

Better late than never for Sheeley

■ Warriors' rookie goaltender has delivered like veteran

By NICK PETAROS

nick.petaros@wctcourier.com

WATERLOO — If Jordan Sheeley had it his way, he would have been turning away one-timers and gloving slap shots for years.

There's something about the goalie position that has always piqued his interest.

Yet when Sheeley got his start in youth hockey, his coaches saw talent that could be used elsewhere.

"Just because I had a hard shot, the coaches made me stay at forward and defense," Sheeley lamented.

Outside of competitive hockey, he'd eagerly volunteer to play goalie during pick-up games and in the adult league.

Then, heading into his final season for the Waterloo Warriors, head coach Doug Dietz asked the Waterloo West senior a question he'd been waiting to hear for years.

Cal Petersen's decision to play AAA hockey in Chicago created an opening in net that didn't take long to fill.

"I approached Jordan because I knew he was capable of playing goalie and just asked him if this is something he'd consider," Dietz said.

Sheeley, who spent the past two seasons as a varsity forward and defender, didn't need to be persuaded.

"I was shocked and excited at the same time," Sheeley said. "I've wanted to be a goalie since I was a little kid.



Jordan Sheeley

SHEELEY

Senior will lead Warriors into MHSHL tournament

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"I was thinking of answering right away, but (Dietz) wanted me to take my time to make sure it was the right answer and the right move."

No one is second-guessing Sheeley's position change now.

As the Waterloo Warriors enter their 2 p.m. opener Friday in the Midwest High School Hockey League's varsity tournament, it may come as a surprise that their rookie goaltender may be the league's top netminder. Sheeley leads the league with a 24-6-2 record and seven shutouts, while his goals-against average of 1.60 ranks fourth.

"You don't see that very often," Dietz said. "The goaltending position is a very technical position, especially in this day and age where a lot of these young kids are getting coached by goaltender guys.

"For him to just step out of his old role and into a new role this year has been tremendous for us."

Prior to the season, Sheeley invested plenty of time completing drills he'd learned from watching other goalies. He also took advantage of the

opportunity to work out with the Waterloo Black Hawks' goalies.

"After the first weekend of the season is when I really got into it and got the position down," Sheeley said.

Dietz views his goalie as a model of consistency.

"There's no up and downs with him right now," Dietz said. "He doesn't get on an emotional high and he doesn't get on an emotional low."

Sheeley's teammates also respect his willingness to take on the new role.

"I think the guys rallied behind him and kept pushing him," Dietz said. "The kids respect what he's done and where we're at right now. Our defensive side of the puck has helped him also."

Waterloo finished the regular season third with 50 points, just two points back of the first-place Des Moines Oak Leafs.

"This is probably the closest group that I've ever played with," said Sheeley, who competed on the Warriors' 2009 state championship team. "We all back each other up."

After this season, Sheeley said he'd like to try and play on a junior team next year. He also plans to remain a goalie.

"I wish I would have switched to goalie when I was younger," he said.