

Goalies play important role in Metro state meet hopes

By Steven Allspach

Journal sports writer

The guys with the best gloves hope to catch some Sioux City lightning in a bottle this weekend during the Iowa High School Hockey League's post-season tournament.

Goaltenders Dirk Worner and Matt Sewalson must be at their best, according to Metros Coach Jim Peck, if a state championship is to be realized.

"We've got some high-scoring forwards and our defense has been solid for a month," says Peck. "The strength of our goaltending will be so important."

Peck, in his first season as head coach, has full confidence in his netminders.

Matt Sewalson is the returning starter, but freshman Dirk Worner, a strapping 6-foot-3, has emerged as the No. 1 goalie.

Worner is 14-1 with two shutouts, a save percentage of .880 and a goals-against average of 2.47. Sewalson is 5-5 with two shutouts, a .820 save percentage and a 4.40 goals-against average.

"I'm confident with either guy," says Peck. "Both of them have been fantastic."

"Worner has been a real pleasant surprise. He's darned quick with the glove and covers a lot of the net, while Sewalson is one of those hard-working blue-collar types."

As the tournament's top seed, the Metros have the luxury of personally scouting their first opponent in the '94 tournament.

The tourney opens tonight at the Five Flags Center in Dubuque with a pigtail game matching eighth-seeded St. Joseph, Mo., and the ninth-seeded host team, Dubuque.

Peck's skaters will play tonight's winner at 2:45 p.m. Friday.

"We're pretty optimistic about reaching the finals," says Peck. "We've been playing solidly since our guys learned they have to play

a more physical brand of hockey.

"We learned that about a month ago when Valley-Dowling came to Sioux City to hit and really pounded us.

"It was a combination of us being a little complacent and flat. We just weren't prepared to play well, but we've been a much better hockey team since then."

Valley-Dowling, which ended Sioux City's two-year tournament championship reign last year by beating the Metros in the state title game, saddled Sioux City with 8-3 and 3-1 losses on Jan. 22-23.

The Metros take an overall 21-6 record into the tournament and an 18-6 mark in IHSHL play.

Valley-Dowling, also 18-6, enters the '94 tournament seeded second. The Metros got the top seed by virtue of a better goals-for, goals-against ratio.

Offensively, the Metros feature two high-scoring lines and a third checking line.

Center Mikael Sundelin plays on the first line with right wing Mike Stoneburg and left wing Sami Heino.

The trio ranks 1-2-5 in scoring on the team. Sundelin, a foreign exchange student from Sweden, has 27 goals and 55 points. Heino, a foreign exchange student from Finland, has 24 goals and 54 points.

Stoneburg has 14 goals and 30 points.

Nate Kelly (18-12-31) centers the second line with Mark Doren (24-15-39) and T.J. Juon (10-14-24) on wing. Robert Jaynes centers the third line that also includes Sam Kincaid and Aaron Olson.

The defensive pairs are Josh Strong and Garrett Heyns, along with Seth Schramm and Chris Hedquist.

The Metros have scored 145 goals and allowed 87 in 27 games.

The tourney championship game is slated for 3 p.m. Sunday.