

Lancers picked as favorite

□ Omaha won the regular-season championship, finishing 25-3-0-1.

By CHARLES EMERICK
Of The Globe Gazette

MASON CITY — The Iowa High School Hockey League is loaded with talent.

And starting today and running through Sunday, the league's top eight teams meet at the North Iowa Ice Arena all looking to capture the 2001 IHSSL championship.

While some teams may have had better seasons than others, the regular season proved that every team must be ready to compete every game.

Mason City coach John Lloyd knows the Mohawks must be ready to play if they hope to win the 25th Anniversary Tournament.

"We've got to work hard at it. We just can't assume that we're going to go out there and beat somebody," he said. "That just doesn't happen. If you assume that, you're going to be on the short end of the score. So we have to be ready to play — do the things that we do best and not try to change a whole lot."

The Omaha Junior Lancers, the Des Moines Capitals and Mason City are the top three seeds, respectively, and all have had their share of miscues this season.

The Lancers (25-3-0-1), who began the season with 18 consecutive victories under first year coach Chuck Nano, lost their first game of the season to Lincoln, 4-2 at the Tranquility Ice Plex in Omaha. The Junior Stars finished 12-15-1-3 in the

league this season and didn't qualify for the state tournament.

Omaha, which plays Dubuque at 3:15 p.m. in the first round today, later lost back-to-back games — a 2-1

overtime loss to Kansas City and a 3-1 loss to the Capitals.

Like the Lancers, the Capitals also suffered their first loss of the season to Lincoln.

Des Moines, which finished 20-7-1-2, lost 5-1 to the Junior Stars on Nov. 11.

The Capitals, who face Kansas City at 1 p.m. today, also suffered losses to Sioux City, Waterloo, the Lancers, the Des Moines Oakleaves and Mason City.

Mason City went 21-7-0-0 this year and has slipped up on its home ice.

The Mohawks dropped a 5-1 decision at home to Lincoln on Jan. 28 — a night after the Mohawks cruised to an 8-0 victory over the Junior Stars.

Dubuque, which won just two games at home all season,

claimed two wins over Mason City this season at the North Iowa Ice Arena.

"Dubuque is coming in here knowing they can play well in this arena for some reason," Lloyd said. "They can't play at

home, but they can play well here."

Waterloo, the Lancers and the Capitals also claimed victories over the Mohawks, who play Sioux City at 7:45 tonight.

Sioux City

comes into the tournament with the league's leading scorer.

Ben Deck scored 22 goals and recorded 26 assists for 48 points this season for the Metros, who were 16-11-1-1 this season.

The Metros lost all three games to Mason City this season, but that doesn't make Lloyd rest any easier.

"Sioux City has always been tough for us," he said. "Regardless of how good Sioux City is, they've always been a very tough team, especially when

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Nano



Paulsen



Globe Gazette
photo file

Mason City's Jon Bushbaum (18) skates up ice while the Quad Cities' Zach Donnelly (7) and Mike Griffith (17) give chase during the Mohawks' 8-1 victory on Jan. 5.

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they get to tournament time."

But the Mohawks have the home ice advantage, which Sioux City had last year as the Metros were runner-up to the Capitals in the state tournament.

The Metros beat Mason City in the first round last year.

"This is going to be a big tournament," Mason City senior center Matt Paulsen said. "I get to go out my senior year at home. It's going to be a great tournament and we get to see what we can do."

"We'll have the added pressure from the fans, but it's also

our home ice giving us the home advantage," he added.

Also, 5:30 p.m. today, Waterloo and the Oakleaves meet in a first round contest.

The Oakleaves are 2-0 against the Warriors this season. Des Moines won both games by a final of 3-2 — one an overtime victory.