



# VARSITY BLUES

## Q-C hockey team begins another season with a new coach

**T**HE members of the Quad-City Blues hockey team have been at it awhile, but the thrill of travel hasn't wavered. If ever there was a fusion between prep and professional sports, the Midwest High School Hockey League is it.

Two road games into their eighth season, the Blues have regained their taste for charter buses, hotel rooms and, of course, competition. Yet for all the antics and debauchery of the road, playing at home is especially meaningful.

As the Blues prepare to open the home portion of their 36-game schedule Friday, several of the team's seniors will begin the final stretch of their Quad-City careers. When the Quad-City Sports Center opened on the Davenport riverfront in 1995, these boys were there, stumbling across the ice.

**BLUES HOME OPENER**

**When:** Friday 8 p.m. (junior varsity at 6:30)

**Where:** Quad-City Sports Center

**Tickets:** Free admission for children; \$5 for adults  
**On the web:**

On the web  
www.michigan.gov

**Players to watch:** Jake Hemmen (Sr., F, Alleman); Rich Moran (Sr., F, Bettendorf); Collin DeBuysere (Sr., D, Geneseo); Bennett Welsner (Sr., F, Moline); Ryan Giertz (Sr., D, Rivermont Collegiate)

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Bettendorf senior Rich Moran started playing hockey at age 3 and is just as captivated 14 years later.

"I have fun with it," he said. "It's a rush. And it's not just your high school group."

The Blues represent 11 area high schools from Iowa and Illinois.

They've been part of the Midwest High School Hockey League since 2000, and the league first began play in 1972.

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youngsters.

"Back when the kids were 6 or 7, they really took to hockey," Teplicky said. "They embraced everything about it."

And they got better and better.

This year's team is off to a respectable start, particularly considering its first two games (a win and an overtime loss) were played short-handed.

Several team members recently returned from football seasons, and a few more Bettendorf players still are on the gridiron.

When everyone's back, the Blues have every intention of building on last season's 20 wins.

"We're solid throughout," Rivermont Collegiate senior Ryan Giertz said. "These guys can really put the puck in the net."

"It always helps that you know where everyone is. You give them a no-look pass, and it's not being fancy, you just know you can get it through."

But like traditional sanctioned Iowa and Illinois prep sports, no one's playing if they aren't making grades.

One player is sitting out 20 games for failing a class, O'Dacre said. League rules stipulate that teams must adhere to the eligibility guidelines of each player's individual school.

For the most part, O'Dacre said, the players are model students.

"These seniors, they were the original guys in the program," O'Dacre said. "We want them to leave their mark on the Quad-Cities."

As long as they continue to hone their skills and keep road trip antics to a minimum, that shouldn't be a problem.

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**PAUL O'DACRE**

**New coach of the Blues, and  
former president of the Mallards**



Check out video  
of the Quad-City  
Blues at  
[www.qctimes.com](http://www.qctimes.com).