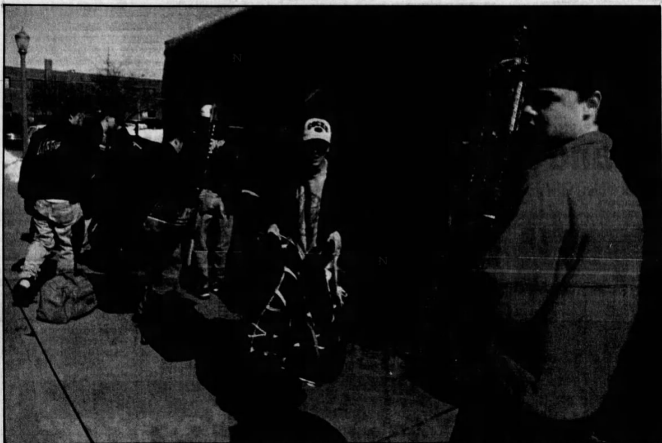


## Back on home 'ice'



Sioux City Metros' **Nick Mills** carries the team's first-place trophy after the team bus arrives at the Municipal Auditorium Monday

afternoon. The team won the Iowa High School Hockey League championship Sunday in Omaha. (Staff photo by Tim Hynds)

# Metros bring home heavy duty hardware

By Michele Linck

Journal staff writer

After clinching the Iowa High School Hockey League championship in Omaha Sunday afternoon, the Sioux City Metros decided not to press their luck on a less popular kind of ice — the slick roads left behind by a winter storm.

They won the championship in a 3-2 contest with the sixth-seeded host team, the Omaha Junior Lancers.

But the weekend's storm struck Omaha hard, creating treacherous travel conditions and closing roads. So the team went back to its hotel to celebrate, leaving its triumphant return to Sioux City for sunnier conditions on Monday. Even then, Interstate 29 remained in bad shape all the way to Blencoe, Iowa, the bus driver said.

When the bus finally pulled in at the Municipal Auditorium an hour late, the team got off the bus hoisting the first championship

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trophy for Sioux City since the opening of the new IBP Ice Center in December. The Metros have played and practiced there since January. Their sizable new hardware will be displayed as soon as a trophy case is built, said Metros manager Dr. Richard Dohrmann.

The waiting parents were met by happy, but more reserved, hockey players than those they'd left Sunday evening.

Memories of the games, especially the championship game, were still fresh, however.

"It was great. We all came together and played as a team," said Nick Mills. "We finally meshed as a team and stayed out of the penalty box. And our goalie was 'on,' definitely," he said, referring to Jake Hindermann, who stopped 27 shots in the championship game.

Clint Stiles echoed that assessment.

"We played well," he said. "We had some people step up and play big when they had to."

Stiles said all three games were close. The Metros defeated the Dubuque Devils 2-1, beat the Omaha Gladiators 3-1 in the semifinals and then fashioned the 3-2 win over the Iowa Lancers Sunday.

"It was awesome," said Robby Lessard. "As soon as the game was over, we just piled up (on the ice.)"

Chris Lohr said that after the game they went back to their hotel instead of leaving for Sioux City. "We had a big party to celebrate.

The wait (to come home) wasn't that bad, as long as we got it," he said of the trophy.

The Metros had the co-MVPs of the tournament in Hindermann, an East High junior, and Heelan junior Greg Gill, said Coach Walt Johnson, who drove in later.

Some fans think the Metros can look forward to more of the same, said Greg Lohr, father of Chris.

The team last won the championship in the 1994-95 season, but the elder Lohr said the Metros' junior varsity has a number of promising players. The team was the top seed in its league championship, and finished second to Kansas City in a four-overtime loss last weekend in St. Joseph, Mo.

"Our youth hockey is very strong in the older youth; the 14 and over is very strong," Johnson said. On whether he'll return to coach next year, he said the coaching committee will review the season and decide that.