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## Rivermen radio reaches new frequency


**Dave Eminian**

 Wednesday,  
 July 18,  
 2007

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**Sports**

The Peoria

Rivermen brought in a new radio voice last month. On Tuesday, they signed on with a new radio station.

The AHL team has reached a two-year deal with fledgling Peoria station WZTN-FM (96.5), returning the club to a strong FM signal and the promise of all their games live for a devoted fanbase.

The deal includes all regular-season and playoff games, and priority over the airwaves in most cases, the only exceptions being national single-event programming from ESPN, like the NCAA basketball title game and certain football bowl games. None of those events conflict with the hockey club's schedule.

WZTN, owned by Dallas-based Independence Media Group, will go by its ESPN radio moniker while building an all-sports and talk format in central Illinois.

"We thank JMP Radio for giving us a home last year," Rivermen president Bart Rogers said. "Image and access to our games was critical for our fans, so this is a move we had to make.

"We're excited to be part of ESPN radio, in a sports setting and with a great signal. Our fans travel an average of 33 miles to get to Rivermen games. FM 96.5 touches Bloomington, gets into Carlock and is super strong to the west, well into Macomb and even Fort Madison, Iowa.

"They are going to be a great partner for us."

The Rivermen will have a 30-minute pre-game and post-game show for all home games in the 2007-08 season, anchored by new team radio voice Tom Callahan.

Those shows will originate live from Carver Arena's new clubroom suite. Telecasts of the games will again be available via pay-per-view on b2 Network.

WZTN will also air a live, local sports show anchored by Doc Watson and Gabe

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Reynolds in a 90-minute slot leading up to the Rivermen pre-game shows.

"I'm a big hockey fan, a St. Louis Blues fan, actually," said WZTN vice-president and general manager Mike Rea, whose station delivers a Class A signal equivalent to 6,000 watts. "From a business standpoint this made sense for us. I don't know that the Rivermen will be the last sports team we bring in. But we're sure glad they are the first."

## OUTDOORS

Jeff Lampe  
The Brag Board

Rea elaborated on that hint, saying he is in preliminary talks with Bradley University for its men's basketball broadcasts. The Braves contract at WMBD-AM (1470) is said to be expiring this year.

## COLUMNISTS

DAILY  
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Rea also said he is interested in the Peoria Chiefs and other local sports events. The station also carries Jim Rome's syndicated sports talk show.

WEEKLY  
Dave Eminian  
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**HOME RUN DERBY:** The Rivermen will stage a home run derby to benefit St. Jude's at the Aug. 10 Peoria Chiefs game.

Ryan Ori  
Dave Reynolds  
Greg Stewart  
Wes Huett

The Chiefs will wear special Rivermen jerseys in that game, and host a silent auction for them.

Lonnie  
Schwindenhammer  
Nick Vlahos  
Johnny Campos

At 6:30 p.m., Rivermen president Bart Rogers, Chiefs president Rocky Vonachen and WEEK-TV Ch. 25 sports director Lee Hall will attempt to launch homers.

## HOWE STATS

Pro Basketball  
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You can sponsor the trio's efforts by downloading a form at [www.rivermen.net](http://www.rivermen.net), requesting a pledge form via e-mail at [info@rivermen.net](mailto:info@rivermen.net) or accessing the form at [www.peoriachiefs.com](http://www.peoriachiefs.com).

Pledges will only be collected for homers, not strikeouts.

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**RIVER READINGS:** Popular public address announcer B.J. Stone is back with the Rivermen. Gary Olson handled those duties last season, but Stone will return in the fall. The Rivermen will use Olson as a game operations guy, handling the microphone for on-ice promotions and as a rover in the grandstand. "Gary is strong in that area and we need him there," Rivermen president Bart Rogers said. "And B.J. Stone had a lot fans among our customers, and we want our loyal fanbase to be happy." ... The Rivermen say the trademark horns used to celebrate their goals at Carver Arena are going to be retired. Mark and Cindy Hunt, who own and operate the horns, are retiring from duty. The Rivermen have a digitally mastered recording of the horns they will use at the games. ... Rivermen co-owner Bruce Saur says the team has decided to repair its custom bus, which needs emergency exit windows added. The repairs will cost about \$6,000 and the bus is expected to be ready for the coming season. ... Former Rivermen center Tyler Rennette has officially retired from the UHL-IHL Bloomington club and taken a job as the on-ice rep running drills for Next Testing, a new skills measuring service created by ex-Rivermen goalie Mike Valley. . . . Former Rivermen assistant coach Joe Trotta will get a Stanley Cup ring after serving this past season as the video coordinator with the Anaheim Ducks.

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Barry

July 18, 2007 - 08:34

Subject:

Two good steps in the right direction for the Rivermen! A good FM radio station to carry ALL the Rivermen games live, and BJ Stone back as PA announcer at the games. Those 30-minute pre-game and post-game shows sound really good, as well, for the trips to-and-from the game. Someone might want to let Dave Basseggio know that his presence at the post-game shows will be expected and greatly appreciated.

I'm sorry the horns are going to be retired. They have been a great tradition at Carver Arena for so many years. I don't know how a digitally re-mastered recording can have the same effect as the actual horns, but we'll see, I guess.

With two good potential rivals in Quad City and Rockford coming into the league next season, and the news mentioned above about the radio station and PA announcer, it seems things are swinging in the right direction for the Rivermen. Hopefully it will all pay off for them!

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