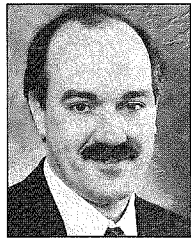


# Rookie lawmaker Tomassoni inks two-year deal

Jack Kemp. Bill Bradley. Mo Udall. Even Gerald Ford successfully made the jump into the electoral arena after hanging up his sports jersey for good.



Rep. David Tomassoni

Tomassoni is perhaps the first former Olympian to gain a seat in the Legislature since Wendell Anderson came to the state Capitol in 1962.

But what makes Tomassoni's athletic career a bit unique is that he played for the Italian Olympic squad in 1984 — not Team USA.

Tomassoni, 40, also had a National Hockey League tryout with the New York Rangers after graduating from Denver University with a bachelor of science degree in business administration. Returning to Minnesota for good in 1990 with his wife, Charlotte, two sons, Dante and Danny, and daughter, Chauntell, he set up shop as an insurance broker and also filled in as an assistant coach for the Chisholm High School hockey team.

Add Rep. David Tomassoni to the list of former athletes who've turned to politics. A high school and collegiate standout, and later a defenseman in the Italian hockey leagues,

One would suspect his on-ice renown — particularly in the puck-happy Iron Range cities of Hibbing and Chisholm — gave him a leg up on the competition for the District 5B seat.

But it was an unsuccessful run for a county commissioner's post four years earlier that Tomassoni credits for allowing him to emerge from a crowded primary field last September and to roll to an easy win in November.

"The '88 race gave me some important name recognition," he said. "That was my first taste of politics. I didn't win but I liked what I got involved in. I can't tell you exactly why we won this time — we ran a real issued-oriented campaign and it just worked."

Because of the overwhelming impact taconite mining plays in the lives of his constituents, Tomassoni said revitalizing the often-beleaguered industry will be among his chief legislative concerns.

"The focus has to be to save what [jobs] we have and try to find something else" and plan for the future, he said. "We have to figure out how to compete worldwide."

Tomassoni said he expects to make some tough decisions as he and his colleagues work to get the state's balance sheet back in order. He said the task has been aided by a talented caucus

staff, and his new constituents giving him time to grow into the job.

Past experiences also have taught him how to roll with the punches, explore alternative methods to achieve a goal, and to just relax when the situation warrants.

"I was over there [in Italy] for 16 seasons and in that time they made 16 different rules for foreign players," he said. "There were 16 different regular season formats and 16 different playoff formats."

"I never knew which team I could play on from season to season, so I signed 16 separate one-year contracts. This is my first two-year contract ever."

—Dave Price

## District 5B

**Population:** 32,467

**Distribution:** 100 percent of residents live in rural areas \*

**County:** St. Louis

**Largest city:** Hibbing

**Location:** northeastern Minnesota

**1992 presidential election results:**

Clinton/Gore: 61.2 percent

Bush/Quayle: 18.6 percent

Perot/Stockdale: 19.6 percent

Other: 0.6 percent

\* U.S. Census definition