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Starting up a professional sports franchise is not something that happens overnight.

Just ask the St. Charles Chill President and General Manager Nicole Kupaks, who is leading the charge of developing the new hockey team in St. Charles, Missouri. The Chill will begin play in the 2013-14 season and will compete in the CHL (Central Hockey League), a developmental hockey league designed for players who have NHL aspirations.

Kupaks, along with owners Gustavo Hernandez, Alfonso Arguindegui and Glenn Hart, are uplifting the Laredo Bucks and plotting them in the Family Arena, which sits about 25 miles outside of downtown St. Louis.

Kupaks had the idea to move the team after disastrous attendance numbers in Laredo forced the group to look at other markets.

“When we unfortunately had to choose to shut down our franchise in Laredo, I started looking for other opportunities and St. Charles popped up,” Kupaks said in her Family Arena office Friday afternoon. “I was talking to the league and I had done my own research about the market. I felt it was interesting. I presented it to our ownership group and told them that we needed to do a little more homework on this. I really dug down, looked at the numbers and found out that it could be very successful [in St. Charles] and worth our time. I encouraged one of our owners to fly with me up here and sold him on the idea.”

Kupaks was employed with the Bucks from 2005 until this past season, serving as a jack-of-all-trades. She cycled through positions that ranged from Director of Public Relations to her final position, Team General Manager and Governor.

“When I became GM of the Laredo Bucks, they chose me because they had seen my work over

the years," she said. "Our former coach was the President, GM and Head Coach but I'd always done the work of the GM. I'd always done the player integration, the contracts and all of that fun stuff. For them it was just a natural progression for me to become the GM."

Kupaks, who studied Business Management at Texas Tech University, is the only female to hold a General Manager position in professional men's hockey. Expecting respect was never an option.

"You have to earn it. I've bled and sweat for this.

"It's like anything else; when you come in as a rookie you have to prove yourself. I think my work ethic and my love for the game have proved that I am a legitimate businesswoman in this industry."

The Chill's biggest hurdle so far has been to find the team a qualified head coach. The ultimate goal was to find a candidate that has local ties in the community. Specifically, Kupaks wanted someone who played professional hockey with the St. Louis Blues of the NHL.

She admits that putting together a franchise is not exactly an easy task, so the new head coach will have to be prepared for a daunting road ahead.

The head coach's main task would be obvious; motivate the players to compete game-in and game-out, no matter the opponent.

"We are confident that this coach will be able to motivate these guys and take them to where you don't look past the lower-level guys just because their record isn't up to par. That doesn't give you the right to not show up for the game."

The franchise will announce the new head coach this Monday at the Arena Club Restaurant inside the Family Arena at 12:00 pm CDT. Hurdle #1 will be complete in a few short days.

While Kupaks would not offer any hints as to whom the franchise's first head coach would be, she did admit that the club has been in talks with the Blues about a possible partnership.

"Hopefully we will have something soon to formerly announce regarding a relationship," the 2005 CHL Soul of Service Award recipient said. "Their organization has been great to work with so far and I'm looking forward to building a partnership. Everyone from the alumni to the front office has been nothing but class."

Kupaks, currently the only member of the Chill organization, has already dropped her gloves with the Missouri Mavericks, a fellow CHL team who currently plays about 14 miles from Kansas City in Independence, Missouri.

"Our relationship is going to be just like the players; [we'll be] fine off the ice but when the puck drops it'll be a different story. We want to encourage those fans in Independence to come down and see some hockey here. We'll also take a lot of bus trips to let our fans watch us kick their butts up in Independence."

The Chill's website can be found at stcharleschill.com .