

Warriors open state tourney with Oakleafs

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WATERLOO

The Waterloo Warriors know they're capable of making a run at the Iowa High School Hockey League tournament championship at Mason City this weekend.

They also know they were a .500 team (13-13-2) during the regular season.

Waterloo takes on the Des Moines Oakleafs (17-10) in a first-round

game at 5:30 p.m. Friday with the winner advancing to the semifinals Saturday afternoon against the Des Moines Capitals-Kansas City winner.

"I think we've been pretty inconsistent," said coach Mike Brown. "Which team shows up will be the key. When we eliminate unnecessary mistakes, we believe we can play with anybody."

The regular season results support Brown's statement. The Warriors have defeated both of the teams that finished ahead of them in the

IHSHL's East Division - Mason City and the Des Moines Capitals. They also lost to Quad Cities, which finished with the worst record in the league.

The Oakleafs, meanwhile, took a pair of 3-2 victories over Waterloo during the regular season, including one in overtime. Both games were played in Des Moines.

"I think we're just a pretty good match for each other," said Brown. "It should be interesting."

Statistically, the teams almost mirror one another. Waterloo has

scored 88 goals, Des Moines 85. The Warriors have allowed 86, the Oakleafs 83.

Seven players have scored in double figures for both teams, although the Oakleafs can't match the firepower of Waterloo's big three of Ryan Shaw (47 points), Josh Dicken (32) and Jared Boller (30).

In the nets, Des Moines' Matt Barth has saved 89.6 percent of the shots he's faced while his Waterloo counterpart, Zach Goodsell, takes an 89.3 percentage into the postseason.

"Obviously, goaltending and defense are going to be important," said Brown. "From that standpoint, we've played pretty well the second half of the season. Goodsell has played better and we've played better in front of him."

"We just can't afford to trade goals with people. We've got to take care of the defensive end first. That makes us a better offensive team, anyway. We've got to sit back, play smart defensively and jump on our opportunities."