Eastern Connecticut Stars Announce Long-Term Partnership with Bolton Ice Palace

Bob Crawford Named Coaching Director, Sasha Malkov Named Skills Director and Director of Player Personnel

Bolton Ice Palace, Eastern Connecticut Hockey Organization (ECHO Stars) and Black Bear Sports Group are pleased to announce a long-term partnership between the rink and the youth hockey club with the shared goals of growing the youth club, enhancing youth hockey offerings within the club and at the rink, and offering more development opportunities for rink and club participants. This new partnership establishes the ECHO Stars as the home club at the Bolton Ice Palace and the rink will undergo a beginner hockey programming re-brand to develop and promote the Little Stars Rookie Program (in conjunction with the New York Rangers Learn to Play Program) to bring more opportunities for young players to play hockey.

The Ice Palace and ECHO have also named Bob Crawford as Coaching Director of the club and Sasha Malkov as Skills Director and Director of Player Personnel.

Coach Crawford, an alum of the NHL’s Hartford Whalers, has spent the last 30 years training and developing hundreds of players, and most recently, developing and growing girls hockey in the region. Crawford was recently named to the Board of Black Bear Sports Group (“Black Bear”). Black Bear is the owner and operator of Bolton Ice Palace and Champions Skating Center. “In my capacity as Coaching Director of ECHO, I’ll be working closely with the current coaching staff to build competitive teams at each level for next season and implementing a wider variety of skills training and goalie training,” said Coach Crawford.

Coach Sasha Malkov was named Skills Director and Director of Player Personnel of ECHO and will be also be announcing soon a variety of skills training programs run through the rink. Coach Sasha will also be assisting with tryouts and recruiting for the 2022-23 system. “It is clear that the rink and Black Bear Sports Group want to build on the great traditions of ECHO and grow the club long-term,” said Sasha. “The partnership with the rink opens the door to new opportunities for our players including spring and summer camps, tournament opportunities and access to player movement to its owned and operated Elite and AAA clubs at the Jr. Wolfpack AAA and MassConn United.”

Tryouts and team alignments for 2022-23 will be announced soon on the website! Go Stars!

About Black Bear Sports Group, Inc.

Black Bear Sports Group, Inc. is a privately held company formed by Murry Gunty and Blakstreet Capital Holdings, LLC in 2015 that seeks investments in sports and entertainment facilities, teams, and youth sports events. Black Bear arenas are clean, professionally managed, and offer world-class recreational programs. Black Bear focuses on ice arenas in metropolitan areas with compelling demographics, markets with a National Hockey League club presence and arenas with existing youth hockey clubs. Black Bear not only features the ability to acquire healthy and stable arenas, but also the expertise required to turn around mismanaged or under-performing facilities. The largest owner/operator of ice rinks in the U.S., Black Bear’s footprint totals 30 facilities across the United States with 55 sheets of indoor ice, four indoor turf fields, 18 youth hockey clubs, two youth hockey leagues (Atlantic Hockey Federation and National Girls Hockey League), the nation’s largest adult hockey organization (Foundry Adult Hockey) and three Junior “A” hockey franchises with membership in the United States Hockey League, North American Hockey League and Eastern Hockey League.