

Metros hope for competitive season

JUSTIN RUST
jrust@siouxcityjournal.com

SIoux CITY — The Sioux City Metros high school hockey team has put together a recent string of success.



Frerichs



Bricker

Three years ago, the Metros finished in the top four in the standings and finished the end of the season tournament as the runner-up.

The next season, the Metros were the top team in the standings and went on to win the postseason tournament.

The Metros followed the championship

run with a second-place finish last season. The Metros lost in the semifinals but bounced back to finish in third place in the postseason tournament.

Metros coach Jesse Monell hopes to continue the recent Midwest High School Hockey League going this season.

"We have a real good group of kids back but at the same time, we have some spots we are still competing for," Monell said. "We are very talented but not as deep as we have been in the past. We are hoping to stay injury-free and stay healthy we can still have a pretty competitive year."

The Metros have plenty of scoring back from last season. Even though Reece McDonald graduated (second on the team with 41 points), the Metros return four of its five top-scoring forwards from last season.

Senior Taylor Frerichs leads that group after he led the team with 22 goals and 51 points last season.

"Taylor is a guy that livens up the locker room and shows his presence on the ice," Monell said. "I've had the opportunity to coach him since he was seven and I've seen him grow into a competitive young man. He has come a long way since he started."

Metros

From B1

Senior Cale Bricker had 36 points for the Metros last season and senior Smith Archer and junior Tyler Ownby followed with 34 and 33 points, respectively. Senior Easton Ransford added 27 points on 20 assists last season and Dayson Tucker had 12 points. Junior Cade Hesse is working in as the team's seventh forward.

Defensively, the Metros lost its starting goalkeeper and its top two defensemen — Max Beller and Alec Nieman. However, Monell still thinks the team's play on defense will be its strength this season.

Senior Colby Nieman, Alec's brother, and junior Ethan Burge will lead the group with junior Kai Barner seeing key minutes.

"The Niemans are extremely tough kids and will do anything asked of them. Colby is one of my assistant captains and I can trust

him in any moment," Monell said. "Ethan is another kid that is very skilled along with Kai."

Ownby will also rotate from forward to defenseman this season. It will be a major switch for Ownby but Monell said he is accepting the new role.

"He's a forward at heart. I told him during big games, he is going to have to play on the blue line even though he is a very skilled forward," Monell said. "We will let him do a bit of both. Those four are so skilled and they just do whatever is asked of them."

The Metros don't have a goalkeeper back with a single minute of varsity experience because Blake Beller played at 1,643 minutes in net last season. He had a 1.30 goals against average and a .934 saves percentage.

Monell knew who his top goalie would be well before the season started, though, as senior Colin Patrick will be in between the pipes.

"He's very good and is a quiet

leader. He's been patiently waiting," Monell said. "He was plenty good last year but we had Blake. We are looking forward to seeing Colin out there. He deserves it and is ready for the moment. Our whole team is going to play extremely hard in front of him."

The Metros will be thrown to the fire right away to open the season on the road at Cedar Rapids on Saturday and Sunday, which lost to Waterloo for the league title last season.

Monell thinks Cedar Rapids will be a top-three team in the league again this season.

"We are very excited to get the year started and we wanted to take it one day at a time," Monell said. "I want to make sure these seniors enjoy this year. Every year it's a new year and you have to get kids focused on who we are and what our identity is as a team."

"We have a very good group of kids that appreciate the opportunity to play for their home team. There's some potential for them."