

YHA: Fifth season looks promising

More than 100 miniature would-be Bobby Orrs and Gordie Howes descended on East Park Saturday to register for participation in the fifth season of the Mason City Youth Hockey Program.

"We are excited about this year's program," said Craig Johnson, the group's treasurer. "The Youth Hockey Association (YHA) is something the people of Mason City initiated, and it is growing and becoming more popular every year."

"This year we are expanding the program," he continued, "by adding two new groups: the Mighty Mites, a group for girls and boys under eight years of age who want to learn to skate and play hockey. The lessons for the Mites will be free.

"And we also are adding a Junior B League for high schoolers. Participation in this group will be based on try-outs. This will be a traveling team, competing with teams from Waterloo, Des Moines and other towns."

Other divisions comprising the YHA include the Squirts, 8-9-year-olds; Pee Wees, 11-12-year-olds; Bantams, 13-14-year-olds, and Midgets, 15-17-year-olds.

Hockey board members are expecting a good turnout for the organization again this year, Johnson said. A second registration day will be held Saturday from 1-5 p.m. at the East Park Warming House. Thereafter, registration may be made through the Parks and Recreation De-

partment in City Hall.

"Last year, we had more than 250 participants in the program," Johnson said, "and we had 16 teams playing twice weekly, besides practicing during the week."

In fact, the program has grown so much larger than had been anticipated a third rink has had to be constructed at the site in MacNider's Woods just to accommodate all the players.

"That was our main project last year," Johnson commented. "We used building fund money for the third rink. This year we hope to be able to finance a cinder block warming house for the kids."

Johnson's hopes are likely to come true, he believes. "The phenomenal amount of support we get from the community is truly remarkable," he explained, emphasizing the fact that most YHA funding comes from local sponsoring businesses and the Exchange Club.

"Besides the nucleus of dedicated adults who coach and work with the kids, we owe so much to the merchants in the community who make the program possible, the Exchange Club and the Parks and Recreation Department," he said.

The only other sources of income for the YHA are their annual candy sale, scheduled this year for Nov. 20-28, and registration fees paid by the participants in the program: \$1 for each Squirt, \$3 for Pee Wees, Bantams

and Midgets.

And costs are considerable, according to Johnson. Last year, he said, the YHA spent nearly every cent of the \$5,000 they raised through sponsorships, the candy sale and registration fees.

A breakdown shows 34 per cent went for equipment, 18 per cent for liability insurance, another 18 per cent for rink maintenance, 16 per cent for ice time, and the remainder going for miscellaneous items such as thermogas for the warming house and trophies.

Equipment furnished participants includes jerseys for teams, hockey sticks, helmets and shin guards for Mites, and helmets and shin guards for Squirts who cannot afford their own. Participants otherwise must furnish their own hockey skates, sticks, shin guards, helmets and hard athletic protectors.

"This year we may be able to get some help on the liability insurance through the Parks and Recreation Department," Johnson said, "but still we would like to raise \$10,000 this year to help build an indoor recreation facility that would include skating and hockey in addition to sports like tennis."

Board officers for the season are Phil Stephan, president; Art McMahon, vice president; Dolly Hanna, secretary, and Craig Johnson, treasurer.