

**(Col.)-Avalanche fire coach**

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DENVER (AP) — The Colorado Avalanche have fired coach Joe Sacco a day after the team missed the playoffs for the third straight season.

General manager Greg Sherman says in a news release Sunday the "organization believes a change of leadership behind the bench is needed going forward."

Colorado never got on track in the lockout-shortened season and finished last in the Western Conference.

Sacco was hired in 2009 after coaching in the minors. He preached an up-tempo style and it served the youthful Avalanche well in his first season as the team earned a postseason spot. But the team couldn't duplicate that success.

Sacco will lead the U.S. squad at the world championships later this week. Sacco will even take several Avalanche players with him, including Paul Stastny and Erik Johnson.