

## Wishing they knew the Drill

Contributed by Joanne Ireland  
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Six-year-old Conor Elder sat in a chair at the airport, blissfully unaware of the cloud hanging over the Edmonton Drillers.

He just flashed another grin when the arrival doors slid open, then held up his handmade sign. It was upside down but most of the players got the message: "Thanks for a great season."

The Drillers were knocked out of the National Professional Soccer League playoffs on Saturday, losing their second straight game to Milwaukee.

They flew back Monday, still waiting to hear if there will be a next season.

"We'll go our separate ways and hopefully hear some good news from the front office," said Shayne Campbell.

"We just keep trudging on because we don't know. We never know as players what's going to happen. There are times when it creeps into your psyche, but anyone who's ever played in Canada knows you have to separate the game from the off-the-field issues."

This was the second year the Drillers advanced to the National Conference final, the second year they failed to get to the league championship.

Off the field, the focus has been on owner Wotjek Wojcicki, who has said he can't continue losing money. He then said he would keep the team in Edmonton if he could recruit partners or 8,000 season ticket holders.

Neither has been secured.

"Everybody is talking like there will be a next year," said LeBaron Hollimon. "We haven't heard otherwise."

By the end of May, Wojcicki has to renew a letter of credit with the league office, or call it quits.

"I'm hoping he makes that decision quicker, for the players' sake. For everybody's sake," said coach Ross Ongaro. "But I'm confident he'll have a plan and he'll make it known so we can go forward from there -- one way or the other."

Captain Kevin Holness said the uncertainty only accentuated the frustration of the loss. He, like several of his teammates, will now hook up with an outdoor team. Some of the players will remain in town to work at summer camps.

"A lot of guys were thinking that there might be a lot of changes, that this might be the last time a lot of us are together," he said. "We can't be in the semis every year, only to get knocked out."

"But you can't play for this team and not worry about next year. We've developed such a family atmosphere with this team that that's going to be the hardest part, wondering what's going to happen next September."