

NEW COACH FULL OF EASTERN PROMISE

THE Lee Valley Lions have appointed a new coach from Eastern Europe in the hope of reversing their fortunes in the English National Ice Hockey League.

Sergey Smolenko, 41, took up the reins at the Lee Valley Ice Centre last week, stepping into the role vacated by club veteran Eddie Joseph.

Joseph remains with the Lions, but will now concentrate his efforts on developing the junior Lions teams.

Smolenko played as a net-minder during his career and already coaches a team called the Eastern Stars, a side based in Britain that contains a number of players from Eastern Europe.

He is an experienced coach and it's hoped that a man of his background can steer Lions to a more successful string of results than in previous seasons, when they have struggled near the foot of the

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table.

Smolenko first cast his eye over the glut of potential players when Lions held their initial trial a week ago.

Several of last season's favourites have signed for the coming season, including local products Nicky Braithwaite and Paul O'Neill.

Top scorer from the last campaign Scott Beeson, son of the club's new general manager Deryck Beeson, also makes a welcome return to the roster and is joined by ex-Chelmsford Chieftains under 19 player, Mark Saunders.

Lions held another trial night last Tuesday and have further trials for prospective players next Tuesday, July 25 and on Saturday, August 1.



LEE Valley Lions' new coach for 2006-07 is the Ukranian Sergey Smolenko.