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a challenge for  
MSU's Margenthaler

# Sports

## Hockey team closes door on Vizenor era



Jeff Vizenor is out as coach of the MSU women's hockey team.

### Players tight-lipped about change; interim coach to be selected next week

By Shane Frederick  
Free Press Staff Writer

**MANKATO** — The Minnesota State women's hockey team appears to be moving on.

One day after Jeff Vizenor officially stepped down as head coach, players tried to shift their focus to this weekend's Western Collegiate Hockey

Association series at Bemidji State.

"It's been emotional," junior forward Christina Lee said. "On the ice, we're just trying to put into practice. We've always been told, when we're on the ice, put personal feelings aside and focus. That's what we've been doing."

On Tuesday, Vizenor was reassigned to another position

in the athletic department. Vizenor, who is in the last year of his contract with the university, said he no longer had the drive the job required and requested the move.

According to assistant coach Paul Willett, Vizenor met with the team both Monday and Tuesday.

Asked if the coaching change came as a surprise,

both Lee and junior forward Kala Buganski said, "No comment." An athletic communications official attended practice, and team captain Maggie Fisher, the lone senior on the team, declined to answer questions, saying only that Buganski would be speaking on behalf of the team.

"It'll be a change, but we've dealt with change before," Buganski said.

The Mavericks are winless in their last eight games and will face the team they last defeated, Bemidji, which is

winless in the WCHA, on Friday and Saturday.

"It's been fine," Buganski said. "We're still working hard. We're staying focused. We're doing what we need to do this week. The main focus is on Bemidji."

Willett will be the lone coach behind the bench this weekend, as the team's other assistant coach, Mandy Krause-Rideout, is on a recruiting trip in Germany. She is scheduled to return Sunday. Willett said

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both coaches will meet with MSU athletic director Kevin Buisman next week to discuss who will be the team's interim coach for the rest of the season. The Mavericks have 14 games remaining in the regular season.

"We'll discuss a number of topics," said Willett, who is in his first season with the Mavericks.

Buisman said the school

will search for a permanent replacement for Vizenor after the season ends.

Vizenor was in his eighth season with the Mavericks. Now in an administrative position, his duties will include fundraising, marketing, student-athlete development, capital projects and community relations.

"The coaching staff and players care a lot about Jeff," Willett said. "He is a great person. We wish him

nothing but the best."

Willett broke Wednesday's practice into two parts, working with defensemen for the first half and forwards in the second.

"I addressed the team, and we talked about some things," Willett said. "This is the last time we're going to talk about (the coaching change) because the focus is going to be on Bemidji. The girls practiced remarkably well today."