

METROS HOCKEY

New faces have big goals for Metros

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SIOUX CITY — Gone is the scoring of Tanner Frerichs and the defenseman duo of Logan Visser and Jarret Heyl.

Still, fourth-year Sioux City Metros Coach Dave LeGree chooses to look at the positives of a Midwest High School Hockey League season which begins Saturday. Depth is the early strength of a squad which will host the Des Moines Capitals both Saturday and Sunday at the IBP Ice Center.

Scoring could come from three lines, including the solid top line that returns right wing James Page



Newman



Page

(27 goals, 27 assists) and left wing Drake Beller (21, 26). Grant Newman (3, 9), Walter Werden (1, 7) and Max Beller (1, 2) form a solid defenseman trio which offers others who will also see time in the blue line.

"We're excited. We have a bunch of new players moving up who we are really excited about," said LeGree, whose 19-7-2 team of last season fell 2-1 in the championship game of the MHSHL Tournament to Waterloo.

"We haven't had a group like that since I've come in. We will have depth this year. The young kids coming up know what they're coming in to. We have one of the best coaching staff with Dale Frerichs and Jesse Monnell. They care about the program."

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Metros

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Page serves as the captain for a program that has steadily risen in LeGree's three seasons, moving from sixth at the 2015 MHSHL Tournament to fourth a year later and then the runner-up finish. He has provided 46 goals and 59 assists in those three seasons.

Drake Beller and forward Connor Sand (4, 3) are alternate captains along with

Newman, who had a productive off-season. Newman joined Page and Drake Beller (along with Tanner Frerichs) at the America's Showcase in late April at Pittsburgh, Pa., then Newman joined for Team Midwest, a group of MHSHL all-stars led by Omaha Jr. Lancers Coach Nick Harrahill, a squad that competed against AAA-level teams from Minnesota last month.



D. Beller



Sand

"Grant and Walter have been with me since pee-wees," said LeGree. "They've watched us go from making state to getting fourth to almost winning. This year, they'd like to make the completion and finish it off. They're solid, steady defensemen who have good puck control. They're big, but not overly big, yet they are solid."

You can tell they're seniors. They're more mature. They've learned along the way."

Alec Nieman (1, 4) will get more playing time in the blue line. Among the newcomers who excite LeGree is freshman defenseman Ethan Burgo, who the fourth-year coach said held his own as the Metros split four games at last weekend's MHSHL Showcase in Omaha.

"He's steady," said LeGree. "He understands his position and skates well. He's a heads-up player. He knows when he is being forced and he knows when he needs to move the puck and go with it."

Kolton and Tyler Ownby are the lead candidates to center the line that features Page and Drake Beller. Sand could line up with Chase Lewison (13, 14) and Reece McDonald, who had seven goals and six assists for the Metros' 12-14-2 junior varsity.

Yet another line is in the mix, where Ownby could be paired up with Taylor Frerichs (11, 9 [IV]) and Easten Ranford. Cale Bricker (2, 5 [IV]) adds depth as a forward.

"You need two top lines to be able to score," said LeGree. "Your top line puts the puck in the net, but this year there could be two even lines. One line puts it in the net and the other holds them off the scoreboard."

Blake Beller returns as goaltender after posting a 12-6 record and a 2.31 goals-against-average. Beller was the starter between the pipes from December until the remainder of the season for a team that allowed 68 goals which ranked third in the league.

"He was a sophomore who did a great job at state," said LeGree. "He was one of the reasons we got there. He was solid, steady and didn't panic."

We'll be depending on him quite a bit. He'll do well."

Will Stokes will be the Metros' top [IV] goalie, but will also back up Beller as well.