

THE RETURN OF THE STEELHEADS



by matt cullen

Matt Cullen, the radio voice of the Mississauga Steelheads recently sat down with the Owner/President of the Mississauga Steelheads to talk about the year without hockey, how it impacted him, the team and the sport and what the future holds:

Matt Cullen: What are you most excited about when the puck finally drops in October?

Elliott Kerr: I can't wait to hear the fans back in the facility and seeing our family of season ticket holders face-to-face. I also can't wait to see our billet families and clearly, our players. I know, understand and feel the frustration of all these groups. It's been a difficult period of time but once the feel of hockey comes back, the smell of hockey, the atmosphere of hockey, I think we'll soon forget what we've lost over the last 16-18 months and just enjoy that hockey is back.

MC: How has the pandemic changed the landscape for the Steelheads?

EK: First of all, my heart breaks for our three overage players from last year: Nic Canade, Richard Whittaker and Kai Edmonds. Not being able to finish their OHL careers and to have lost that opportunity, my heart breaks for them. I hope they'll be able to continue their hockey careers. Going forward for us, we have to reconnect with our sponsors. We have to reconnect with minor hockey, season ticket holders and group sales people. When we reached out before, we didn't have a start date. Now we do.

MC: What will the Steelheads be doing differently from a business perspective?

EK: When you are out of business for the past 18 months, we unfortunately lost some really good people. Mike Hastings

our VP of Communications & Business Operations is poised to be a powerful leader and there is a lot of ramping up on the staffing side. It will be a renewed focus in connecting with corporate Mississauga. Yes, we are the Mississauga Steelheads but Oakville is our market, Brampton, Caledon, Toronto – those are all our markets.

MC: How will this upcoming season in the OHL be different from past years?

EK: We're going to have to be conscious of safety protocols to protect our players, staff and fans. A lot of that will be driven by the guidelines set out by the province. Whatever we are asked to do, believe me, we will do more. That also applies when we reach out to schools and minor hockey. We are going to need to reinvent what we usually do so safety protocols are part of the process. We have to be ready to adapt.

MC: What is your message to your loyal fans, but also to your new fans?

EK: My message is - We are back. We will return with an outstanding hockey team that will provide the best sport entertainment on the planet. We've been out of the market for 18 months. We've lost almost two full seasons. We have to rebuild the Steelheads brand. There are a lot of people looking to be entertained. We have to communicate what a wonderful entertainment opportunity and family-oriented environment we have. If you haven't experienced Steelheads hockey before, give us a try. You will not be disappointed. For those returning fans, we appreciate your loyalty very sincerely. I look forward to shaking hands or hugging or fist bumping everyone. Our season starts on October 9 and our home opener is October 22. I am counting the days. It's been long overdue.