

No. 1 Mohawks begin title quest

□ Championship trophy is final goal for Mason City Hockey Club

By DOUG BARRETT
Of The Globe Gazette

WATERLOO — It has come down to this. After 31 wins and a regular season championship, the Mason City Hockey Club is three games away from its goal of a state title.

To be sure, the Mohawks (31-1-1-0) would love to be holding that championship trophy right now. But they also realize that trophy won't happen without a lot more work.

"We have to go out and give 110 percent, because if we lose tomorrow the rest of the tournament doesn't mean anything," said senior for-



Abben



Hicks

ward Kyle Abben.

The Mohawks begin the quest for that title today when they face Lincoln (14-16-1-2) in the first round of the

state tournament. Game time is 5:30 p.m. at the Young Ice Arena.

The second round continues tomorrow. The title game will be played Sunday afternoon.

To win a title, Mason City will have to play three good games in as many days. The

Mohawks won't be able to do that unless they keep their focus on the game in play.

"We need to go one game at a time," said coach Mark Hicks. "I like to go first things first and take it from there.

"We need to string three good games together. In a tournament like this, you never know. We have to be ready to play."

Mason City is seeded first, which has advantages and challenges. The obvious advantage is that the Des Moines Capitals and Omaha Junior Lancers, seeded second and third respectively, will have to beat up on each other before getting a potential shot at the Mohawks in the finals.

The drawback is that Mason City must face eighth-seeded Lincoln in the first round.

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STATE HOCKEY

What: The Iowa High School Hockey League State Tournament.

Where: The Young Ice Arena in Waterloo.

When: Today through Sunday.

Today's Games

1 p.m. — (3) Omaha Jr. Lancers vs. (6) Des Moines Oak Leafs.

3:15 p.m. — (2) Des Moines Capitals vs. (7) Lincoln.

5:30 p.m. — (1) Mason City vs. (8) Lincoln.

7:45 p.m. — (4) Waterloo vs. (5) Sioux City.

Leading Scorers

	G	A	Pts.
Cole Despenas (MC)	26	50	76
Mike Murtaugh (MC)	39	35	74
Kyle Abben (MC)	36	37	73
Dan Kashue (WAT)	40	27	67
Brice Thompson (WAT)	36	15	51

Leading Goaltenders

	Rec.	Sog.	Svs.
Brandon Lind (MC)	30-1-1	617	565
Beau Erickson (SC)	13-11-0	743	680
N. Schumacher (LIN)	10-9-0	556	509
Jesse Johnik (OJL)	6-3-0	195	178
Kyle Walsh (DMC)	24-4-0	493	444

Mohawks face team with nothing to lose

MOHAWKS

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So the Mohawks will face a team with nothing to lose. They also face a squad that's hard to get a read on.

Mason City is 2-0-1 against the Stars. The two skated to a 4-4 tie on Nov. 30, and Mason City won 4-0 on Dec. 1. On Feb. 8 the Mohawks won in overtime, 3-2.

"I don't think they were as good a team at the beginning. I think they started to be a better team towards the end," said junior forward Cole Despenas. "They're just so physical and intense. It keeps them in the game all the time."

Sean Heard leads the Lincoln offense with 24 goals and 15 assists.

Goalie Nick Schumacher is 10-9-1 with a shutout to his credit.

"They're kind of a weird team," Hicks said. "They beat the Capitals, they tied us and they lost to teams that aren't in the tournament. They get focused for big games. This will be a tough game."

Playing three good games three days in a row will be tough. The team to beat in the regular season, the Mohawks know nothing will be easy this weekend.

Whatever happens, Hicks feels that his team will get their three days' worth.

"It's an accumulation of 14 years for some of these guys," said Hicks. "They've been playing hockey since they were four and this is the last time some of them are going to play.

"I don't think they're going to show up and not give it their all. I think they're going to lay it on the line, and what happens, happens."