

SPORTS

T-Birds, Blues, announce long-term extension

SPRINGFIELD – Last month, the Springfield Thunderbirds and St. Louis Blues announced the extension of their affiliation agreement through the end of the 2030-31 season. The deal further solidifies the long-term future of the American Hockey League in Springfield, one of the league’s charter cities.

“We are thrilled to continue our richly rewarding long-term partnership with the St. Louis Blues,” said Thunderbirds President Nathan Costa. “The Blues and Thunderbirds share similar core values regarding player and staff development and maintaining a deep commitment to their communities. Our collaboration has enabled us to grow our franchise both on the ice and throughout the region. We cannot wait to see the next generation of Blues stars hone their talents in Springfield in front of the best fans in the AHL.”

In the first three seasons as the Blues’ AHL affiliates, the Thunderbirds have experienced tremendous success on and off the ice. In 2022, the team cap-

tured the Richard F. Canning Trophy as Eastern Conference Champions, reaching the Calder Cup Finals for the first time in club history. The T-Birds received the AHL President’s Award as Team of the Year that same year.

“On behalf of our local ownership group, we are proud to announce an extension of our affiliation agreement with the St. Louis Blues. I want to thank Blues Chairman Tom Stillman, General Manager Doug Armstrong, and the Blues staff, as well as our President Nate Costa and his team, for building a culture of cooperation and success that is unparalleled within the AHL. This agreement will ensure that AHL hockey has a home in Springfield for many years to come,” commented Paul Picknelly, Thunderbirds Managing Owner.

The club built upon their success last season, posting a fran-

chise-record 20 sellout games, including a 14-game sellout streak to end the campaign. 2023-2024 also marked the T-Birds’ eighth consecutive season of attendance growth (6,321 fans per game).

“First, I want to thank Springfield Thunderbirds President Nate Costa, the local ownership group under managing partner Paul Picknelly, and the entire team and staff for their continued dedicated efforts and support and belief in our City of Springfield,” said Springfield Mayor Domenic J. Sarno. “Special thanks and appreciation to the St. Louis Blues organization for their continued strong commitment to our local T-Birds! Both organizations are class acts that share a strong emphasis on community and fan engagement and putting a quality product and team on the ice.



Since the start of the partnership, the Blues have also promoted several Springfield staff members to the parent club in St. Louis. Most notably, Drew Bannister became the first T-Birds coach to earn a promotion to an NHL bench when he was named the Blues’ head coach on May 8.

“Springfield provides a first-class environment for players in the Blues organization to develop on and off the ice and continue their progress toward the NHL in a well-established, supportive market with strong, experienced leadership,” said Blues Assistant General Manager Ryan Miller.

In addition to Bannister’s rise to the NHL, 26 players have skated in games for both the Thunderbirds and the Blues, including young stars Jake Neighbours, Zack Bolduc, Matthew Kessel, Joel Hofer, Scott Perunovich, and Zach Dean.

“This is an exciting day for both the St. Louis Blues and the Springfield Thunderbirds organizations,” said Thunderbirds

General Manager Kevin Maxwell. “This agreement provides stability for our players and staff, and it will continue to offer our fans the chance to identify with our prospects and follow their careers as they graduate onto the Blues.”

The affiliation extension assures Springfield’s continued tenancy in the American Hockey League, which dates back to 1936. The City of Springfield has had an active AHL franchise on the ice every season since 1954.

“The city of Springfield has been a cornerstone of the American Hockey League for more than 80 years,” said AHL President and Chief Executive Officer Scott Howson. “Hockey in Springfield has experienced a renaissance since the arrival of the Thunderbirds. Stability with an NHL affiliate is very important for AHL clubs, and we’re pleased that Springfield’s partnership with the St. Louis Blues will continue to bring excitement and entertainment to the fans of Western Massachusetts.”

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nonplayoff games if teams did not qualify.

Those filler games were supposed to be on team schedules by mid-September. Because the procedure was not followed, the MIAA imposed forfeits on the schools that did not follow the rule. Under the MIAA’s ruling, Minnechaug and Monson, which had soccer teams in the Western Mass. tournaments, would have to take losses affecting their standing for the state tournament. If the schools won, they were still able to advance in the tournaments. Monson girls soccer reached the Western Mass. finals. Pathfinder boys soccer did as well. Minnechaug girls soccer made it to the semifinals.

An injunction was filed by Monson and Minnechaug, seeking to not have the athletes punished for an administrative issue. Judge Tracy Duncan granted the injunction, and both schools had their forfeits changed to whatever their actual results were.

Minnechaug boys soccer benefited the most from the change, securing the No. 5 seed in the Division 2 state tournament. The changes had the ability to affect schools such as Agawam, Ludlow, Holyoke, and Chicopee Comprehensive in Division 2. Monson’s injunction affected seedings for schools such as Granby, Quabog, Palmer, and Pathfinder.

Pathfinder did not appeal to a court, and was defeated on the road in the first round of the tournament.

The injunctions also led to delays in the state tournament starting in the case of field hockey and girls volleyball.

Northampton and Pioneer Valley Regional also won injunctions, though the MIAA is appealing those rul-

ings. They are appealing despite the fact the tournaments have already concluded. The MIAA is not commenting on the court cases.

No schools from Western Massachusetts made it to the state finals in boys soccer, girls soccer, or field hockey.

NOTICE

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PUBLIC NOTICE

Legal Notice
Public Hearing Notice
Pursuant to MGL C. 111, sec. 31 the Board of Health will hold a Public Hearing on **December 11, 2024 at 6:45 PM** in the Select Board meeting room Lawrence Memorial Hall 2 Jabish Street and remotely: <https://meet.goto.com/MGrenier> Get the GoToMeeting app <https://meet.goto.com/install>

This public hearing is to revise the regulations pertaining to the Sale of Tobacco and Vape Products within the Town of Belchertown. Copies of the proposed changes can be obtained at the Board of Health office, Room 105 Lawrence Memorial Hall 2 Jabish Street Belchertown, MA and on-line at <https://www.belchertown.org/210/Health-Department>

All interested parties are encouraged to participate. 11/28, 12/05/2024

Please check the accuracy of your legal notice prior to submission (i.e., date, time, spelling). Also, be sure the requested publication date coincides with the purpose of the notice, or as the law demands. Thank you.



We hope this holiday finds you surrounded by those you love and hold dear. Thank you for giving us so much to be grateful for this holiday season and all year; we appreciate your loyal support.

Belchertown, Granby & Amherst
SENTINEL
YOUR HOMETOWN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1915
24 Water Street
Palmer, MA 01069
413-283-8393
www.sentinel.turley.com