

Joseph's the Ed man for Lions' comeback

AFTER ten years off the ice the Lee Valley Lions are set to return to action next season, looking to recapture some of the magic that saw them play to packed houses in the mid-1980s, writes Paul Woloszyn.

The original Lions played from 1984 to 1995 in British League Division One, famously winning the title in 1986.

That year also saw them shock one of the country's leading teams, Nottingham Panthers, in the Norwich Union Cup.

Now one of the heroes of that era is ready to lead the new breed of Lions as they prepare to compete in the English National League.

Eddie Joseph played at Lee Valley for nine years and will coach the new team.

Reflecting on events he said: "It's been hard work getting it all together and I've got to say that I owe a huge thank you to the junior ice hockey club this year because this is partly possible thanks to the assistance of the parents of the kids in the juniors.

"I'm just looking forward to the future with these guys



FRAMED: Eddie Joseph with his jersey (Pic by Diane Davey)

and being able to see the kids coming through at Lee Valley Ice Centre from five-years-old up to 25-years-old and beyond."

The former defenceman, who has had the number two jersey he used to wear retired to commemorate his time at the club, has been coaching the junior Lions teams for the past ten years, a role he will continue despite the return of the senior team.

He said: "While I am very much involved in this my passion is getting kids into hockey, because they are the future of the sport and we need as many of them to come through as possible."

While Joseph concentrates on coaching, handling all off-

ice affairs for the Lions senior set-up is Pete Osbourne, who was Romford under-19s manager for the past three seasons.

Explaining the return of the senior team, he said: "The main idea is that Lee Valley junior ice hockey club have players coming up through the ranks and when they get to 19 they've got nowhere to go and it's a case of giving the kids something to look forward to when they finish junior hockey.

"It was an idea that had been around for a while but actually putting the idea into practice didn't come about until around April or May this year, and that's when the trials started. It's all been

happening very quickly, getting a full team together from scratch."

With the final squad now in place Osbourne is confident about the season ahead as the Lions prepare to compete in the English National League South, the third tier of hockey in this country.

He said: "We are quite happy with the squad we've assembled. I think we can be competitive. We certainly won't finish bottom."

Osbourne is also confident that the fans who watched the Lions first time round will return, as well as attracting new supporters from fellow Lee Valley-based London Racers.

"I certainly hope we can attract some of the old fans back. I think a lot of them have ended up watching the Racers because they have been their local side, but I expect to get Racers fans down here watching us as well," he said.

The Lions will begin their 2005-06 campaign with a local derby against Haringey Greyhounds on September 3. Face-off at Lee Valley will be at 5.45pm.