



The Tampa Bay Lightning owner Jeff Vinik announced Monday that the team has fired head coach Rick Tocchet and general manager Brian Lawton. In a statement the owner said the hockey operations department "needs a fresh start in order to help us fulfill our goal being a word-class organization."

Neither Tocchet nor Lawton had been in their position more than two years. The team missed the playoffs the past three seasons after making the post-season four seasons in a row from 2002-03 to 2006-07. The Lightning, let go coach John Tortorella after missing the playoffs in 2008, then hired Barry Melrose to start the 2008-09 season, but he was fired after just 15 games (5-7-4). Tocchet replaced Melrose going 19-33-14 in the remained over 2008-09 and 34-36-12 this season.

Lightning star Steven Stamkos, who was among lead leaders in goals scored this season, was not shocked by the firing. "It's not something that was a huge surprise," Stamkos told NHL Live! Monday. "Obviously, the success wasn't there the last couple of seasons and there was a lot of media attention surrounding what was going to happen. This is the first of a lot of moves that'll be made this summer and it's something you have to respect and just go out and do your thing."

In the statement by Vinik, he also mentioned that the search for a new CEO is underway and that the team is in the process of interviewing candidates. By the start of 2010-11 season, the team will have a new CEO, GM and coach. Starting fresh is right. Here's why the Lightning need a "fresh start:"

According to [Forbes](#) team valuations, the team scored a 72 in the “wins-to-player cost ratio” category. This category compares the number of wins per player payroll relative to the rest of the NHL. A score of 120 means the team achieved 20 percent more victories per dollar compared to the league average. To give you an idea how far the team has fallen off, their wins-to-player cost ration was a 196 in 2004.

The Lightning, who won the Stanley Cup in 2004, ranked 21st in attendance this season filling just 78.4 percent of the St. Pete Times Forum. Last season the team averaged filling 85.6 percent of the stadium. Both of those numbers are a major decline from 2008, when the team averaged 94.6 percent attendance drawing near 19,000 fans per game.

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Lightning Fire GM, Coach

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