

Meet the new Team U.S.A.

Lamoureux twins, Hilary Knight are youngest players on revamped team with fewer veterans

BY RICHARD O'BRIEN
RECORD STAFF

From top to bottom, Team U.S.A. is bringing more new faces than ever to the Four Nations Cup.

Look behind the bench and there is coach Mark Johnson, a member of the famous 1980 Miracle On Ice men's gold medal winner, replacing Ben Smith, the highly regarded American coach at the last three Olympics.

Many players from the Turino Olympics are gone, with youngsters vying for their positions at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver.

"They'll see a mix of some real good veteran players and a lot of new, unknown faces — unless they follow college hockey at the women's level in the States," Johnson said.

U.S. players coming to the Four Nations Cup include some who will wear the national jersey for the first time.

Hilary Knight, a 17-year-old forward, is among the players taking the opportunity to try to crack the lineup.

At 17, she is the youngest player on the American team that will compete in Kitchener.

Knight is just nine days older than Monique and Jocelyne Lamoureux, twin sisters who hold dual citizenship in Canada and the United States.

"They're still in high school," Johnson said.

"I think it will be a wonderful opportunity for those three players to gain some experience, especially with the tournament being held in Canada.

"They can start the process of understanding what it means to be a national player and get their feet wet in some pretty stiff international competition."

Johnson, who is in his fifth year coaching the women's team at the University of Wisconsin, has committed to Team U.S.A. to the end of the World Championships in Winnipeg in April of 2007.



Team Canada's Cheryl Pounder keeps Team U.S.A.'s Natalie Darwitz away from goaltender Charline Labonte during first period Four Nations Cup action in 2004 in Burlington, Vt.



Chandra Gunn



Angela Ruggiero



Sarah Parsons

Assistant coaches Hillary Witt and Erin Whitten Hamlen are also new.

Michelle Amidon holds the recently created position of director of women's hockey operations.

Amidon, a former U.S. national player off and on from 1991 to 1997, takes over some of the responsibilities that used to fall on the coaching staff.

"We're trying to create the atmos-

phere where they can just focus on the coaching aspect now," Amidon said.

"I can take care of all the other stuff for the players and coaches."

The U.S. team competing at the Four Nations includes nine players from the 2006 Olympic bronze medal team.

They include Chandra Gunn in goal and four players on defence —

Caitlin Cahow, Julie Chu, Helen Resor and Angela Ruggiero.

Natalie Darwitz, Kristin King, Sarah Parsons and Krissy Wendell are four forwards who played in the last Olympics.

Parsons was the youngest American player at the Olympics. She was 18 at the time and in her freshman year at Dartmouth College.

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