

Mohawk hockey club debuts tonight

❑ **Mason City to face Sioux City tonight.**

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Of The Globe Gazette

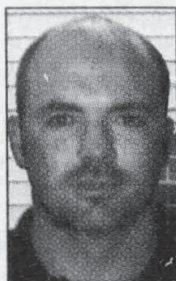
MASON CITY — The Mason City Hockey Club will feature a new look behind the bench and some fresh faces on the ice for the 2001-02 season.

Things will look different, but the goals will be the same: to be a factor during the regular season and at next March's state tournament.

The Mohawks host Sioux City tonight in the season opener. The junior varsity is scheduled to begin at 6:15 p.m., with the varsity to follow at 7:45.

New head coach Mark Hicks takes over for John

Lloyd, who retired last spring after 18 seasons as head of the Mohawk program. Hicks has been a coach in the Mason City organization since 1996.



Hicks

He has also served coaching stints with the North Iowa Huskies and University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire.

He is excited about his newest challenge, leading what he feels has traditionally been one of the better programs in the Iowa High School Hockey Association (IHSAA). The team began workouts on Sept. 25 and

went 4-0 in exhibition play.

"We're having fun and the kids are working hard," said Hicks. "I think we'll do pretty good this year. I'm not sure I'll

say where we'll finish, but I think we'll be all right."

Hicks inherits an experienced varsity squad with speedy forwards and a solid defense.



Fox

Senior forward Erik Fox had a 29-point season last year. A captain this season, Fox will be asked to be a leader on the ice and in the locker room.

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Hockey

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"It's been a good start," he said. "Mark's a really good coach. He knows what he's talking about. The season started off good in preseason games with four wins so far. That helps the confidence out a little bit."

The other captain, forward Kyle Huff, had a 23-point season. Sophomore Cole Despenas and senior Jon Bushbaum had 16-point seasons.

The Mohawks will be a little light in some spots as several players are just now finishing football season, including Huff. Two of Mason City's better defensemen, juniors Brandon Millard and Brad Bohl, just finished playing football on Wednesday. Mason City should be solid on offense at the start of the year while the defense will need a little

time to jell.

"When they're back there we feel pretty safe," said Hicks. "When we get them get back our defense will really mature. They'll take a lot of pressure off our forwards."

Junior Brandon Lind will step in at goalie. He was 4-1 with a .918 save percentage in a 2000-01 season shortened by a neck injury.

"Brandon Lind is one of the better goalies around, so we'll feel pretty confident in goal," said Hicks.

If offense and defense come together as hoped, the Mohawks feel they can be one of the better teams in the league. They finished 27-12 overall and fourth in the state tournament last season.

"This year I think we're going to be the team to beat," said Fox. "Last year Omaha was, but they've lost a lot of players, and we've got a lot of really good players."