 313-581-4366

DETROIT
Champion's Cellular Warehouse • 810-443-4444

FENTON
Cellular and More • 810-629-7440

FORT GRATIOT
Activia Cellular • 810-335-9942

GARDEN CITY
Mobile Tec • 734-421-9999

HIGHLAND
Global Network, Inc. • 888-866-4888

LIVONIA
Raymond, Inc. • 734-425-0900

MADISON HEIGHTS
Champion's Cellular Warehouse • 248-583-6506

MADISON HEIGHTS
Central Data Systems • 248-842-8000

MILFORD
Cellular and More • 248-884-7440

NOVI
Activia Cellular • 734-349-4487

REFORD TOWNSHIP
Discover Communications • 313-794-1400

ST CLAIR SHORES
Activia Cellular • 810-778-6115

STERLING HEIGHTS
Activia Cellular • 810-966-5882

TROY
Control Data Systems • 810-565-9941

TROY
In Touch • 888-588-7181

WARREN
Mobile Tec • 810-755-1091

WATERBURY
Activia Cellular • 248-883-9004

WESTLAND
I-Net Paging & Cellular • 248-874-3200

WAYNE
Wireless Taps • 734-332-0000

YPSILANTI
Activia Cellular • 734-513-7321

YPSILANTI
Am I-Net Wireless • 734-327-5498

YPSILANTI
Wireless Taps • 734-444-0000

Important Information

©2001 AT&T Wireless. Requires credit approval, activation fee and a Digital multi-network phone. May not be available for purchase or use in all areas. Phone availability and prices may vary at AT&T Wireless Authorized Dealer locations. Rates do not apply to credit card calls. Airtime for each call is rounded up to the next full minute. Monthly included and promotional minutes cannot be carried over to any other month. Roaming, additional minutes charges, over-the-air charges, surcharges and taxes apply. Subject to General Terms and Conditions and calling plan brochure. May not be available with other offers. Mobile 540 Mail-In Rebate: One rebate per new Nokia 5165 phone purchase. Must be on AT&T Wireless service for at least 30 days and when rebate is processed. See rebate coupon for full details. Expires 9/15/01. 540 Mail-In Rebate: One rebate per activation on a qualifying AT&T Wireless calling plan \$29.99 monthly or above. Must be on AT&T Wireless service for at least 30 days and when rebate is processed. See rebate coupon for full details. Not available if you received a service credit at activation. Expires 9/15/01. Night and Weekend Minutes Promotions: Available on calls placed from the Home Calling Area. Applicable long distance charges additional. Night and weekend minutes in from 8:00 p.m. to 6:59 a.m. Monday-Friday and Friday 10:00 p.m. through Monday 6:59 a.m. Limited time offer. Nationwide Long Distance: When you sign up for our Nationwide Long Distance offer (available on AT&T Digital Advantage \$39.99 monthly and above) we will waive the monthly fee of \$4.99 for the first 12 months. No wireless long distance charges apply to calls placed from your Home Calling Area to anywhere in the U.S. Standard airtime charges apply. Limited time offer. Mobile-to-Mobile Minutes: When you sign up for 1000 AT&T Wireless Mobile-to-Mobile Minutes (available on AT&T Digital Advantage \$39.99 monthly and above) we will waive the monthly fee of \$9.99 for the first 12 months. Mobile-to-Mobile minutes apply to calls: (1) placed to or received from another AT&T Wireless subscriber's wireless phone; (2) placed or received from your Home Calling Area; and (3) on the AT&T Wireless network when other ID is received. Long distance charges may apply. Please see the AT&T Wireless Mobile-to-Mobile Minutes brochure for coverage and other details.

ARRIVE SAFELY

ARRIVE SAFELY