

## PREP HOCKEY

# Right Time to Peak

## Mohawk Hockey Club opens state tournament after 9-3 finish to regular season

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**MASON CITY** — Over the course of a season, a team has its share of ups and downs.

For the Mason City Hockey Club, the last several weeks have been a big up.

The Mohawks have gone 9-3 to end the regular season, positioning themselves as the No. 7 seed when the Midwest High School Hockey League playoffs begin today at the Quad City Sports Center in Davenport.

The Mohawks open play at 7:30 p.m.

"I really don't know our record, but I do know we have been playing pretty good," Mohawk Hockey Club coach Mark Hicks said. "We've been getting ready for the state tournament all year and we're ready to play hard and go as far as we can."

For its efforts, Mason City opens against No. 2 seed, and tournament host, Quad City.

The Blues have topped the Mohawks three times this season by scores of 6-1, 4-2 and 6-1.

"There's no question about it," Hicks said of Quad City's success against Mason City. "But we look at this as a new season and all the teams are starting 0-0."

There's another aspect about Quad City that hasn't escaped the Mohawks, either.

"I was reading in their paper and they said they're the only team in the league we haven't beaten," Mason City's Spenser Poppinga said. "There wouldn't be a better time to get them."

Quad City is fueled by goaltender Matt Truniger, who leads the league in winning percentage, sporting a 17-1 record.

He is also tops in goals against average, surrendering 1.31 per game.

"They play two goalies and they're both really good," Hicks said. "We'll just have to go out, make them move and put a lot of pucks on net."

"If we can get a goal early, make him work and get some momentum, we should be in good shape."

Getting scoring chances shouldn't be a problem for the Mohawks, who are led by Ben Juhnke and Chris Jessen.

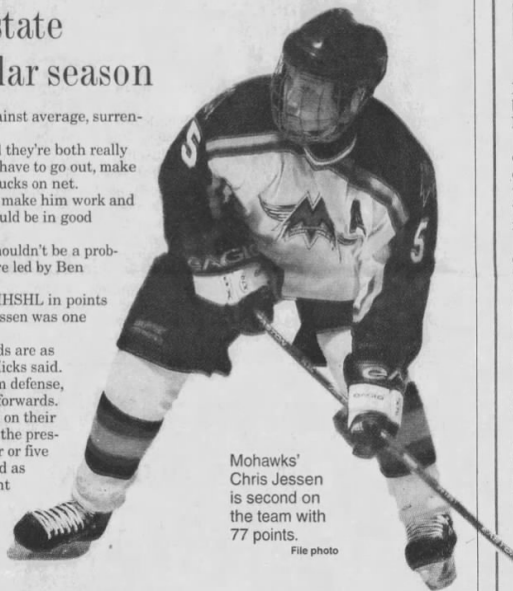
Juhnke was third in the MHSHL in points this season with 78, while Jessen was one point back with 77.

"We think our four forwards are as good as any in the league," Hicks said. "The key to this game is team defense, and for us it starts with the forwards."

"We need to keep the puck on their side of the red line and keep the pressure on them. They have four or five forwards who are just as good as ours, they just play a different style."

As far as who will be in net for the Mohawks, Hicks has his choice of Drake Lundeen and Max Lassise.

"I haven't decided who I'll put in yet," Hicks said Thursday. "But I, and the team, have plenty of confidence in both guys. Like I said, it will come down to how well the five guys in front of them play."



Mohawks' Chris Jessen is second on the team with 77 points.

File photo