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Fans can be excited about Bruce

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The celebratory dust has settled after the Minnesota Wild announced Bruce Boudreau would be the next coach. I'm still excited about it. I think he will be a great help to this roller-coaster squad of players. This hockey lifer has a lot to offer, even if his hiring isn't a fix-all, which I don't think it is.



Image courtesy of Greg Smith-USA TODAY Sports

It's no secret that the market for head coaches in the NHL was kind of slim pickings. I wasn't really sure what to think. I thought the Wild would do the predictable thing and hire interim coach John Torchetti. Not that there's anything wrong with him, but I think it was important that the Wild conduct a search.

Anyway, everything changed when Boudreau was fired from Anaheim after his team was ousted in – gasp! – game seven in the first round. Once he was available, he became the top coach for hire. Thankfully, Chuck Fletcher and the Wild realized that. Everything I've heard and read suggests Fletch went after Boudreau quickly and didn't let up in the interest.

I thought for sure the snag in the plan was going to be the fact that Boudreau had family, a grandchild even, in Ottawa, another team that was on the hunt for its next fearless leader behind the bench. Maybe it was my jaded Minnesota sports fan outlook, but I just knew he'd take the job there.

By some miracle, and millions of dollars, Boudreau will now call Minnesota home. He's coming back to some of his roots, since he was a player with the Fighting Saints.

Boudreau brings with him a ton of regular-season success. He's got eight division titles in nine seasons with Washington and Anaheim. For a team like the Wild, that is accustomed to slumping its way into the No. 8 spot, this is refreshing news. To consistently be a top team in the league, the coach has to be doing something right. These division titles were really the biggest stats that stood out to me when I was reading about Boudreau.

Now, I get that being good in the regular season doesn't always translate to being good in the postseason, especially in the NHL. One might not have anything to do with the other. Take this year's playoffs as an example. Washington tore it up this year and now they're done. So I get why there might be

they don't know what being a top team is like, so it could be a nice change to see that happen.

Seemingly the biggest knock on Boudreau's coaching history is that he hasn't had success in game sevens in the playoffs (1-6), or more general success in the postseason. Conversely, the Wild is a team that thrives in game sevens. Am I concerned about this? Not really. I think it's a stat that stands out, certainly, though I've heard others dismissing it, too. Bigger fish to fry.

If you think about it, it's one game. It happens to extend or end your season. It's still just one game. Sometimes it's a fluke goal, bad bounce or hot goaltender that beats a team. And ultimately, it's the players on the ice, not the coach. I think Boudreau has done a pretty good job of addressing these concerns when he's been asked as well.

Back to my earlier point about how the Boudreau hire is not a fix-all for this Wild team. The fact remains there is still not much wiggle room when it comes to the almighty dollar and player contracts. Much of the personnel will stay the same. Chuck Fletcher, whether you like him or hate him, is still the general manager. The Wild will still have a reputation of being a team that falls off a cliff at some point every year, until they can prove otherwise.

So yeah, it's not the prettiest picture. As far as a coaching hire though, Boudreau was the best choice available. Fans need to rejoice in that. One of my favorite things during his news conference with the media last week was when he talked about the balance between friendly relationships with players versus being their coach. He mentioned that the players will need to do what he wants or ice time will be cut. That will definitely get interesting next year, especially with a guy like Ryan Suter, a minutes eater.

I think Boudreau will challenge and push these players. He'll likely be tough, raise expectations and not expect some of the accustomed Wild antics, like slow starts and a lack the offensive mindset. Players will be held accountable.

There are still a lot of variables to a winning season. Right now though, fans can be excited.

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