

Metros prepare for MHSHL Varsity Tourney

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SIOUX CITY | Two weekends ago, the Sioux City Metros experienced a defeat from a team that like themselves, was in a sense of urgency.

Ames, like the Metros, needed to win to keep its fading hopes of qualifying for the Midwest High School Hockey League Varsity Tournament alive. The Metros bounced back from a 4-0 loss on Valentine's Day with a 4-3 overtime win the next day, as Skyler Beller scored, courtesy of assists from James Page and Cory Goss.

While Ames stumbled to an 0-3 finish, Coach Dave LeGree's team followed with 4-1 and 4-2 wins last weekend at Lincoln and in doing so, got the seventh seed for the MHSHL Varsity Tournament.

"When we beat Ames it's because of what Ames did to us that first game," said LeGree, whose 11-14-2-1 team, back in the tournament after a two-year absence, will play a 2 p.m. first-round game on Friday at the Ames/ISU Ice Arena against the No. 2-seeded Des Moines Capitals (24-4-0-0).

"We're the seventh seed, but we have talent. In playoff hockey, you need strong goaltending and the people who are scoring need to keep putting the puck in the net. We have to limit our mistakes in the neutral zone and the defensive zone."

The Metros have three strong lines with various strengths. All-West Division forward Tanner Frerichs (15 goals, 29 assists) is paired up with All-MHSHL Skyler Beller (29, 15) and Trent Harsma (11, 16).

Beller, the MHSHL's leading goal scorer and Frerichs, the league's assist leader, each finished the regular season tied for fourth among the league's scorers with 44 points.

Beller scored two or more goals in five of the last six games while Frerichs at one point in the season, scored in 22 straight games. Harsma had his fourth three-point effort of the season with a goal and two assists in Sunday's victory.

"Skyler has been on a tear the last five games, which is nice to see," said LeGree. "Tanner has been steady all year. Then you have younger guys like Page and Harsma, they're both freshmen, but they go out, they compete against older players and they don't stand down."

Jordan Reynolds (5, 5) and Goss (2, 6), the Metros' lone seniors, are paired up with Page (7, 10). While the top two lines are filled with scorers, the threesome of Cameron Kramer (2, 1), Sam Holzrichter (1, 7) and Chance Jensen (4, 6) are relied upon for their defense and timely goals.

Logan Visser and Jarret Heyl are the defensemen scoring leaders, each contributing a goal and seven assists. Caleb Sneller (2, 3) will also work the blue line this weekend along with Grant Newman (1, 2), Walter Werden (0, 0), Brady Glissman (0, 0) and Tyler Bruinsma (0, 0).

"Looking down the road, just watching the way they work, we should have one of the best group of defensemen in the league, the way they carry the puck," said LeGree. "They're playmakers. They've gained a lot of experience and lot of ice time this year."

METROS, PAGE B2

Midwest High School Hockey League Varsity Championship Tournament

Feb. 27-March 1 at Ames/ISU Ice Arena

Games Friday

(In Bracket Order)

2 P.M.: #3 Dubuque (21-6-0-1) vs.

#6 Mason City (14-13-1-0)

4 P.M.: #2 Des Moines Capitals (24-4-0-0) vs.

#7 Sioux City (11-14-2-1)

NOON: #4 Omaha (21-6-0-1) vs.

#5 Waterloo (18-6-1-3)

6 P.M.: #1 Kansas City (25-3-0-0) vs.

#8 Des Moines Oak Leafs (10-16-0-2)

NOTE: Consolation semifinal games will be played Saturday at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. while the championship semifinals will be played Saturday at 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Sunday's schedule includes a fifth-place game (9 a.m.), a third-place game (11 a.m.) and the championship game (1 p.m.)

Metros: Playing well

FROM PAGE B1

Goaltender Ben Morehead (9-10, 4.44 goals-against average) has won three straight games and impressed the first-year head coach by stopping four Lincoln breakaways Sunday. He had saves in 50 of 53 chances over the weekend.

Blake Ramsey leads the Central Division-leading Capitals with 16 goals and 23 assists while teammate Jordan Reese (16, 22) is another scoring threat. The two of them combined for

three goals against the Metros during 7-3 and 4-1 wins.

"They're a solid team with a lot of seniors and juniors," said LeGree, whose 29-man roster includes 11 juniors and nine sophomores.

"A lot of the goals they scored were on our mistakes. I think if we play a solid first period, we have nothing to lose. If we put pressure on them and play the game I want us to play, we can keep the score tight and if we go into the last period ahead, who knows how (the Capitals) will react."