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Holland's professional basketball team hires coach

Mike Ahrens served as assistant coach for team in Grand Rapids last year

By ERIC GAERTNER
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Mike Ahrens, an assistant coach last year with the International Basketball League team in Grand Rapids, has been named head coach of Holland's IBL team, officials announced Tuesday.

Ahrens, a math teacher at Muskegon Orchard View schools, helped the Grand Rapids Flight to a 14-6 record in their inaugural season.

"I'm excited to come down there to Holland," said Ahrens, 54, of Muskegon. "They've got a great basketball tradition with the (local high schools) and Hope College."

Ahrens has accumulated more than 200 victories while coaching high school, college and professional teams.

Holland IBL general manager Tom Moore said the team is excited to have hired Ahrens.

"I have worked with him in the past," Moore said. "He brings excellent coaching and basketball skills to the team, as well as solid personal values."

Moore said team officials were originally looking for a head coach from the Holland area and they are still hopeful that a Holland-area coach will be a part of the coaching staff.

"We were looking for a bunch of things and Mike rose to the top," Moore said, pointing out that Ahrens also expressed the greatest interest in the job.

Holland-area basketball fans may remember Ahrens as an assistant coach at Adrian College in head coach Buck Riley's first season in 1982 and as girls varsity and boys junior varsity head coach at Muskegon High School in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Ahrens also has coached at Jordan College and Cass City, Onaway, Central Montcalm, Muskegon Catholic Central and Muskegon Orchard View high schools.

Ahrens also worked with the CBA's Grand Rapids Hoops by evaluating talent at free agent camps, analyzing statistics and running summer camps. Over the last eight years, Ahrens also has directed the Muskegon Post Player Camp that attracts players from Michigan and Ohio.

As he has at his previous coaching positions, Ahrens will stress an up-tempo game which fits into the IBL's nontraditional rules, including a 22-second shot clock and eight seconds to advance the ball to the frontcourt.

"I always believe that teamwork is the most important factor," Ahrens said.

"Offensively, my philosophy is to speed it up and attack. I believe in man-to-man, pressure defense. I put an emphasis on defense."

The coach of Holland's new professional basketball team has already contacted some coaches about potential players for the team and he said some potential players have contacted him.

In addition to hiring one or two assistant coaches, Ahrens said one of his first official duties will be to evaluate players at an IBL/CBA exposure camp Oct. 1 at the Courthouse in Byron Center.

Team officials announced last month that the team will play its home games at the Civic Center during its inaugural season, which is set to start in either February or March.

The IBL featured 17 teams last year in its first season with all but one expected back for the upcoming season. Five expansion teams -- Holland, Lake County, Ill., Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, Elkhart, Ind., and Aurora, Colo. -- have made official announcements joining the league.

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