

LeGree likes Metros chances going into MHSHL Tournament

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SIoux CITY — Could this be the year?

Wins in five of their last six games pushed the Sioux City Metros to the fourth seed in the Midwest High School Hockey League Tournament, which begins Friday at Ames/ISU Ice Arena.



Tan. Frerichs

It's the Metros' highest seed in Dave LeGree's three years as head coach. He feels that any of the top six seeds have a chance to win the tournament, including his 19-7-2 squad which faces the No. 5 Des Moines Oak Leafs (17-8-3) at noon.

LeGree likes his team's chances partially because of the top line, which includes three of the MHSHL's top six scorers. Center Tanner Frerichs (26 goals, 39 assists) ranked second in the league with 65 points. Right wing James Page was fifth with 54 points (27, 27) and left wing Drake Beller (21, 26) was sixth with 47 points.

"That line scares a lot of teams because of the way they penetrate in the offensive zone and the way they can dominate," said LeGree, who has two other quality lines, including the trio of left wing Sam Chadwick (5, 2), center Connor Sand (4, 3) and right

wing Chase Lewison (13, 14).

Then there's the checking line of, from left to right, Reese McDonald (1 goal), Taylor Frerichs (1 goal) and Nick Novak (5 assists).

"That checking line, they shut the other team down," said LeGree. "We don't worry about them getting a point. If they do, that's a bonus. They understand that's what they're supposed to do.

"The experience they have is big time. They're older, more mature. There's more confidence. I've seen them grow into young men. When I first started coaching them, they were freshmen and sophomores. Now, they're juniors and seniors. It's everyone for one cause. I'm proud of what they've done."

A year ago, the Metros entered as the sixth seed, but surprised No. 3 Dubuque 3-2 in the first round and ended in third place.

Several of these athletes played for that team, such as defensemen Jarret Heyl (6, 14), Logan Visser (6, 11) and Grant Newman (3, 9). Christen Peterson (1, 4) and Alec Nieman (1, 4) add to the blue line depth while LeGree likes the versatility of Taylor Frerichs and Walter Werden (1, 7) who can play both forward and defenseman.

Blake Beller (12-6, 2.31 goals-against average) will get the goaltender start in the third meeting of the season against the Oak Leafs.

"He makes the stops that need to be made in a game," said LeG-

ree. "There was a game we won two weeks ago, 3-1 over Lincoln where the puck wasn't going in the net and we should have beat them 10-1 because we had our chances. Blake played solid as a stone. You need to have a goaltender that makes stops when other teams have chances and it's a matter of time before the puck falls in the net for us."

Jacob Chau leads the Oak Leafs with 15 goals and 17 assists. None of his teammates have double-digit goal totals, though defenseman Tyler French has seven goals and 16 assists.

Sioux City's 9-0 start to the season included a 3-2 shootout win over the Oak Leafs on Dec. 3. Des Moines avenged the loss with a 3-0 win the next day of the weekend series.

The Des Moines Capitals (25-1-2), paced by league-leading scorer Joe Kruger (45 goals, 51 assists) are the top seed. Still, LeGree feels there's better balance in the MHSHL with each team he said, possessing two strong lines and quality goaltending.

"It's been a long time since we've won a championship," said LeGree, aware of the program's six MHSHL Tournament titles, the most recent coming in 2003.

"This year, we have a shot. I'm not saying it's going to happen, but we have a legitimate shot to bring a title back home. I hope we get all the bounces and all the breaks."