

Metros open season today

By Barry Poe

Journal sports writer

With a new regime firmly in place, the Sioux City Metros open the Iowa High School Hockey League season this weekend, playing St. Joseph, Mo., today and Sunday at Sioux City Auditorium.

Walt Johnson, an assistant under Jim Peck last season, has taken over the head coaching duties, welcoming back 14 players with varsity experience. The Metros finished 16-12 overall and were fourth in the state tournament.

The puck drops at 3 p.m. for the varsity game each day, following 1 o'clock junior varsity contests.

Johnson, in his second stint as Metros head coach, played for the Sioux City Musketeers for four seasons in the late 1970s. After his playing days, he coached the Metros during the 1979-80, '80-81 and '81-82

seasons.

"I think you will see this team be near the top of the pack," said Johnson. "If they play consistent hockey and get the discipline thing going, we should get everything we need out of them."

Chresten Jensen, a North High senior, is the top returning scorer, tallying 16 goals and 12 assists for 28 points a year ago. Jensen and defenseman Willie Persinger, also a senior at North, were mid-season all-star selections.

Jeff Kempter, a North junior, scored 15 points (seven goals, eight assists) and Clint Stiles, an East High senior, had 12 points (five goals, seven assists). North junior Kyle Worner, a rugged 6-2, 205-pound forward who missed the second half of the season

SEE METROS

continued on page B5

Metros play in same division with clubs from Omaha, Missouri

from page B1

after breaking a leg, had 11 points in just 13 games and senior defenseman Nick Mills of North finished with 10 points.

Other returning seniors are forward Brent Suing (East), forward Chris Lohr (Heelan) and defenseman Jeff Schultz (North).

Jake Hindermann, an East junior, played 268 minutes in goal, posting a 3.86 goals against average. He'll be backed up by Ryan Dohrmann, a freshman from North.

Johnson also expects to get plenty of mileage out of juniors Matt LeGree (North), Brent Saunders (North), Greg Gill (Heelan) and Matt Tonjum (West), along with freshman Dustin White (East).

Talented newcomers Andy Hockenson, a freshman from Cherokee, and sophomore Dusty Browning of Heelan, who played the last two seasons at Shattuck St. Mary's in Faribault, Minn., will fit into the regular rotation.

Peck, another former Musketeer, guided the Metros for four seasons, including a glorious rookie campaign in 1993-94 that produced a state championship. Sioux City also won

IHSHL titles in 1991 and 1992 under Dave Davies, yet another ex-Musketeer standout.

"I've been around hockey forever and enjoy working with kids," said Johnson, who'll be assisted by Landon Blatchford. "We're stressing discipline, trying to put in some real strong defensive systems and cut down on penalty minutes."

The Metros were whistled for 565 penalty minutes last season, a number Johnson said must decrease.

Defending state champion Mason City should once again be a strong contender for the IHSHL crown again this winter. Johnson said the Omaha Junior Lancers and Gladiators, as well as Dubuque, are also talented clubs.

The Iowa High School Hockey League will again include 10 teams, divided into two divisions. The 1998 state tournament will be played in Omaha, beginning on March 8.

Along with the Metros, the Kansas City Junior Blades, Omaha Gladiators, Omaha Junior Lancers and St. Joseph Griffons comprise the West Division. The Ames Little Cyclones, Des Moines Capitals, Dubuque Blue Devils, Mason City Mohawks and Waterloo Warriors play in the East Division.

Mason City dethroned the two-time defending champion Omaha

Junior Lancers in last year's state tournament. Sioux City, meanwhile, advanced to the semifinals before losing 4-2 for Des Moines and settling for fourth place.

Metros Roster/Schedule

SENIORS: Nick Mills, 6-0, 195, defense, North; Jeff Schultz, 5-9, 180, defense, North; Chris Lohr, 6-0, 175, forward, Heelan; Clint Stiles, 5-11, 190, forward, East; Willie Persinger, 5-9, 170, defense, North; Chresten Jensen, 6-1, 175, forward, North; Jennifer Cannon, 5-2, 127, forward, North; Brent Suing, 5-9, 155, forward, East.

JUNIORS: Matt LeGree, 5-10, 155, defense, North; Brent Sanders, 5-8, 145, defense, North; Greg Gill, 5-9, 145, forward, Heelan; Jeff Kempter, 5-9, 180, forward, North; Kyle Worner, 6-2, 205, forward, North; Matt Tonjum, 5-10, 175, forward, West; Jake Hindermann, 6-1, 195, goalie, East.

SOPHOMORES: Travis Yingst, 5-9, 130, defense, West; Chris Ortman, 5-10, 150, forward, North; Chad Blanche, 5-6, 155, forward, West; Dusty Browning, 5-6, 160, forward, Heelan; Robby Lessard, 5-10, 180, forward, Sergeant Bluff-Luton; Tim Johnson, 5-11, 155, forward, West; Zach Edwards, 6-2, 180, defense, East.

FRESHMEN: Brant Mozak, 5-5, 120, forward, East; Andy Hockenson, 5-10, 150, forward, Cherokee; Daniel Blackwell, 5-7, 125, forward, East; Ben Deak, 5-6, 130, forward, North; Dustin White, 5-10, 160, forward, East; Zach Lanning, 5-6, 120, forward, Hinton; Christian McCline, 6-0, 190, goalie, North; Ben Gill, 5-6, 135, defense, North; Ryan Dohrmann, 5-5, 120, goalie, North; Jeremy McClellenn, 5-10, 140, forward, East; Beau Freese, 5-6, 125, forward, North.

SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER: 8 — St. Joseph, 9 — St. Joseph, 14 — at Omaha Lancers, 15 — Dubuque, 16 — Dubuque, 22 — Omaha Lancers, 23 — Omaha Lancers.

DECEMBER: 5 — at Waterloo, 6 — at Mason City, 7 — at Mason City, 12 — at Omaha Lancers, 14 — Waterloo, 20 — at Kansas City, 21 — at Kansas City.

JANUARY: 9 — at Omaha Gladiators, 10 — at Des Moines, 11 — at Des Moines, 17 — Kansas City, 18 — Kansas City, 31 — Omaha Gladiators.

FEBRUARY: 6 — at Omaha Gladiators, 7 — at St. Joseph, 8 — at St. Joseph, 14 — Ames, 15 — Ames, 21 — Omaha Gladiators, 26-March 1 — JV state tournament, St. Joseph.

MARCH: 8 — State tournament, Omaha.
Note: All junior varsity home games begin at 1 p.m. and varsity games at 3 p.m.