

Warriors hope to continue climbing back

By **DOUG NEWHOFF**
Assistant Sports Editor

For the past several years, Waterloo high school hockey has been trying to get back on its skates.

Dwindling numbers and a lack of year-round ice sent a once-proud prep hockey tradition skidding down the ice. But those issues have been addressed, and while last year's 11-14-1 regular season wasn't exactly a return to the glory days, it was another step forward in a slow rebuilding process.

Those 11 wins were a six-year high, but with 13 veterans returning for 1997-98, the Warriors have high hopes for an even bigger step this season.

Eight of those players are seniors, including goaltender Travis Klima, who stopped 87.8 percent of the shots he faced last season, and is one of the Iowa High School Hockey League's top returning goaltenders.

A knee injury suffered during football season, however, will keep Klima out of action for at least the first

month of the season.

"That's the big thing right now," says Coach Mike Brown. "Otherwise, we're real excited. We need to find a little goaltending, and we think we can be competitive."

That challenge will go to Nick Niedert and Mark Styve. Their varsity experience is limited, but Niedert had an 89.7 save percentage with two shutouts and Styve an 86 percent rating at the junior varsity level a year ago.

The top returning scorer is Ben Kutz after tallying 17 goals and 16 assists last season. Rick Reicherts added 22 points and Brian Schaefer 10.

They'll get help at the offensive end from senior Luke McCarty, back after spending a year in Wisconsin playing AAA midget hockey. McCarty scored 12 varsity points as a sophomore two seasons ago.

The Warriors also have senior Curt Shaw returning, along with sophomores Bryce Anderson, Mike Messerer and Jon Schell. All three sophomores played both varsity and

1996-97 standings

East Division	W	L	T	Pct.	GF	GA
Des Moines	18	7	1	.712	109	52
Dubuque	17	8	1	.673	111	72
Mason City	12	14	0	.462	105	90
Waterloo	11	14	1	.442	89	94
Ames	4	22	0	.154	45	118
West Division	W	L	T	Pct.	GF	GA
Omaha Lancers	24	1	1	.942	147	30
Omaha Gladiators	17	9	0	.654	94	69
Sioux City	15	11	0	.577	107	66
Kansas City	9	17	0	.346	73	97
St. Joseph	1	25	0	.038	39	213

junior varsity hockey last season, and Messerer scored 18 points for the JV squad.

"They got a lot of experience at the varsity level, and they're good hockey players," says Brown. "Hopefully, it will start paying off. They just need to keep playing and keep getting stronger."

Defensively, Waterloo will build around seniors Wes True and Shaun Knoll, along with juniors Blake Marshall and Bobby Brady. Exchange student Honza Kubicek from the Czech Republic (6-foot-2, 185) could help there.

The Warriors began the IHSHL

season with four straight home games, and they finish it by playing five of their last six games at Young Arena. In between, they face a stretch where 12 of 16 games are on the road.

"I think our division will be real tough," says Brown. "Mason City has just about everybody back from a state championship team. They're going to be real tough."

Dubuque also has a veteran group returning from a 17-8-1 squad, Ames has 16 varsity players back, and Des Moines has 19 veterans from its East Division champions of a year ago.

In the West Division, the Omaha Gladiators went 17-9 last season and return 22 of their top 25 varsity players, including Joel Ruegg, who is statistically the No. 1 goaltender returning in the league (90.2 save percentage, three shutouts).

But the Warriors, says Brown, can play with any of them.

"We've been close," he notes. "We just need to get over that hump."

1996-97 record — 11-14-1

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS (13) — Bryce Anderson, f; Bobby Brady, d; Travis Klima, g; Shaun Knoll, d; Ben Kutz, f; Blake Marshall, d; Luke McCarty, f; Mike Messerer, f; Rick Reicherts, f; Jon Schell, f; Curt Shaw, f; Wes True, d; Brian Schaefer, f.

Schedule

(Starting times for varsity games)

Nov. 7 — Mason City, 7:40 p.m.
 Nov. 8 — Kansas City, 7:40 p.m.
 Nov. 9 — Kansas City, 1:30 p.m.
 Nov. 15 — Mason City, 7:40 p.m.
 Nov. 21 — at Mason City, 8 p.m.
 Nov. 28 — at Dubuque, 7:30 p.m.
 Nov. 29 — Des Moines, 7:40 p.m.
 Dec. 5 — Sioux City, 7 p.m.
 Dec. 12 — at Omaha Gladiators, 8 p.m.
 Dec. 13 — at Omaha Lancers, 7 p.m.
 Dec. 14 — at Sioux City, 3 p.m.
 Dec. 19 — at Ames, 7:50 p.m.
 Dec. 21 — Omaha Gladiators, 1:30 p.m.
 Jan. 2 — at Ames, 7:50 p.m.
 Jan. 3 — Ames, 7:40 p.m.
 Jan. 9 — at Des Moines, 7:50 p.m.
 Jan. 10 — at St. Joseph, 7:45 p.m.
 Jan. 11 — at St. Joseph, 9:45 a.m.
 Jan. 16 — at Mason City, 8 p.m.
 Jan. 23 — at Dubuque, 7:30 p.m.
 Jan. 24 — Des Moines, 3 p.m.
 Jan. 30 — Ames, 7:40 p.m.
 Feb. 8 — Omaha Lancers, 1:30 p.m.
 Feb. 11 — Dubuque, 7:40 p.m.
 Feb. 20 — Dubuque, 7:40 p.m.
 Feb. 21 — at Des Moines, 7:50 p.m.
 Feb. 27-March 1 — at JV State Tournament (St. Joseph)
 March 6-8 — at Varsity State Tournament (Omaha)

WATERLOO WARRIORS
Head coach — Mike Brown