

Hotshots name new head coach

Former Salem Stampede coach to lead Central Oregon IBL team

By Mark Morical / *The Bulletin*

The Central Oregon Hotshots will look to benefit from another team's absence during the 2008 International Basketball League season.

Hotshots owner Mikal Duilio, who is also commissioner of the IBL, has selected former Salem Stampede coach Joe Becerra to lead the Hotshots this spring.

Becerra coached the Stampede — an IBL rival of the Hotshots — the last two seasons, but Salem will not field a team in 2008. The Salem franchise is trying to restructure and to find a permanent venue for home games, according to Duilio.

Becerra, who was also the director of basketball operations for the Stampede, led Salem to a 19-4 record last season. He said he sees many similarities between the Stampede and the Hotshots, who finished 9-13 last year.

“It’ll be different personnel, but a lot of similar types of players,” Becerra said Friday. “A lot of guys who can get up and down the court and can shoot the ball. It’s an exciting group. If there was one team that mirrored the Stampede team (in 2007), it was the Central Oregon team.”

Duilio and Robert Penson, an assistant boys basketball coach at Bend’s Mountain View High School, will serve as assistants for the Hotshots.

Central Oregon is scheduled to play 20 games, including eight home games, all at Mountain View High. The regular season will run from April 25 to June 10.

Last season Phil Gray, who assisted his father, Dick Gray, at Portland’s Benson High School for 15 years, started the season as the Hotshots’ head coach. But Phil Gray resigned midway through the season, leaving the coaching duties to Duilio and other team officials.

“The difference between (Becerra) and other coaches is he understands the minor-league player,” Duilio said. “He’s very good at managing minutes and communicating with players. As a result, he’s had amazing teams on a low budget.”

Becerra has also worked as an assistant coach for the Chemeketa Community College (Salem) women's basketball team from 2000 to 2003, and the Mt. Hood Community College (Gresham) and Columbia Basin Community College (Pasco, Wash.) men's teams in the late 1990s.

The new Hotshots coach said players already in the Portland area will begin practicing and scrimmaging in the next week or so. Becerra said he plans to hold a weeklong minicamp in late March or early April, after most of the team's out-of-state and overseas players have arrived in Oregon. According to Becerra, the Hotshots will likely split their practices between Portland and Bend, as they did last season.

"There's not a lot of practice time," Becerra said. "It's just a matter of emphasizing fundamentals and playing smart, and buying into the team concept. Even though they're trying to get a job (overseas) and move on, you get more exposure by being on a winning team."

In addition to a new head coach, the Hotshots have added three more players to the roster: Jeff Dunn, Bryan Zamore, and Dustin Hummel.

The 6-foot-5-inch Dunn was an IBL all-star with Salem last year, averaging 19 points per game. Hummel, 6-6, was Dunn's teammate on the Stampede. Duilio described Dunn as a "solid defender."

Zamore, 6-9, played for the IBL's Vancouver (Wash.) Volcanoes last season, averaging 10 points and eight rebounds per contest.

Central Oregon opens the season at home on April 25 against the Shaanxi Kylins of China.

For more information call 866-425-4263, or visit www.iblhoopsonline.com and click on "Central Oregon Hotshots."