



Globe Gazette file photo

Cole Despenas passes the puck in a game last season.

Mohawk hockey club has unfinished business

□ Mason City opens season Saturday night at home

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MASON CITY — The Mason City hockey club has some unfinished business to take care of this season.

Last year, Mason City cruised through the Iowa High School Hockey League regular season with a record of 31-1-1 but placed a disappointing fourth at the state tournament.

"It was a great time," Mason City senior forward Cole Despenas said of the regular season. "It was the best hockey I've seen in a long time, but we couldn't finish it.

"So it didn't mean that much."

Mason City begins its march toward its first state title since 1997 this week-end with a pair of home contests against Dubuque/Cedar Rapids.

The Saturday game starts at 7:15 p.m. with the Sunday contest starting at 10:45 a.m.

Mason City coach Mark Hicks said motivation for the 2003-2004 season will not be a problem.

"I guess we don't put many expectations on them because these guys have put them on themselves," the coach said. "They want to finish off what they started last year.

"They're determined and

are working hard. They worked hard in the summer. They're ready to go."

Mason City returns the top two scorers in the league last year in Despenas (76 points — 26 goals, 50 assists) and Mike Murtaugh (74 points — 39 goals, 35 assists).

Also returning is Carter Angell, who was 12th in the league in scoring with 45 points (17 goals, 20 assists).

"We have a lot of offense," Hicks said. "We won't have any trouble putting the puck in the net. We have

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Angell

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some good defensemen and we have two good goalies."

Despenas' 50 assists easily were tops in the league. The next highest assist total was Mason City's Kyle Abben, who graduated last year with 37.

"For one, he's probably one of the strongest guys in the league," Hicks said of Despenas. "He's fast and he's got a good shot.

"He's got a good head on his shoulders. He's got good hockey sense."

Hicks called Murtaugh a very gifted player with the puck.

"When he gets a guy one-on-one, there's not anyone better that I've seen, and I've seen a lot of levels of hockey," the coach said. "He's just a natural goal scorer."

Mason City will be short-handed to start the season as a few players are still playing football at Mason City, Newman Catholic and Clear Lake.

"We're definitely ready," Murtaugh said. "We're playing well. We played well in the preseason. I think we're going to be pretty good.

"We have two great lines. Our top two lines would be the first line on most teams."

While offense shouldn't be a problem, Mason City must replace graduated goalie

Brandon Lind, who was 30-1-1 last year with seven shutouts.

Hicks said junior Brent Frein will be the Mohawks' starter in goal with freshman Austin Maginnis as the backup.

Frein was 27-3-3 with 12 shutouts on the junior varsity level a year ago.

"Brent's a gamer," Hicks said. "He works hard in practice and does all the little things right

"But when he gets in the game and in the action, he's really quick and covers a lot of net."

So a strong offense and good goal-tending should make the Mohawks a team to

be reckoned with in the IHSHL this season.

"We're setting the goal as high as it gets — a state championship," senior defenseman Kyle Burgmeier said.

Pre-Winter Break Schedule

Saturday: vs. Dubuque/Cedar Rapids, 7:15 p.m.

Sunday: vs. Dubuque/Cedar Rapids, 10:45 a.m.

Nov. 7: vs. Waterloo, 8 p.m.

Nov. 14: vs. Quad Cities, 8 p.m.

Nov. 15: at Lincoln, 6:30 p.m.

Nov. 16: at Lincoln, 8:30 p.m.

Nov. 21: at Sioux City, 7 p.m.

Nov. 26: vs. Ames, 7:45 p.m.

Nov. 29: vs. Waterloo, 7:15 p.m.

Dec. 6: vs. K.C., 7:15 p.m.

Dec. 7: vs. K.C., 10:45 a.m.

Dec. 10: at Ames, 8 p.m.

Dec. 13: vs. DM Capitals, 7:15 p.m.

Dec. 19: at Kansas City, 9 p.m.

Dec. 20: at Junior Lancers, 7 p.m.