

■ JUNIOR C HOCKEY: With the Woodstock Navy Vets falling under new local ownership players are excited with the new sense of optimism



GREG COLGAN Sentinel-Review

Following Monday afternoon's change in team ownership and a new board of directors for the Woodstock Navy Vets, players are excited for the opportunities that the transformation is going to bring.

Players excited for new beginning

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WOODSTOCK - There's a change in the air for the Woodstock Navy Vets.

And two players - starting goaltender Mike Roefs and captain Mackenzie Langford - are looking forward to the new ownership for the Navy Vets following the official change Monday afternoon.

"I was excited. It's a new opportunity for everyone involved and having local people in the ownership is a great thing," Langford said. "It brings so many new opportunities and new changes.

"When you have a top to bottom refresh of the team it

really sets a standard for what the team wants to achieve," Langford added. "It's a good challenge ahead of everyone."

Roefs has been stellar in net since joining Woodstock in January 2011 and among the Niagara and District Junior Hockey League's best, while Langford has been with the team for three years and was captain and the team's leading scorer this past season.

Both Langford and Roefs said there had been nimbings since the season ended February, but Monday's announcement put any rumours to bed.

"It's good Woodstock actually owns it. It'll bring back more fans since they'll know who our owners are," Roefs said. "They'll

put a lot more into the team since they're invested in it and it'll help bring more new players out, too."

As with any change, there's a sense of optimism, but also one of restraint knowing the road ahead is long and not without growing pains.

"It's going to be slow with new owners and a little bit to get used to," Roefs said. "You won't know until camp starts (what players will tryout). We'll be out a lot over the summer fundraising, so hopefully we'll have a good team come camp. You don't know who's going to be at camp, so it's like a new beginning.

For some of the new board of directors, they're not too far

removed from the ice themselves.

Team president Devon Young played with the Navy Vets from 2008 to 2012, while vice-president of hockey operations Stuart Preston played with the Tavistock Braves and Norwich Merchants from 2008 to 2011. Trevor Rose, the director of hockey operations and general manager, also played with the Braves and Merchants from 2007 to 2010.

"I know a lot of the players personally and played with many of them. I want them to experience that and really want to play for Woodstock," Young said of his hope to bring back excitement to play for Woodstock. "That's what we want to accomplish. If they're

happy, we're happy."

As far as players are concerned, the place to start is by having more fans in the stands that provide a better playing atmosphere.

"It helps us. The more people that come out the better our confidence is," Roefs said. "You see that crowd and gives you an extra jump because they're there to see you play because they want to be there."

"When you go into a rink and you know everyone is cheering you on it's great," Langford added. "The excitement at the start of last year was pretty incredible even though we couldn't sustain, that time was great."

Of course, team's can fund-

raise and be visible in the community all they want. At the end of the day the best way to get more fans is simple: more wins.

They're convinced though, if there's a group who can change the Navy Vets, it's the new board.

"Knowing some of them personally they're great people and it's not like they're just a bunch of people who want to own a team for the sake of owning a team," Langford said of the new board of directors. "They're really here to see the team flourish and see the team truly be the best it can be and represent the community positively."

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