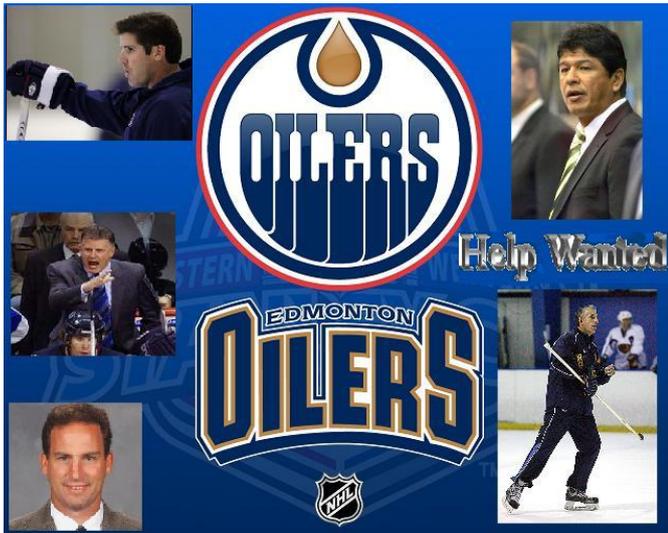


Help Wanted!

Written by Ryan Ma
Tuesday, 21 April 2009 03:03 -



The playoffs have truly started as many playoff poolies are beginning to see that it's not necessarily the "big named" favorites that are the top-producers during the playoffs but the quiet achievers that can also get the job done. Anyhoo, as the playoffs begin for 16 teams, the other 14 teams will be looking towards next season. My hometown Oilers have already begun that journey by replacing long-time bench boss Craig MacTavish following a disappointing end to this season.

Let's begin with the understanding that I'm a long-time follower of the Oilers, from the glory days of the Wayne Gretzky-era to the dark days of Doug Weight/Jason Arnott and back to the huge Stanley Cup run in 2006. I've enjoyed plenty of highs, as well as plenty of lows, but one thing that's been a huge disappointment to me was the stagnant/underachieving performances of the Oilers in recent years. I want to honestly sincerely want to thank MacT for the job that's he's

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done in the past eight years, while compiling 301 wins, which sits him 36th on the all-time list, but it's just time for a change. Bottom line, it's time to be competitive again and I want to start with a new coach!

Coaches That Would Make Me Happy...

Scott Arniel

I haven't heard much about him until I saw his name on top of the short list of candidates at Oilersnation.com. He's been coaching since 2000 at the minor league level, but finally made his way to the NHL level as an assistant coach alongside Lindy Ruff and the Sabres in 2002. He then finally obtained his first head-coaching gig with the Manitoba Moose of the AHL in 2006, and in three seasons has posted a dazzling record of 140-72-7-18 in 237 games (59% win rate). FYI, Bruce Boudreau had a win rate of 51.9% in the AHL just for comparisons sake. Arniel was also the recipient of the Louis A.R. Pieri Memorial Award as this season's AHL's most outstanding coach. The only problem is that Arniel lacks the NHL coaching experience that a few of the coaches listed below possess, will that be the deciding factor which loses him the head coaching gig? The Oilers desperately need an outside man for the job. Could they be willing to take the leap of faith on Arniel?

Marc Crawford

I suggested his name in forum topic and got laughed out of the place, so I'm gonna fire back in article form. My main argument was that he's an outsider, which will bring a different point-of-view to the club instead of the you scratch my back I'll scratch yours "boys on the bus" tactic that they've used for the last eight years. Crawford has the most experience in terms of my favorites list, as he's been in the business since 1989 as a head coach for the Cornwall Royals in the OHL. In his 19-year coaching career, 13 of those years have been in the NHL. He's just 13 contests shy of 1000 games coached and has 470 wins under his name (47.6% win rate), which just sits him outside of the top-10 in all-time NHL coaching history. Another positive is that Crawford has also been in tv commentary during the last few years, which means that he hasn't been completely away from the game. Perhaps being away from coaching and in a commentary box to observe other high-achieving teams gave Crawford a different perspective to coaching. Granted I'll give you the Cloutier debacle, but was Sean Burke, Mathieu Garon, Jason LaBarbera, or J.S. Aubin really any better?

