



July 4, 2012

An Open Letter to the Fans of the State of Hockey:

It seems like yesterday, but it was more than 4 years ago that I bought the Minnesota Wild. I came to the State of Hockey with high hopes and big dreams. I knew all about the loyal fan base and the remarkable support here in Minnesota. I felt the team had a solid roster and we were coming off of two straight playoff appearances and the franchise's first-ever Northwest Division Championship. The future looked bright.

Long story, short...things didn't work out the way I expected. Issues in and out of our control went south, and I'll be the first to acknowledge we have struggled. We made some difficult changes throughout the organization and I've had ample opportunity to work on a couple of skills we all need in life...patience and humility.

Like you, I've been disappointed with our results the past few seasons. But, at the same time I saw some hope emerging. I am extremely proud of the work Chuck Fletcher and his staff has done to build perhaps the very best group of young prospects in the NHL today. Those of you who follow us closely know all about the likes of Mikael Granlund, Jonas Brodin, Charlie Coyle, and Jason Zucker among others. Those players represent the bright future of our franchise and it's been proven time and time again that drafting and developing young talent is the most reliable path to sustained playoff success.

Having said that, when the season ended in April, I found myself wondering, perhaps as you did, how long that process might take and how we could accelerate it. To Chuck's credit, he had an ambitious plan and today's announcement of the signing of free agents Zach Parise and Ryan Suter marks the culmination of that plan. We now have the two most coveted free agents in the NHL to add to our veteran core, led by our captain Mikko Koivu, and our acclaimed class of young prospects. Sounds pretty good to me.

As Chuck has said, this is a rare opportunity to bring two players of this caliber, both in the prime of their careers, to our franchise. I want to thank Zach, Ryan and their respective agents/advisors for their decisions in our favor. I know they both had numerous, attractive offers (some higher than ours). I also want to thank Chuck and his staff for their creativity, vision and earnest pursuit of these players. We are obviously thrilled with this outcome.

Finally and most importantly, I felt like we had a "secret weapon" working in our favor during these negotiations...the spirit and dedication of you fans of the State of Hockey. It's no secret that both Zach and Ryan have strong ties to this area. They've had first-hand experience with the extraordinary pride and unrelenting passion of our fans. Ultimately, I firmly believe that you fans were the deciding factor in their decision and so my final "thank you" is reserved for you.

Now, the real proof will come when we hit the ice this season. But, I am confident that we have taken a huge step forward today. It's high time that the fans of the State of Hockey are rewarded with playoff success. I can't wait...oh yeah, that patience thing again!

Sincerely,

Craig Leipold

