

"There is no other goal to have. Anything less wouldn't be where we want to be."

— Mohawk Hockey Club coach Mark Hicks on winning a state title

Mohawk hockey team wants state championship

By JARED PATTERSON
Of The Globe Gazette

MASON CITY — Seniors on the Mason City Hockey Club have won a state championship before, just not on the varsity level.

The Mohawks won the 2003 junior varsity tournament, and that same group will look to bring home Mason City's first varsity title since 1997 in early March in Kansas City, Mo., at

the Iowa High School Hockey League state tournament.

"Our goal is to finish first in the regular season and win a state tournament," said Mason City coach Mark Hicks, whose team hosts Dubuque/Cedar Rapids at 8 tonight. "There is no other goal to have. Anything less wouldn't be where we want to be."

And winning the state championship was something the Mohawks

were close to accomplishing a year ago.

Mason City lost to the Des Moines Capitals, 6-3, in the championship game after finishing third in the regular season (22-5-1-2).

"We should have got first last year," senior defenseman Zach Buss said. "We were all pumped and then the Capitals beat us. It took a while to get over that."

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Mohawk players gather around the bench Wednesday as coach Mark Hicks draws out plays during practice.

Scoring isn't a concern for Mohawk hockey team

Hockey

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The Mohawks lost their top three goal scorers from a year ago (Cole Despenas, Carter Angell and Mike Murtaugh), but goal scoring isn't a concern for Hicks or his players.

"We'll be able to take care of that," said Alex Maginnis, who was fourth on the team with 26 goals last year. "We're going to have a pretty strong first line."

Aside from having goal scorers, Hicks thinks having Brent Frein in net for the second straight year will help the Mohawks make a run at a state title.

"The experience is very valuable," Hicks said. "You can't beat that. He's just a gamer."

Senior defenseman Zach Buss agreed.

"His mental game is amazing," Buss said. "You got to have talent, but if you just have a little talent and a lot of experience, that will take you a long way."

With goaltending and goal scoring taken care of, Hicks had one simple answer when

asked about any concerns he has entering the season.

"Team defense," he said.

The Mohawks have addressed that in early practices by working on being physical and developing depth.

"We have to let the younger kids know how physical this game is," Buss said. "It's a different game."

And the Mohawks are going to have to have some of the younger kids step up if they want to compete with

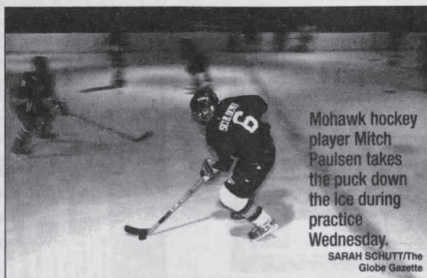
the Des Moines Capitals and Oak Leafs for a league crown.

"When we play the Capitals there is going to be a little bit of a revenge factor," Hicks said, but the Oak Leafs have some of the best talent back in the league."

Note: The Mohawks Hockey Association is holding a tailgate from 5-7 p.m. outside the arena prior to tonight's game. They will be serving supper and all fans are invited to attend.



Buss



Mohawk hockey player Mitch Paulsen takes the puck down the ice during practice Wednesday.

SARAH SCHUTT/The Globe Gazette