

Metros go for state hockey 'three-peat'

By Terry Hersom

Journal sports editor

Four Iowa High School Hockey League teams posted better regular season records, but Coach Walt Johnson thinks his Sioux City Metros could bring home the title in this weekend's IHSHL varsity state tournament.

The eight-team competition gets under way today at the IBP Ice Center, just south of Lewis and Clark Park.

Three days of action, with four games daily, will decide the 24th champion since the prep league first began in the winter of 1976-77.

No team has ever won three championships in a row. However, the Metros, who've won back-to-back titles, have that feat within reach.

"No other team coming to this tournament has the opportunity to win three in a row," said Johnson, whose team faces Mason City at 6:30 p.m., the final game of the day. "Hosting (the event) gives us an edge, but then everyone else wants to knock us off, too."

Two season-ending losses to the Omaha Gladiators (15-7-0) knocked the Metros out of first place in the league's six-team West Divi-

IHSHL varsity state tournament

AT IBP ICE CENTER

Today's Games

- Game 1: D.M. Capitals vs. Kansas City, 11 a.m.
- Game 2: Waterloo vs. Om. Lancers, 1:30 p.m.
- Game 3: Om. Gladiators vs. Dubuque, 4 p.m.
- Game 4: Sioux City vs. Mason City, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday's Games

- Game 5: Loser 1 vs. Loser 2, 8 a.m.
- Game 6: Loser 3 vs. Loser 4, 10:30 a.m.
- Game 7: Winner 1 vs. Winner 2, 1 p.m.
- Game 8: Winner 3 vs. Winner 4, 3:30 p.m.

Sunday's Games

- Loser 5 vs. Loser 6 (7th place), 6 a.m.
- Winner 5 vs. Winner 6 (5th place), 8:30 a.m.
- Loser 7 vs. Loser 8 (3rd place), 11 a.m.
- Championship Game, 1:30 p.m.

sion. Johnson's team wound up tied at 14-7-1 with the Omaha Lancers.

Meanwhile, the Des Moines Capitals won the East at 19-3-0, followed by Mason City (18-4-0) and Waterloo (16-6-0).

By virtue of a tiebreaker, the Lancers were awarded the West's No. 2 seed ahead of the Metros. Pairings were cross-bracket between the divisions, matching No. 1 in the East with No. 4 in the West, No. 2 in the East with No. 3 in the West, and so forth.

SEE DES MOINES

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Des Moines plays Lincoln in today's opening match

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Mason City swept two regular season meetings with the Metros, prevailing 9-1 on Nov. 19 and 4-1 on Jan. 7. However, the Metros did snare a win over Mason City during their separate Midget (Under-18) schedule, a 20-game slate outside the prep league.

"Those two games were probably our worst of the season and I think maybe they were two of Mason City's best," said Johnson. "They're a big, physical team with, I think, about 12 seniors and a real strong goaltender. We're going to have to bring our 'A' game.

"To be honest, this is more like a final game than a first-round game. I feel the winner has a good chance of going all the way, although there is good competition with the Des Moines Capitals and the Omaha Gladiators.

"I'd say the top six teams in the league were real close this year. It was a real tight race."

In league games, Ben Deck led the Metros with 36 points on 16 goals

and 20 assists. Robby Lessard is next with 32 points, including a team-high 24 goals, followed by Ricky Nearman and Chris Porter with 23 points each.

Ryan Dohrmann was 8-4-1 in goal and had a league-leading .935 save percentage, sharing the netminding chores with Ross Patrick (6-3-0, .868).

"I'm just looking for one or two or three people to come up with the extra effort that it takes," said Johnson. "Whatever aspect of the game that may be, I think that would make a big difference."

The Des Moines Capitals kick off today's action at 11 a.m., facing the Lincoln Junior Stars. Lincoln, after finishing fifth in the West, would not have qualified for the tournament but was awarded a berth after the Kansas City Blades, fourth in the West, pulled out due to injuries.

Waterloo takes on the Omaha Lancers at 1:30 p.m. and Dubuque meets the Omaha Gladiators at 4 o'clock.

Semifinals and consolation play continue Saturday and the championship game is slated for 1:30 p.m. Sunday.