It was only a matter of time before President of Hockey Operations John Davidson put his stamp on the Blue Jackets in a big way. He did that on Tuesday night, as the team announced the firing of General Manager Scott Howson. The replacement GM is Jarmo Kekalainen and he will now be given time to make his assessments before one of the most important offseasons in franchise history. With what looks to be another season without a playoff berth, the Jackets need a major overhaul and Davidson will work closely with Kelakainen to oversee that process.

Under Howson, the Blue Jackets made their lone playoff appearance in franchise history, but the results in the other seasons were poor. Howson was hired during the summer of 2007 and will be remembered for taking some chances and the Rick Nash fiasco. The chances Howson took were reasonable gambles, signing James Wisniewski, trading for Jeff Carter, trading for RJ Umberger, and signing Steve Mason to a contract extension. The Jackets were 173-190-59 during Howson's reign.

The Rick Nash trade will be the part of Howson's tenure that people remember. Howson, Nash, and Nash's agent had a public spat that sealed Nash's fate in Columbus and took away some of the team's leverage. Howson publicly stated that Nash had requested a trade, while Nash responded that he had not made such a request. The entire thing was a public relations disaster and Howson came out looking like public enemy number one. A true evaluation of the trade will take some time, with a first round pick and 21-year-old defenseman Tim Erixon in the deal, along with Artem Anisimov and Brandon Dubinsky, but Howson will always be the GM that traded away the face of the franchise.

The ill-fated Carter trade has not panned out for the Blue Jackets. The team traded Jakub Voracek and the eighth overall pick in 2011 for Carter, who was unhappy from the start in Columbus. The draft pick became Sean Couturier, who is already a main contributor for the Flyers at just the age of 20.

During Howson's tenure, the Blue Jackets struggled to find a head coach. Ken Hitchcock was relieved of his duties and immediately hired by the St. Louis Blues in 2010. Scott Arniel was hired and fired a year and a half later. Todd Richards took over and is still the coach, but his future is certainly up in the air with Howson's dismissal.

To say that the Jackets are in worse shape now than they were when Howson took over is not entirely true. They're in about the same shape that they were in back in 2007. Howson took some chances that didn't pay off and missed the boat on some opportunities that would have worked out. He won't be remembered favorably, but, he was a professional for most of his tenure, even when things weren't going well. The Nash fiasco aside, Howson was always approachable and didn't shy away from the team's problems. By no means is his firing a bad thing.

Jarmo Kekalainen is an interesting hire for the Jackets. He has spent the last three seasons as the GM of Jokerit, one of the top teams in the Finnish Elite League. Kekalainen becomes the first European GM in the history of the NHL and was the director of pro scouting for the St. Louis Blues from 2002-10. In other words, Kekalainen and Davidson have worked together extensively and helped to build the Blues into the team that they are now. Before being the director of pro scouting with the Blues, Kekalainen was the director of player personnel for five seasons with the Ottawa Senators. He is a very experienced man, with a lot of experience in international hockey, something that should help the Blue Jackets draft better.

As a player, Kekalainen played US college hockey at Clarkson University and played 55 games in the NHL. He spent most of his career playing overseas. Kekalainen gets the opportunity he's always wanted and with a man that he respects, so this should be a terrific hire for the Blue Jackets and one that should improve the future success of the team. Even with a lengthy resume of NHL front office jobs and a playing career, Kekalainen is only 46 years old, so this is a guy who has moved up the front office ranks quickly and is highly thought of in hockey circles.

Once Kekalainen's immigration stuff is squared away, he will join the team and get a firsthand look at what he has to work with. This is a hire that Blue Jackets fans should be excited about.

As for the team on the ice, aside from a blowout win over the San Jose Sharks in their last game, the Jackets have had a lot of difficulty this season, especially scoring goals. With the six-goal outburst against the Sharks, the Jackets are up to 2.3 goals per game. Even with a five-goal win, their minus-11 goal differential still ranks last in the Western Conference. With a six-city, 10-day road trip beginning on Friday against the Los Angeles Kings, the Jackets could be facing Mount Everest in the standings when it's over with.

To date, 43 percent of the team's goals have been scored by Mark Letestu, Artem Anisimov, and Vinny Prospal, so getting some scoring help from the key forwards is a must. James Wisniewski and Derick Brassard are the only other Blue Jackets with more than one goal through 13 games.

Things are going to be very difficult for the Blue Jackets and the added pressure of playing for a job under the new GM probably won't help.

A brief update on the Lake Erie Monsters. The Monsters are riding a four-game losing streak, losing three times in a shootout, once to Hershey, and twice to Abbotsford over the weekend and losing the annual 10:45 a.m. school day game to Rochester 3-0.

The Monsters are now in a three-way tie for the fifth seed and are one point ahead of the eighth and final playoff spot.

The team heads back out on the road for three games in three days this weekend before coming home for an eight-game homestand.