

## **strand Resigns To Take Position With Houston Aeros**

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After just two years as the UW-Eau Claire head men's ice hockey coach, Luke Strand has resigned to take a position with the Houston Aeros of the American Hockey League.

Strand will join former Blugold player and coach Troy Ward as one of two assistants with the Aeros under Kevin Constantine who was hired as head coach May 29.

Strand, like Ward a former Blugold player and coach himself, has been working at Ward's Hockey and Sons Camp the past two weeks in Faribault, Minnesota. Ward was named an Aeros' assistant coach on July 31. He had been on Constantine's staff with the Pittsburgh Penguins in the late 1990s.

Strand replaced Jean LaForest as the Blugolds' eighth head coach two years ago, and after struggling to a 2-21-4 mark his first season, improved to 9-14-4 this past season. The improvement the team made over the course of last season was evident in the Northern Collegiate Hockey Association playoffs where the Blugolds lost to conference co-champion St. Norbert College, 3-1 and 4-3, in the best of three opening-round series.

Strand was a Blugold player from 1993-97 when Ian Perrin was head coach. He then spent two years with the Madison Monsters and one with the Madison Kodiaks as a player before joining the coaching staff at St. Norbert College under head coach Tim Coghlin. Prior to coming to Eau Claire, Strand had a two-year stint as head coach of the Green Bay Gamblers of the United States Hockey League.

An Eau Claire native who played his prep hockey under Tom Kuklinski at North High School, Strand is joining an Aeros team that is the primary development affiliate of the Minnesota Wild. The Aeros are in the West Division of the Western Conference of the AHL along with the Chicago Wolves, Iowa Stars, Milwaukee Admirals, Peoria Rivermen, Quad Cities Flames, Rockford IceHogs and San Antonio Rampage.

With Strand's late resignation, Director of Athletics Scott Kilgallon indicated that the university will move as quickly as possible to find the best possible replacement for the Blugold men's ice hockey squad.

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