

Warriors open with three-game weekend

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Waterloo's goals are clear, even if the people who will provide them are not as the Warriors skate into the Iowa High School Hockey League season this weekend.

Beginning at Ames tonight, Waterloo opens the league campaign with a demanding, three-game weekend that includes its home opener at Young Arena Saturday afternoon against Dubuque and a visit to Dubuque on Sunday.

Head coach Mike Brown has a nucleus of 10 letterwinners back, including seven forwards, and how often they can put the puck in the net will be the key to how often they win during the 1998-99 campaign.

"We're starting to get some people who have played a lot of hockey," says Brown, whose team went 11-13-2 last season. "I don't think there's a lot of newness there. It's just the same old problem. We need to find people who can score goals."

The Warriors lost their top three scorers and five of their top seven from last season when they ranked eighth among 10 teams with just 83 total goals.

Junior Mike Messerer is the top returning scorer after a 23-point campaign that included seven goals. The only other double-digit scorer returning is Bryce Anderson (6 goals, 11 points).

"The scoring is going to have to come from Messerer, Anderson, Josh Braby, Jon Schell and those people,"

says Brown. "Bob Brady is another one. He's a big, strong kid and we'll see what we can get out of him."

Defensively, Brown is counting on veterans Chad Cutsforth, Brandt Clark and Blake Marshall to challenge opponents in the Waterloo zone, and he's depending on his forwards to play good defense, too.

The Warriors played solid defense last season and kept themselves in most of their games by allowing just 88 goals.

That will be critical as new goaltenders Treye Kettwick and Zach Goodsell, both freshmen, adjust to varsity high school hockey.

"I think that's always been a starting point for us," Brown notes. "It just takes hard work to play defense, and we can do that. We have enough

experience with our defensemen and with our forwards to play defensively.

"If we go out there with that mindset, I think we can stay in hockey games defensively. Ideally, I'd like to see a lot of low-scoring, close games. That's what we're used to playing in."

The IHSHL has grown this season with the addition of a team from Lincoln, Neb., and a second Des Moines squad.

The league is divided into two six-team divisions and only the top four in each group — based on divisional play — qualify for the state tournament, unless the host team for the postseason event isn't among the top four. In that case, only the top three in that division would qualify.