

Omaha Imports Hockey Meet Of Iowa High School League

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There will be a first this weekend at the Iowa High School Hockey League Tournament.

This will mark the first time in the 21-year history of the league that the tournament will be played somewhere other than Iowa. The tournament, which consists of 10 teams from three states, will be held Friday through Sunday at Omaha's Hitchcock Park Ice Arena.

"This is something for us to get excited about," said tournament official Lee Johnson. "We've earned the right to be the host city for it."

The IHSHL, formed 21 years with only Iowa teams, now also includes squads from Nebraska and Missouri. The Omaha Gladiators joined the league 10 years ago, and the Omaha Junior Lancers joined a few years after that.

The two Omaha teams consist of players from area high schools. Fourteen schools are represented, including nine from the Metro Conference.

The Junior Lancers, coached by Omaha Lancers Assistant Mike Aikens, will be seeking their third straight tournament title. The team will enter the tourney as the top seed after winning the regular-season crown with a 24-1-1 record.

The leading scorer for the Junior Lancers is Jed Ortmeier, a senior from Omaha Central. The right wing led the league with 34 goals and 30 assists.

"Hopefully, playing here in Omaha will be an advantage for us," Ortmeier said. "If we play well, we should have a chance to win it all."

His two linemates — center Tom Ogee and left wing Jeremiah Johnson — also finished among the league leaders in scoring. Ogee, from Millard West, was second with 52 points and Omaha Northwest's Johnson was tied for sixth with 40 points.

The Junior Lancers also have the top two goalies in the league. Brett Roth from Omaha Creighton Prep is 13-1, and Omaha Bryan's Mike Newell is 10-0-1.

The Gladiators' top scorer is Brett Duncan, who has 23 goals and 18 assists. Their No. 1 goalie is Joel Ruegg, who has a 17-8 record.

The tournament begins Friday at 7 a.m. with seventh-seeded Waterloo playing 10th-seeded St. Joseph. The Gladiators play at 12:30 p.m. and the Junior Lancers play at 8:45 p.m.

The championship game is scheduled for Sunday at 3:30 p.m.

Friday's schedule:

■ 7 a.m.—Waterloo vs. St. Joseph, 9:45—Kansas City vs. Ames, 12:30 p.m.—Omaha Gladiators vs. Slouss City, 3:15—Dubuque vs. Mason City, 6, Des Moines vs. highest seed winner of Games 1 and 2, 8:45—Omaha Junior Lancers vs. lowest seed winner of Games 1 and 2.