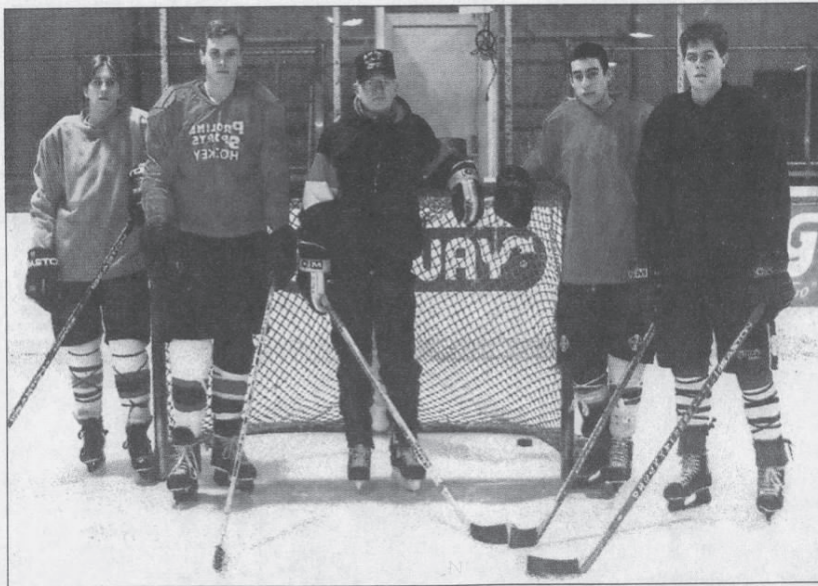


Mohawks ready to defend state hockey title



Globe-Gazette photo by KELLI WENCIL

Mohawk hockey coach John Lloyd will rely on these four seniors to provide a steadying influence in the state tournament. They are (from left) Jim Shovein, Shawn Graven, Tom Zanios and Nate Stanton.

■ They open with the Lancers today.

By TOM THOMA
Of The Globe-Gazette

OMAHA - The Mason City Mohawk hockey players believe anything can happen at the state tournament.

They're living proof of it.

Mason City entered last season's tournament as the No. 6 seed and battled its way to a state championship.

The Mohawks will try for a repeat starting today when they play the Omaha Lancers in the opening round at noon on the Lancers' home ice, Tranquility ice rink.

"The toughest game is going to be the very first one," said coach John Lloyd, "because we beat the Lancers last year (in the tournament) and they're going to be looking for us. And it's going to be on their home rink, which is bigger than ours."

This year, the Mohawks are seeded fourth with a regular-season record of 18-6-2. If they win

today, Saturday's opponent likely will be Des Moines, the only team in the Iowa High School Hockey League they have not defeated this year.

"They're the ones that give us the most trouble," said Lloyd.

But these Mohawks are giving no quarter, and are taking nothing for granted, according to four seniors who will see considerable ice time. After all, they learned a great deal in winning last year.

Jim Shovein said "everybody picks it up another level during state tournament time, and anything can happen."

"Teams are a lot closer this year (in skill level) than they always have been, and any team can win it," said Shovein. "You've got to start out like you want to win it right away. You can't get behind or you're done. The key is having everybody involved, every line producing. If we have every line producing, we'll win."

"Hopefully we'll be fired up as much and do as much as we did last year," said Nate Stanton.

"There's a lot of pressure, but
See **MOHAWKS, B3**

Top six teams could win title

Mohawks

From Page B1

then you realize you go down there to have a good time and play good hockey."

Lloyd said a crucial factor will be playing strong defense.

"If our goaltending is good and the defense can play well, we'll be all right," he said. "If we start allowing more than three goals, we're in for a tough time. In the games we've given up over three goals, we lost. We're not going to score a whole lot of goals. In the past we've had teams that can go out there and score nine, 10 goals, but we've concentrated on playing defense."

Tom Zanios is one of the defensemen Lloyd will rely on.

"We want to make sure we have a good team effort," said Zanios. "We've been improving all year long, especially with team play if nothing else. Hopefully there'll be a strong team effort and we'll come out of there with another championship."

Lloyd expects such an effort

because this team "is very close-knit."

"There's no individual stars out there, but they're all pretty hard workers," he said. "We're not overly big but we do have some speed. We're kind of average size. We try to use our speed. If the other teams come out and throw the body at us, we can have a tough time."

Shawn Graven, one of the Mohawks' bigger defensemen, said the team has had a good week of practice and is ready.

"Any team can do anything they want as long as the team effort's there and the dedication," he said.

Lloyd agrees, at least when it comes to the top six teams.

"The first six teams are capable of winning this tournament, depending on which one decides to put it together this weekend," he said.

Zanios said nerves could be a "little bit" of a problem.

"But hopefully we'll be able to turn it into positive momentum," he said, "and stay fired up throughout the whole tournament."