

Prep hockey team eyes improvement

By Dick Champ
Journal Sports Writer

Hopes are high as the Sioux City Metro high school hockey team prepares for the 1980-81 season opener.

"We're shooting for over .500 hockey," said Walt Johnson, the Metros' coach at the team's media night Thursday. "The state tournament is by no means out of reach."

Johnson, the former Sioux City Musketeer, is in his first full season at the team's helm. He took over the reins in the middle of the 1979-80 season. Another ex-Musketeer, Mitch Brandt, is in his third campaign as a high school coach.

Conditioning and fundamentals have been emphasized in pre-season practices. "They're important," Johnson says. "We're hopeful that we can out hustle some of the other teams."

There are several reasons for the optimism. One is that this will be a veteran team. Only three players were lost to graduation from the team that is composed of hockey players from all of the city's high schools. That means that Johnson and Brandt are working with 14 lettermen.

Another is that team officials are counting on Brent Hartman's health to be better. The East High senior missed six full games and portions of others with an injury to his right shoulder. Hartman, brother of ex-Musketeer Brian Hartman, says he had a separation and "the muscles were torn a little. But I've lifted weights and built it back up."

Hartman was in pre-season camp with the Musketeers, so he picked up a few more tips.

Norton returns but barely wins

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (AP) — Former World Boxing Council heavyweight champion Ken Norton came out of a 16-month retirement to battle undefeated Randall "Tex" Cobb Friday night and took a 10-round split-decision with a flurry of counter-punches in the final round.

Norton, 36, obviously dead on his feet at the end of the ninth round, summed up enough energy in the final round to batter the lumbering Cobb with a series of uppercuts in the center of the ring and capture the deciding round.

Referee Tony Perez of New York scored the match 97-94 for Norton, judge Spider Bynum of Dallas saw it 97-95 for Cobb and judge Chuck Hasset of Norton's hometown of Los Angeles cast the deciding 96-95 ballot for Norton.

Team officials figure that a healthy Hartman will be one of the top five scorers in the state.

Another senior, Clayton Wiffen of West High, figures to challenge Hartman for team scoring honors.

Johnson says he doesn't plan to have Hartman and Wiffen on the same line with any regularity. "I think we'd like to have two or three consistent lines, so they probably won't be in the game together," Johnson says.

One of the two non-lettermen (goalie Craig Patrick is the other) who figures to see a lot of action is Mats Hansson. The North High senior defenseman is an exchange student from Sweden. "He's a very quality person," Johnson says of Hansson. "Mats has played a lot of hockey...and he's head and shoulders above most high school hockey players in Iowa."

Finally, Johnson figures that depth will be a key factor for the Metros. "We have more experience and depth than we've had and that has to help."

Something new — a recreation league — has been added this year. Thirty-two athletes reported to start the season and Johnson and Brandt figure to keep 20 on the squad with no more than 16 dressing for any game. The 12 who haven't made the varsity, plus the four who don't dress, will play in the recreation (intramural) league. "In the past, if a boy didn't make the high school team he had no other place to play hockey," Johnson says. "The recreation league will keep those boys in the game and helping in their development."

Other regulars figure to be forwards Dan Holzrichter, Mark Adam, Pete Baker, Bob Batcheller and Bill Emerick, and defensemen Krag Lohry, Pat Pinney and Dan Reynolds. Johnson shied away from naming a regular goalie, but the top candidates are Patrick and Jamie Lampares.

Johnson feels that Waterloo Public and Waterloo Columbus, both perennial powers, will be the teams to beat in the Iowa High School Hockey League. Sioux City hosts (at Sioux City Auditorium) Columbus in the season opener Nov. 15 at 1 p.m.

Another new wrinkle will be the televising of the Metros' home games. The games will be shown on a tape-delayed (two-four days) basis on cable Channel 12 here.

The complete schedule (all home games start at 1 p.m.):

November: 15—Waterloo Columbus; 22—Urbandale; 29—at West Des Moines Dowling; 30—at West Des Moines Valley.

December: 5—Des Moines Hoover-Roosevelt; 13—at Waterloo Public; 14—at Ames; 20—Dowling.

January: 10—Valley; 24—Waterloo Public; 25—Ames; 31—at Urbandale.

February: 1—at Hoover-Roosevelt; 8—Mason City; 26—at Waterloo Columbus.

March: 1—at Mason City; 5-8—State tournament at Des Moines.