

Hockey club opens season with alumni game Sunday



WEBSTER CITY HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY CLUB — First row, (left to right) Shawn Seamonds, Kevin Johnson, Kim Carpenter, Tom Chambers. Second row (left to right) Pat Foley, Eric Anderson, Steve Green, John Wilcox, Steve Schorzman, Jeff Leytham, Mike Anderson and Gibb Wood. Not pictured, Tim Yates, Greg Golly, Dale Olmstead, Jeff Lehman, Mark Anderson, Jeff Weir, Danie Ruddy and Paul Swanson.

Whether it's 14 degrees or minus 14 degrees (like it was last night) the Webster City High School Hockey club almost always seems to be out at Riverview rink practicing.

The team, under the direction of Coach Carl Rhoer and Assistant Coach Pat Foley, are warming up in the frigid night air for Sunday's battle against returning alumni and for their first regular scheduled game on Jan. 8 against Ankeny at the Des Moines Ice arena.

The alumni game was a spur of the moment idea by Gary Swon, 20, and his father Ellis Swon. Gary, on break from Central College in Pella, said "a number of guys from college and also some older players decided to get together and take on the high school

team." He added, "There are eight or nine of us that will play and Carl Rhoer who is around 60-years-old may even play."

Foley said there will be no admission charge on Sunday and that the warming house will be open for everyone's use.

The team will meet Ames in their first home game on Jan. 15.

Foley said, "Our team is pretty unique because we are the only team in the league that doesn't have indoor facilities to use when the weather gets bad. Indoor rinks help alot because there are usually only 30-35 really good skating days during the winter."

This year there is a new high school hockey association that has divided the participating teams in two classes, explained Foley.

"The A class is made up of seven teams and the B class has five teams." He added, "We use to use NCAA rules but this year we will follow the professional rules."

The A division schools are generally larger and have had more experience in the hockey program," said Rhoer. He added Webster City is the smallest school in the class B division and the only school which doesn't have school backing.

"We are going to run into real tough competition but we wanted to try being in the league anyway," said Rhoer.

Presently the high school hockey program in Webster City is pretty much at a stand still in regards to the increase in participation, but this could change, said Foley.

"We aren't sponsored or funded at all by the high school," said Foley. "This means that the players have to pay for all equipment and traveling expenses which gets sort of expensive. This is the main reason the sport really hasn't grown much. If the program intends to really get going it will need eventual school support."

Most of the 19 players have only skated for four or five years, according to Foley, but he says they have really come a long way in their playing.

"The guys are real enthusiasts about the sport and most of them make it down just about every night for practice," except on Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights, which are left open for games, said Foley.