

Metros host state tourney

Sioux Cityans try to repeat as titlists

By Terry Hersom
Journal sports editor

Defending champs and pre-tournament favorites, the Sioux City Metros can play spectator tonight as the 15th annual Iowa High School Hockey League Tournament opens at Sioux City Auditorium.

Two games tonight, five more Friday, four on Saturday and another four Sunday will decide first through eighth place in the nine-team tournament.

The IHSHL has all but outgrown its name in recent years, adding two teams from Omaha and another from St. Joseph, Mo., to the six high school squads that remain in Iowa.

The Metros, who won the tournament for the first time last year, when it was held in Ames, hope the home-ice advantage will help spur them to a repeat championship.

And, Coach Dave Davies' team appears to have the talent to do it. For the first time ever, the Sioux City preps posted the league's best regular-season record, winning their last 13 games in succession to post a mark of 19-5-0.

With that, the Metros earned the top seed and will open play Friday afternoon at 2 p.m. in the tournament's last quarterfinal pairing.

Their opponent will be determined in tonight's opener, when Waterloo (5-17-0) and the Omaha Junior Lancers (3-20-1) square off at 6:30. Waterloo and the Lancers are seeded eighth and ninth, respectively.

The Thursday nightcap, slated for

9 o'clock, pairs up third-seeded Mason City and sixth-seeded Dubuque.

Mason City, which led the IHSHL's four-team Eastern Division with a 16-6-0 record, was the last team to defeat the Metros, prevailing 7-4 in a Jan. 11 contest in Mason City.

The Metros followed that up the next day by salvaging a split of the weekend series, launching their current win streak with a 5-2 success.

The Omaha Gladiators, the only team to beat Sioux City twice this season, drew the No. 2 seed with an 18-6-0 record, good for second to the Metros in the West Division. Valley-Dowling of Des Moines was third in the West at 16-8-0 and

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comes in as the tournament's No. 4 seed.

The Gladiators face St. Joseph in Friday's 9 a.m. opener, then it's Valley-Dowling vs. Ames at 11:30 a.m., with the Metros' game to follow.

Sioux City boasts the league's strongest offense, averaging 6.08 goals a game, and ranks a close second defensively, yielding just 3.04 per contest. Mason City is the defensive leader, giving up an even three goals a game.

Arguably, though, the Metros' schedule was more difficult than Mason City's. Teams play four games against each team in their own division and just two apiece with those in the other group. And, the West, with Sioux City, the Gladiators and Valley-Dowling, was seemingly much stronger than the East, whose runner-up was Ames, 11-10-1.

Powering the Metros' offense is the production line of Jesse Monell, Daniel Davies and Jesper Kilander, an exchange student from Sweden. When this trio hits the ice, they represent three of the IHSHL's top four scorers.

League statistics are based on per-game averages since the East Division teams played 22 games, or two less than the 24-game schedules of the West teams.

Monell, who missed three games, is the league leader with 2.90 points a game, totaling 31 goals and 30 assists, or 61 points. The East High junior is actually second on the team in total points, since Davies, son of Coach Dave Davies, has totaled 63 points on 28 goals and 35 assists.

Davies, a junior at Heelan, has appeared in all 24 games, giving him an average of 2.63 points a game.

Close behind him is Kilander with 28 goals, 24 assists, 52 points and a 2.60 average.

The only non-Metro among the leaders is Ted Lowndes of the Gladiators, averaging 2.67 points with 29 goals, 35 assists and 64 points in 24 games.

Lowndes' teammate, Kobie Boykins, is a distant fifth in the league at 2.13 points a game (24-27-51).

The Gladiators beat the Metros 6-5 and 4-3 in a pair of early season meetings, when the Sioux City squad was still regrouping from the loss of seven seniors off last year's roster.

In two subsequent meetings, the Metros whipped the Gladiators 7-0

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 (8-17-1) 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 (19-5-0) 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

and 9-5.

Valley-Dowling, another team that has been a challenge to Sioux City, represents all of Des Moines, which at one time fielded three IHSHL entries. The Metros lost the first meeting with the capital city skaters, 4-3, but have since eluded them with wins of 4-3, 5-3 and 4-2.

The Metros, runners-up in 1978 and 1990 before capturing their first post-season title last year, are bidding for the first back-to-back titles since Valley-Dowling reigned in 1988 and 1989.

Waterloo beat Sioux City in the 1990 finals, then it was Sioux City topping Dubuque last year.

The Metros have had the tournament's MVP on two occasions and both times the honor went to a goaltender. Scott Patrick, who now assists Davies with the coaching chores, won the award in 1987, helping the Metros take third in the tournament's only previous visit to Sioux City, and Jeff Brogan was honored last year.

Goalies, indeed, shoulder a great responsibility in a tournament that is, for all intents, single-elimination. Even with a consolation bracket, the quest of a championship is over once a team has lost a game.

Jesse Basarich, a senior at North who shared netminding duties with

Brogan during the 1990-91 regular season, has handled the chores almost exclusively this winter, posting a 17-5-0 record.

Chad Stewart, a diminutive 5-3, 120-pound freshman at North, saw action in three games, first when Basarich nursed a knee injury and later when he was suspended one game for a high-sticking penalty, an automatic one-game infraction in the IHSHL.

The league rules vary only slightly from the game Sioux City Musketeers' fans are accustomed to watching.

One major difference is the time limit. Periods are 15 minutes instead of 20. Another change is an automatic icing rule employed by the preps.

The IHSHL also discourages penalties. To that end, a new rule this year mandates that a coach must sit out the next game if his team is whistled for 15 or more penalties.

If victorious Friday afternoon, the Metros would face either Valley-Dowling or Ames in a semifinal game at noon Saturday. All of the Saturday and Sunday agenda is daytime fare, with the championship game Sunday at 3 p.m.

Sunday's other placement games are at 7 a.m. (7th place), 9:30 a.m. (5th place) and noon (3rd place).