Peter Laviolette

Laviolette is the second winningest American-born coach in NHL history as he has 487 games of NHL coaching experience, while having 244 wins plus one Stanley Cup ring under his belt. His 50.1% win rate, isn't too spectacular, but he will bring an outsider's point-of-view that should greatly change the dynamics in the locker room next season.

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Bob Hartley

My reasoning behind selecting Hartley over the other two would be that he pretty much has the qualities of both worlds mentioned above. He carries more coaching experience than Laviolette (651), but also has the advantage of winning a Stanley Cup, with the Avalanche, which Crawford lacks. The only down side that I can foresee is that he didn't fare well with a young Thrasher's squad, so I'm not quite sold on how he would be able to turn a very similar situation in Edmonton around. His 50.5% win rate is slightly better than the two coaches mentioned above, but will it be enough to win Steve Tambellini over?

Ted Nolan

Nolan is my outside pick out of the five choices, but I feel he could be best candidate to turn the Edmonton franchise around. He has the credentials of two stints of turning underachieving teams around as he turned a 73-point Sabres' team into a division winning 92-point team in one stint, while having a second stint of turning a 78-point team into another 92-point playoff bound team with the Islanders. Nolan is a hard-ass coach that brings the most out of his players, and most important of all, preaches on player accountability, which is what was lacking in the Oiler's organization in the past few seasons in my opinion. His 45.0% win rate is the lowest of the five candidates, but his experience with youngsters/underachievers really should tip the scales in his favor.

Coaches Who Wouldn't Make Me Happy...

Tom Renney

Great player's coach, but if he can't get it done with a much more talented, veteran-filled lineup in New York, what makes you think he can get it done in Edmonton? He's too similar to MacT to bring a dramatic change in Edmonton.

Jacques Lemaire

Question : What's more exciting than watching the Wild play? Answer: Watching grass grow, or paint to dry. Please, please don't ruin an exciting free-flowing team by turning into a trap team for the sake of getting some wins. I will personally fly back to Edmonton and don a Flames jersey while marching down Whyte Ave, if they hire Lemaire over the any of the other candidates.

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Charlie Huddy

Please, please don't bring in another former Oiler without head coaching experience to try to turn the franchise around...

Kelly Buchberger

Please, please don't bring in another former Oiler with head coaching experience to try to turn the franchise around...

Craig Simpson

He was my favorite Oiler growing up, but that's as far as that goes...

For the Dreamers...

Brent Sutter

Question : Why would you want to leave a team that's overflowing with veterans, a world-class goalie and an easier travel schedule? Answer: To be closer to home? We can all dream...

Mark Messier

No coaching experience, and landing a head coaching job in the NHL "Betcha can't eat just one", one season that is...

Denis Savard

He was great with the re-building young Hawks, but was unfairly sacked by upper management. He'd be a great fit to turn around the young Oilers, but he's still under contract as a scout for Chicago, and if it wasn't for that reason I'd have him in my list at the top of the page.

Pat Quinn

If he really wanted to return, he would've done so already and to a larger market.

Guy Carbonneau

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He did well in the pressure cooker of Montreal, but probably needs a more solidified team to redeem himself as a quality coach.

Rob Daum

This is for all the University of Alberta hockey fans out there. He had great success coaching the Golden Bears as during his 10 years with the U of A hockey program, Daum, has put together a staggering record of 345-79-32 (.792) and twice named the CIS Coach of the Year (2001 and 2004). This would certainly make a great feel good story for the Oilers, but I just don't think he's quite there yet.

To be honest, I'd be happy as long as it's not another former Oiler that's going to take over for MacT. The Oilers have the tools to be a very solid team next season, but a right man needs to steer the youngsters in the right direction. They have a plethora of bargaining chips that they might be able to move at the deadline to move down at the NHL Entry Draft. A package involving Rob Schremp, Andrew Cogliano, Ryan Poultny, Gilbert Brule, Denis Grebeshkov and/or the tenth overall pick in the Entry Draft should certainly be enticing enough to a rebuilding team like the Coyotes/Kings/Thrashers for a swap in first rounders plus a player like Petr Prucha, Teddy Purcell or perhaps even Kari Lehtonen.