

# Timing right for soaring Warriors

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## WATERLOO

After wrapping up one of their most successful regular seasons in recent history, the Waterloo Warriors get to host the party.

The Iowa High School Hockey League state tournament takes place at Young Arena beginning Friday. It's the first time since 1995 that Waterloo has hosted the tournament, and for the fourth-place Warriors, the timing couldn't be any better.

"This is the first season in awhile where we've been competitive with everybody in the league," said Warrior coach Mike Brown. "I think we have as good a chance to win as anybody. It's a pretty exciting time to have the tournament in our own rink."

The timing is also right for Waterloo health-wise. Star forward Matt Metcalf is back and ready to play after missing over half the season with a broken collarbone, and various other bumps and bruises throughout the roster have had time to heal.

"We've had people out of the lineup all year," Brown said. "I think our goalie (Craig Arras) is the only guy who's played every game. We're looking forward to seeing what we can do with everybody healthy at the same time."

A lot of the excitement around the IHSHL has been coming out of Mason City, where the first-place Mohawks cruised to a near-perfect regular season. Mason City swaggers into the tournament with a record of 31-1-1, wresting the top seed away from the two squads that have dominated the league in recent seasons: the second-place Des Moines Capitals and third-place Omaha Junior Lancers.

"I figured we'd be one of the top three or four teams in the league, but a one-loss season is something I couldn't even fathom," said Mason City coach Mark Hicks. "We just had all the players come together at the right time, and the guys really outdid themselves."

The Mohawks boast the league's top three scorers in Cole Despenas (76 points), Mike Murtaugh (74) and Kyle Abben (73), as well as the top goalie in Brandon Lind. Mason City also had the league's top-scoring

## IHSHL standings

| Final Team        | W         | L         | T        | OL       | Pts       |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| *Mason City       | 31        | 1         | 1        | 0        | 63        |
| *DM Capitals      | 29        | 4         | 0        | 0        | 58        |
| *Om Jr Lancers    | 24        | 8         | 0        | 1        | 49        |
| * <b>Waterloo</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>12</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>42</b> |
| *Sioux City       | 18        | 11        | 0        | 4        | 42        |
| *DM Oak Leafs     | 18        | 13        | 1        | 1        | 38        |
| *Kansas City      | 16        | 16        | 0        | 1        | 33        |
| *Lincoln          | 14        | 16        | 1        | 2        | 31        |
| Ames              | 11        | 22        | 0        | 0        | 22        |
| Quad Cities       | 7         | 24        | 1        | 1        | 16        |
| Dubuque           | 3         | 27        | 1        | 2        | 9         |
| Om Gladiators     | 3         | 29        | 1        | 0        | 7         |

\* qualified for state tournament

### GAMES FRIDAY

1 p.m. - Game 1, Omaha Jr. Lancers vs.

Des Moines Oak Leafs

3:15 p.m. - Game 2, Des Moines Cap-

itals vs. Kansas City

5:30 p.m. - Game 3, Mason City vs. Lin-

coln

7:45 p.m. - Game 4, Waterloo vs. Sioux

City

### GAMES SATURDAY

9 a.m. - Game 5, loser Game 1 vs. loser

Game 2

11:15 a.m. - Game 6, loser Game 3 vs.

loser Game 4

1:30 p.m. - Game 7, winner Game 3 vs.

winner Game 4

3:45 p.m. - Game 8, winner Game 1 vs.

winner Game 2

### GAMES SUNDAY

7 a.m. - Game 9, Seventh Place

9:15 a.m. - Game 10, Fifth Place

11:30 a.m. - Game 11, Third Place

1:45 p.m. - Game 12, Championship

defense, led by first-team all-stater Brandon Millard.

The Warriors might be the one team that can match Mason City's offense. Waterloo's pair of super sophomores, Dan Kaaihue of East and Brice Thompson of Hudson, ranked No. 4 and 5 among the league scoring leaders, and Kaaihue led the league in goals scored with 40.

"Since (Metcalf) got hurt, it really allowed those two to step up," Brown said. "They're both highly skilled players, and they kind of feed off each other."

With all the turnover on the front lines, the Warriors have relied heavily on Arras, a senior out of Vinton-Shellsburg who led the league's goalies in minutes played.

"He's gotten better every week," Brown said of Arras. "I think for the last month or so, he's been our most consistent player."

The Warriors begin their quest for their first title since 1990 with a first-round game against fifth-place Sioux City at 7:45 p.m. Friday. Waterloo is 2-1 against the Metros this season.

The tournament begins at 1 p.m. Friday, with the Junior Lancers taking on the sixth-place Des Moines Oak Leafs.