

SIoux CITY METROS

Metros open MHSHL hockey season today

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SIoux CITY | Yes, there are quarterbacks in hockey.

Just ask Sioux City Metros Coach Brant Mozak. He calls Braden Cherkas the quarterback of the top line that will face the Des Moines Oak Leafs at 3 p.m. Saturday in the Midwest High School Hockey League season-opener for both teams at the IBP Ice Center (the junior varsity game will follow at 5:15 p.m.).

Cherkas, a senior center, scored 14 points (6 goals, 8 assists) for last season's 12-15-0-1 squad that placed last in the West Division, yet nevertheless, reached the MHSHL Post-Season Tournament in Ames. He will direct a line that includes senior left wing Keegan Lyon (7, 2) and a newcomer to the Sioux City

SIoux CITY METROS SCHEDULE

NOVEMBER: 2 – HERE vs. Des Moines Oak Leafs; 3 – HERE vs. Des Moines Oak Leafs; 9 – HERE vs. Omaha; 16 – HERE vs. Quad Cities; 17 – HERE vs. Quad Cities; 22 – at Mason City; 23 – at Mason City.

DECEMBER: 7 – HERE vs. Des Moines Capitals; 8 – HERE vs. Des Moines Capitals; 14 – HERE vs. Kansas City; 15 – HERE vs. Kansas City; 21 – at Cedar Rapids; 22 – at Cedar Rapids.

JANUARY: 4 – at Ames; 5 – at Ames; 11 – HERE vs. Lincoln; 12 – HERE vs. Lincoln; 18 – at Lincoln; 19 – at Lincoln; 25 – at Omaha.

FEBRUARY: 1 – at Kansas City; 2 – at Kansas City; 8 – HERE vs. Dubuque; 9 – HERE vs. Dubuque; 14 – HERE vs. Omaha; 15 – at Omaha; 22 – at Waterloo; 23 – at Waterloo.

program, freshman Tanner Frerichs.

"That first line is a bunch of workers," said Mozak, whose squad will also host the Oak Leafs on Sunday (10 a.m. varsity, noon JV).

"Braden's a hard worker who's the quarterback of the line. Keegan has a good sense of when to go to the

net and when to shoot. He's done a good job in the past of scoring goals.

"Frerichs doesn't know about the (MHSHL) game, but he showed he's good in game situations in practice. He has a good shot and good speed. I look for that combination to complement each other."

Lyon had a team-high 37 points (19 goals, 18 assists) for a 16-9-3 Metros team that made the MHSHL's Junior Varsity Post-Season Tournament. Eight other JV Metros, who combined for 51 goals, are making the transition to varsity action, facing an opponent today that went 25-2-0-1 last season.

Still, among those eight, three of them played at least 15 varsity games, including senior Sam Brower, the second-line center. Brower's linemates are senior left wing Skyler Beller and senior right wing Zach Twillman (4, 4), the biggest of the Metros at 6-3, 210.

Twillman was a defenseman who ranked second on last season's squad with 88 penalty minutes.

"Twillman has a big body, flies around and hits people," said Mozak.

"He's an enforcer. He has a good shot if you give him a chance. If he gets that big body in there, he could score hard."

Senior center Cole Peterson will lead the Metros' third and last line. Senior Zac Gray is one of four battling for other positions on the line along with sophomores Sam Holzrichter and Chance Jensen, plus newcomer Cameron Kramer, a sophomore.

Seniors Connor Schlotfeldt and Mac McFarland are described by Mozak as offensive defensemen. Two others will play in the blue zone, juniors Cory Goss and Jordan Reynolds, who experienced 24 and 15 varsity games, respectively, last season.

"(Schlotfeldt and McFarland) have good shots from the point and play well in the defensive zone,"

said Mozak. "We'll look for points from them as well. Obviously, you want them to play defense first. They're leaders in the 'D' zone who help the forwards know who their guys are."

Goaltenders Briar Burns and Ben Morehead will make their varsity debuts this season after combining for an 8-5-1 JV record. Mozak isn't sure which one will start between the pipes this weekend, but will likely give both a start.

"That depends if Briar or Ben have a lights-out game Saturday, then I'd play him again Sunday," said Mozak. "They'll both get chances this season. Not only do they have to stop the puck, they have to be vocal and watch the game. They have to help our defense out with coverage. I want them active in the game."