



Metros roster has players from six schools, including Jesse Monell (21) of East, Eric Rubel (14) of West, Jesse Basarich (1) of North, Ryan Miller (95) of South Sioux City, Terry Reeves (61) of Sergeant Bluff-Luton and Dan Davies of Heelan. (Staff photo by Gary Anderson)

Metros hope to repeat as IHSHL tourney king

Sioux City plays host to state hockey meet

By Terry Hersom
Journal sports editor

Winning it all in Ames last year was plenty of fun, but the Sioux City Metros can enjoy themselves even more this weekend.

The Iowa High School Hockey League's annual state tournament comes to Sioux City for just the second time, getting under way Thursday night at Sioux City Auditorium.

And the Metros, Sioux City's high school hockey team, will be defending the championship they won for the first time last year.

Following up on that unprecedented triumph, Coach Dave Davies has led the Metros to another milestone.

The Metros, winning their last 13 games to finish regular-season play with a 19-5 record, have won the IHSHL's regular-season title for the first time ever.

Now, backed by the home crowd, they hope to make it back-to-back post-season championships.

Davies, still the all-time scoring leader for his days with the Sioux City Musketeers, is less heartened by

the hometown backing and more concerned with the Auditorium rink.

"In this rink, some pretty strange things can happen," said Davies, who has coached the Metros for four seasons. "I saw Randy McDonald (a former Musketeer teammate) score a goal from behind his own net once."

The cozy Auditorium ice sheet, 40 feet short of the standard, makes scoring opportunities more abundant and puts a higher premium on sharp goaltending.

"The U.S. team in the Olympics had fantastic goaltending and that can take you a long ways," said Davies.

Sioux City's answer to Ray LeBlanc of Team USA is Jesse Basarich, a senior from North High who has been one of the Iowa prep league's stingiest net-minders all winter long.

Basarich is backed up by Chad Stewart, a freshman at North.

Meanwhile, the Metros pack plenty of offensive wallop.

The No. 1 line of Jesse Monell, Dan Davies and Jesper Kilander has combined to collect a whopping 176 points in just 24 games, ranking first, third and

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Metros come into tourney with 13 straight victories

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fourth in IHSHL scoring, respectively. Left winger Davies, the son of the coach, and Monell, who centers the line, have each recently matched the Metros' single-game record of five goals.

Hockey teammates since they were 7, Davies and Monell were arch-rivals last fall, when both had outstanding junior football seasons at Heelan and East, respectively.

Davies was a defensive back and garnered all-state laurels as a punter for Heelan, while Monell, a 5-9, 180-pound defensive back, proved so effective in a mid-season shift to the defensive line that he finished the year at nose guard. Monell, with 31 goals and 30 assists in 21 games, has averaged a league-high 2.90 points a game. Davies, playing all 24 games, has a team-best 63 points on 28 goals and 35 assists, ranking third in the league at 2.63 a game.

Kilander, the right winger with 28 goals and 24 assists in 20 games, or a 2.60 average, was a welcome addition as a foreign exchange student from Sweden, attending North.

In fact, the Metros picked up two valuable performers through the foreign exchange route, gaining the services of Karri Poykio, an exchange student from Finland who attends Heelan.

Jade Pospeshil, a senior at Heelan, lines up with Poykio in the Metros' No. 1 defensive pair.

"In this league, if you've got two or three guys who can consistently put the puck in the net and you've got consistent goaltending and defense, you can circle the wagons," said Davies.

Landon Blatchford, a junior at East, centers the Metros' No. 2 line, flanked by left winger Corey Roberts, a junior at North, and Ryan Miller, a senior at South Sioux City.

A third line consists of juniors Eric Rubel (West) and Taylor Schramm (East) along with senior Chad Hine, a game-breaking wingback for the East football team last fall. Terry Reeves, a junior from Sergeant Bluff-Luton, is the replacement forward for all three lines.

Two freshmen, Seth Schramm from East and T.J. Juon from North, are the second pair on defense.

The top-seeded Metros won't open

IHSHL STATE TOURNAMENT

AT SIOUX CITY AUDITORIUM

THURSDAY'S GAMES

- 6:30 p.m. (Game 1): Waterloo (5-17-0) vs. Omaha Junior Lancers (3-20-1) Winners Bracket
- 9 p.m. (Game 2): Mason City (16-6-0) vs. Dubuque (8-13-1) Winners Bracket

FRIDAY'S GAMES

- 9 a.m. (Game 3): Omaha Gladiators (18-6-0) vs. St. Joseph (6-17-1) Winners Bracket
- 11:30 a.m. (Game 4): Valley/Dowling (16-8-0) vs. Ames (11-10-1) Winners Bracket
- 2 p.m. (Game 5): Sioux City (19-5) vs. Game 1 Winner Winners Bracket
- 5:30 p.m. (Game 6): Loser Game 1 vs. Loser Game 4 Consolation Bracket
- 8 p.m. (Game 7): Loser Game 2 vs. Loser Game 3 Consolation Bracket

SATURDAY'S GAMES

- 7 a.m. (Game 8): Winner Game 7 vs. Loser Game 5 Consolation Bracket
- 9:30 a.m. (Game 9): Winner Game 2 vs. Winner Game 3 Semifinal
- Noon (Game 10): Winner Game 4 vs. Winner Game 5 Semifinal
- 2:30 p.m. (Game 11): Loser Game 6 vs. Loser Game 7 Consolation Bracket

SUNDAY'S GAMES

- 7 a.m. (Game 12): Winner Game 11 vs. Loser Game 8 7th place
- 9:30 a.m. (Game 13): Winner Game 6 vs. Winner Game 8 5th place
- Noon (Game 14): Loser Game 9 vs. Loser Game 10 3rd place
- 3 p.m. (Game 15): Winner Game 9 vs. Winner Game 10 Championship

play until Friday at 2 p.m., when they tackle the winner of Thursday's opening game, a 6:30 p.m. contest pairing Waterloo and the Omaha Junior Lancers, the two teams that posted the weakest regular-season records.

That game is, in effect, a pigtail game, leading into the eight-team quarterfinals. And the first of these games is Thursday's 9 o'clock nightcap between Mason City and Dubuque.

Five games on Friday, the first at 9 a.m., include two evening contests in the losers bracket.

Four games are on tap Saturday, starting bright and early at 7 a.m. to avoid a conflict with Saturday night's Musketeers game. If the Metros win Friday, they'd be playing a semifinal Saturday at noon. And, if they'd win again, they'd play in Sunday's championship game, which wraps up the tournament at 3 p.m.

Initially a league made up strictly of Iowa teams, the IHSHL has become somewhat of a misnomer, since it now consists of six Iowa teams and three out-of-state entries

— the Junior Lancers and the Gladi-

ators, both from Omaha, and St. Joseph, Mo.

The Metros, who thumped regular-season champion Dubuque 8-1 in last year's championship game, started the season slowly, regrouping from the loss of seven seniors.

As of Jan. 11, when they lost 7-4 at Mason City, Davies' team stood 6-4.

However, the Metros, whose three prior setbacks had all been one-goal verdicts, rebounded to defeat Mason City 5-2 the following day and have added 12 more victories in succession since then.

Davies has stressed discipline with his team, maintaining their talents will win games, providing they avoid careless and costly penalties.

"We're not playing 'Scrabble' out there, so there's going to be some rough stuff, but an overly aggressive style of hockey can kill a good team," said Davies. "If you can't skate, you can't play the game. That's the biggest thing I try to impress on these kids. That's all they need to do to win games."

So far, so good.