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## Utah Blaze are reborn in new league

By **Wade Jewkes**  
Deseret News

Published: Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2010 12:51 a.m. MST

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WEST VALLEY CITY — And the name is (drum roll please) ... the Utah Blaze!

Ownership of Utah's latest arena football team announced at a press conference Tuesday that the familiar moniker will be put to use once again. The rebirth of the Blaze marks the return of arena football to Utah — this time competing as a member of the newly formed Arena Football 1 League. The Blaze will play their home games at the E-Center.

Team owner Dave Affleck announced that the new league had purchased the assets of the now-defunct Arena Football League, including things like trademarks, logos, etc. Several teams from the old league joined together in forming a new 15-team AF1 League, which opens play on April 9.

AFL veterans form the nucleus of the Blaze organization, with Steve Videtich named as general manager and Ernesto Purnsley as head coach. They have 13 years and 12 years experience, respectively, in arena league football.

In order to make this team (and league) viable, Affleck is hoping to learn from mistakes in the past.

"League offices were spending a lot of money ... (on unnecessary items). Everyone now is in a more conservative mode," said Affleck.

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He and Videtich both mentioned that player salaries have been lowered.

"Player salaries are one-third lower, but the players have been coming back in droves," Videtich said.

Purnsley concurred. "We are bringing in quality guys," he said. "Our goal is to win a championship."

Players who will be joining the Blaze for their inaugural season include Arena Football League veteran Aaron Boone, American Indoor Football Association standouts Mike Affleck, Akamu Aki and Scott Thomsen, former University of Utah standouts Jason Boone and Derek Richards and former Utah State standout Brian Soi.

Aaron Boone, a wide receiver, prepped at Millard High School in Fillmore, Utah, and played collegiately at Snow Junior College and the University of Kentucky. He also played briefly in the NFL and NFL Europe. Most recently, Boone played for the AFL's Utah Blaze and recorded more than 1,500 receiving yards in 2008.

Affleck, a quarterback, prepped at Timpview High School in Provo and finished

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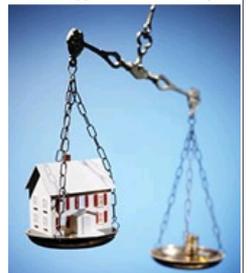
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up his collegiate career at Utah State. Last year he guided the Utah Valley Thunder of the AIFA to an 11-4 record and a berth in the playoffs. He led the AIFA in passing efficiency at 109.6. He was second in the league in passing yards (3,037) and was third in touchdown passes (58). He also rushed for 15 touchdowns.

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