



Jim Fickess' column

High school hockey league in works

PLANS ARE IN the works for a two-division Iowa high school hockey league.

Two meetings have been held in Ames under the guidance and organizing efforts of Iowa State University hockey coach Al Murdoch. Things are looking good, especially for the first division, says Waterloo Public High coach Steve Schell.

The first division consists of seven squads who have interscholastic hockey experience—Columbus High of Waterloo, the Waterloo Public team (composed of players from Central, East and West Highs), Dowling and Valley Highs of West Des Moines, Urbandale, and two other combination teams from Hoover and Roosevelt Highs of Des Moines and a Sioux City metro squad.

Schools expressing interest in division II include Big Eight Conference members Mason City and Ames along with Lincoln of Des Moines, Ankeny and Webster City.

THE ULTIMATE goal of the prep hockey organizers is to receive Iowa High School Athletic Association sanctioning. The league representatives voted unanimously to accept IHSA rules whenever possible. The IHSA will be notified of any exceptions. The Minnesota High School Athletic Association's hockey rules, which emphasize cutting down on violent play, will be used for the games themselves.

The group also agreed 100 per cent to follow the IHSA eligibility rules entirely, a prerequisite for sanctioning.

The hockey people realize sanctioning won't come right away. The programs can't meet certain IHSA criteria yet, such as no multi-school teams.

Also, the IHSA is not giving its official backing to sports, like hockey, in which only a limited number of Iowa schools participate. In fact, the IHSA recently dropped its sponsorship of boys' gymnastics because of its limited program.

A scheduling meeting is planned for early September in Ames. The division I schools have agreed to play each other on a home-and-home basis for a 12-game league schedule. Schell points out this helps overcome a problem his team faced in its first year last season—scheduling games with comparable teams.

A **POST-SEASON** tournament is also being planned for Ames. The seven division I teams will participate along with the top division II team, to be determined by either standings or a playoff.

Iowa State hosted a similar tournament last year which Columbus won. Waterloo Public wasn't invited.

One obstacle in the way of the Waterloo Public and Columbus scheduling process, the schedule for the Waterloo Black Hawks, should be taken care of by the September meeting. The United States Hockey League is scheduled to convene in Grand Rapids, Mich. start Thursday to schedule the upcoming season.