

Dubuque program passes, Cedar Rapids takes a shot

Cities pool talent to play in Iowa club-level league

By Jeff Johnson
The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — They weren't going to take this step for a while. They really preferred to wait.

But when the opportunity arose to

PREP HOCKEY

play organized high school hockey this winter, Cedar Rapids officials

decided to, well, take a shot at it. A slap shot, if you will.

Twenty-nine high school students, 11 from the immediate Cedar Rapids area, are in a combined Cedar Rapids-Dubuque program that will play a full-fledged varsity-junior varsity schedule in the Iowa High School Hockey League. The IHSHL is a 12-team club-level league not associated with the Iowa High School Athletic Association. A 33-game schedule begins Oct. 31 and runs through February.

► **HOCKEY, PAGE 6C**



Jim Stosiarek/The Gazette

Coach Steve Yurichuk explains a drill during a Cedar Rapids Mustangs hockey practice last month at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena.



Jim Stosiarek/The Gazette

Cedar Rapids Kennedy freshman Greg Goettel reaches for the puck during a goalie drill at practice for the Mustangs last month at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena.

Hockey/Home games shared

► FROM PAGE 1C

"We had planned on waiting another two years," said Cedar Rapids team representative Craig Buntenbach. "But this opportunity with Dubuque came up, and we decided that it would be good for us to kind of get our foot in the door."

The Cedar Rapids Ice Arena opened in January 2000 and youth leagues have flourished. The goal all along was to have a Cedar Rapids high school hockey team. It's just a little sooner than expected.

Dubuque's high school program has seen a significant decrease in participants the last few years, a decrease that likely would have prevented it from fielding an IHSHL team this season. So discussions began with Cedar Rapids officials, and the sides decided to create a short-term combined program.

There are 10 players in the program from Dubuque — one who attends high school at MFL MarMac, one from English Valleys, another from Center Point, one from Mount Pleasant, three from Iowa City and the 11 Cedar Rapids-Martin high-schoolers. The Metro players come from Xavier, Kennedy, Linn-Mar, Prairie and Washington.

"The rosters aren't officially nailed down," Buntenbach said. "But the majority of Dubuque's players are playing on the varsity roster, and most of the Cedar Rapids players are on junior varsity."

"But we have a handful mixing in back and forth."

Buntenbach, who has coached high school and collegiate club teams, is an assistant coach with Jerry Moon for the junior varsity team, which is being called

Mustangs/Devils schedule

The Cedar Rapids/Dubuque Mustangs/Devils will play a 33-game schedule in the Iowa High School Hockey League with the Ames Little Cyclones, Des Moines Capitals, Des Moines Oak Leafs, Kansas City Jr. Blades, Lincoln Jr. Stars, Mason City Mohawks, Omaha Gladiators, Omaha Jr. Lancers, Quad City Blues, Sioux City Metros and Waterloo Warriors.

2003-2004

REGULAR SEASON SCHEDULE
OCT. 31 — Quad City (at Dubuque), 7 p.m.

NOV. 1 — at Mason City, 5:30 p.m.; **2** — at Mason City, 9 a.m.; **8** — Omaha Gladiators (at Cedar Rapids), 1:30 p.m.; **9** — Omaha Gladiators (at Cedar Rapids), 1:30 p.m.; **11** — Waterloo (at Dubuque), 7 p.m.; **15** — at Omaha Jr. Lancers, 7 p.m.; **16** — at Omaha Jr. Lancers, 8:45 a.m.; **23** — Kansas City (at Dubuque), 8:45 a.m.; **29** — at Des Moines Oak Leafs, 6 p.m.; **30** — at Ames, 9 a.m.

DEC. 6 — at Des Moines

Capitals, 6 p.m.; **7** — at Des Moines Capitals, 10:30 a.m.; **13** — at Kansas City, 6 p.m.; **14** — at Kansas City, 9:30 a.m.; **20** — Lincoln (at Cedar Rapids), 1:30 p.m.; **21** — Lincoln (at Cedar Rapids), 1:30 p.m.

JAN. 2 — at Quad City, 6:30 p.m.; **3** — at Lincoln, 5 p.m.; **4** — at Omaha Gladiators, 11:30 a.m.; **10** — Des Moines Capitals (at Dubuque), 9 a.m.; **11** — Omaha Jr. Lancers (at Dubuque), 9 a.m.; **15** — Quad City (at Dubuque), 7 p.m.; **17** — Ames (at Cedar Rapids), 3 p.m.; **18** — Ames (at Cedar Rapids), 1:30 p.m.; **24** — Des Moines Oak Leafs (at Cedar Rapids), 1:30 p.m.; **25** — Des Moines Oak Leafs (at Cedar Rapids), 1:30 p.m.; **31** — at Waterloo, 6 p.m.

FEB. 7 — Sioux City (at Dubuque), 9 a.m.; **8** — Kansas City (at Dubuque), 9 a.m.; **13** — at Waterloo, 6 p.m.; **21** — at Sioux City, 1 p.m.; **22** — at Sioux City, 10:30 a.m.

Team rosters, 5C

the Cedar Rapids Mustangs. The Mustangs, whose head coach is Cedar Rapids Ice Arena director of hockey operations Steve Yurichuk, are using the old horse-with-a-hockey-stick forest-green uniforms worn until this year by the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders junior hockey team.

Jamie Lund coaches the varsity team, known as the Dubuque Devils.

The squads practice about three nights a week, but separately in Dubuque and Cedar Rapids. The cities will share 16 home games this season, eight at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena and eight at Dubuque's Five Flags Center.

"On the ice, things have gone exceptionally smoothly," Buntenbach said. "You expect some growing pains because we're a new organization, and this is the first time our associations have had a sharing agreement."

"We've really got two coaches with two different philosophies on how things should be run. But we're working it out."

How long will they work it out? No one knows, though each association wants to go its separate way at some point. That's why there are different team names.

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