

New coach behind bench for Americans tonight

From Tribune wires

The Great Falls Americans Junior A hockey franchise has made a coaching change.

The Americans, 0-14 this season, this week named Stirling Wright as their new head coach, team owner Jim Keough announced.

The Americans are in Bozeman tonight at 7:30 to meet the Icedogs. Wright will make his home debut with the Americans Saturday night at 7:30 against the Icedogs at the Great Falls IcePlex.

Wright replaces Matt Frank behind the Americans' bench. Wright joins the American after starting the season with the Tri City Ice Hawks of the Great Lakes Junior Hockey League.

Due to serious health issues, Wright was forced to step aside. But according to Wright, his health issues are behind him and he is ready to assume the duties in Great Falls immediately.

"I wish to thank Jim Keough for this opportunity. I am looking forward to be a part of the turnaround in Great Falls," Wright said in a statement. "The Americans have a rich hockey history and unfortu-



nately got off to a rough start. I simply want to gain the trust of the players and get to work immediately."

Wright has high hopes to turn the team around.

"I have spent the last few days looking into the roster and they have a good core of players to work with." Said Wright. "Initially, I want to assess what we have and get an idea of where we are at. There is going to be a period of adjustment for both myself and the players.

"At the end of the day, coaches coach and players play. It is my plan to implement my philosophies and have the players adopt the game we want to play in Great

Falls."

As part of the transition, AWWL Commissioner, Mike Butters placed a roster freeze on Great Falls to insure stability for the organization.

"Whenever there is a coaching change, their needs to be a cooling-down period where players and parents need to be informed as to what the future will hold," Butters said in a statement. "Wright is a long time coach with a multitude of experience. I am confident he will make an immediate impact on that team's direction. He is bringing a couple of players with him that he feels will help and has sufficiently illustrated his immediate commitment to make a difference."

Wright said he hopes to establish a new culture with the Americans.

"My philosophy is simple," he said. "I like structure in our end and I like to play an up tempo game that is aggressive in the offensive zone. I also have my teams play a disciplined games. In looking at the penalties the team has taken to date, it is an immediate area of concern."

Great Falls currently leads the AWWL in penalty minutes.

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kevymt

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