

# Metros go to Omaha to begin new season

By Steven Allspach

Journal sports writer

Take away 101 anticipated returning points and there's not much question the Sioux City Metros are in a rebuilding stage.

Co-coaches Jim Peck and Jeff Gray unveil the 2002-03 edition of Metros prep hockey in an Iowa High School Hockey League season opener tonight on the road at the Omaha Gladiators.

The Metros were 20-13 in regular-season play last season (21-15 overall) and wound up finishing fourth in the IHSHL state tournament in Dubuque, falling to Mason City in the third-place game, 3-2.

All things being equal, the Metros were expected to be a major contender for league honors in 2002-03, but the team's top two scorers are no longer with the club.

Kyle Rogers, who would have been a junior this year at Yankton (S.D.) High School, has moved with his family to Pennsylvania. Rogers scored 32 goals and added 23 assists to rank third in IHSHL scoring last season with 55 points.

And, Kyle Jacobson, who scored 13 goals and had 33 assists for a 46-point season, is now attending Shattuck St. Mary's prep school Faribault, Minn. Jacobson would have been a junior at North High.

Even with all the missing firepower, the Metros have played very well as a Midget 'A' team in 17 games already this fall. All but one Metro player is eligible for the Midget competition and the squad went 13-3-1 in those 17 outings.

"This is the first time the high school team has really benefited from several kids being able to play the Midget level games before the high school season," said Peck. "We've done pretty well and the play has been encouraging.

"We're also missing some guys still playing high school football so it will be a week or two before we get those guys on the ice with us."

Peck and Gray will be mixing and matching combinations at forward and the blue line until the squad is full strength.

"We'll definitely miss Rogers and Jacobson," said Peck. "Obviously, they would have made us a stronger team, but we've got some young and good goal-scorers.

"The question now is how well we adapt to a more physical style of play at the varsity level."

Two returning players expected to provide scoring production are Cody Muir and Rick Chartier. Both are still involved in high school football and will be on opposing sides tonight when West meets North. Muir is a two-way starter at West and Chartier starts for North.

Another player with high-scoring potential is West sophomore Kevin Lohry, while North senior Sam Schweigert will probably play on the top line. Chase Kinchen, a junior at Sergeant Bluff-Luton, is also among the forward candidates, along with Jack Brooks (East senior).

One of the top newcomers, too, is forward Alex Lukehart, a junior at Hinton High School. Lukehart had 28 goals and 25 assists at the JV level last year and was second among the league's junior varsity point-makers.

At the blue line, Peck and Gray are counting on experience when Aaron Limoges (West senior), Joel Kempter (North senior), Daren Rife (North junior), Brett Swanson (North junior), Jon Soole (East senior), David Lane (South Sioux City sophomore) and Heelan freshman Kyle Bennett are among the top contenders for shift time.

Kempter is also member of the North football squad.

The goaltending duties will go again to Beau Erickson, junior at Hinton. Another goaltending candidate is Ryan McClennen, a senior at East who was named, along with Swanson, as the most improved players on the JV team last season.

Erickson was 9-7 in regular-season play last year with a 2.60 goals-against average and .869 save percentage.

## 2002-03 Schedule

**November:** 1 - at Omaha Gladiators, 7:15, 9:30, 3 - Des Moines Oak Leafs, 12:30 p.m., 10:30 a.m. 10 - Waterloo, 12:30 p.m. 10:30 a.m. 16 - Omaha Jr. Lancers, 7:30, 9:30, 17 - Omaha Gladiators, 5:00, 3:00, 23 - at Waterloo, 8:00, 6:30, 24 - at Waterloo, 11 a.m., 9:30 a.m.

**December:** 6 - Des Moines Capitals, 7:30, 5:30, 7 - Mason City, 3:00, 1:00, 8 - Mason City, 12:30 p.m. 10:30 a.m. 13 - at Omaha Jr. Lancers, 7 p.m., 9:30, 14 - at Omaha Jr. Lancers, 7 p.m., 9:30, 20 - at Des Moines Capitals, 7:45 p.m., 6:00, 21 - at Des Moines Capitals, 7:45, 6:00, 22 - at Mason City, 12:45, 11 a.m.

**January:** 3 - at Des Moines Oak Leafs, 7:45 p.m., 6:00, 4 - at Des Moines Oak Leafs, 7:45, 6:00, 5 - at Ames, 9 a.m., 7:30 a.m. 17 - at Quad Cities, 8:15 p.m., 6:30, 18 - at Dubuque, 7:30 p.m., 7 p.m. 19 - at Dubuque, 11 a.m., 9:30 a.m. 25 - Kansas City, 7 p.m., 5 p.m. 26 - Kansas City, 12:30 p.m., 10:30 a.m.

**February:** 1 - Quad Cities, 3 p.m., 1 p.m. 2 - Quad Cities, 12:30 p.m., 10:30 a.m. 7 - Lincoln, 7:30 p.m., 5:30, 9 - Dubuque, 12:30 p.m., 10:30 a.m. 15 - Ames, 7 p.m., 6 p.m. 16 - Ames, 12:30 p.m., 10:30 a.m. 21 - at Lincoln, 6:30 p.m., 8:30 p.m. 22 - at Lincoln, 6 p.m., 4:30 p.m. 23 - Kansas City - 11 a.m., 9:30 a.m.

**Notes:** Varsity starting times are listed first in each case. The IHSHL state tournament is Feb. 28-March 2 in Waterloo; junior varsity state tourney is March 7-9 in Des Moines; league all-star game is March 6 in Des Moines.