

Prep gridders spark Mason City's attack

By Steve Allspach

Journal sports writer

Sights and sounds, spiced with some notes and gloats, from the 11th annual Iowa High School Hockey State Tournament that invaded Sioux City Auditorium for the first time Friday:

One of the most imposing sights during the first day of competition was Sioux City's Mike Scott, a 6-foot-5, 260-pound defenseman roaring down the ice.

In a 1-0 victory over West Des Moines Valley-Dowling, Scott was whistled for a boarding penalty and one wag commented that the penalty was assessed for the excessive noise created by Scott hitting the boards, rather than for the unnecessary force created by the hit.

"After all, that guy is about 80 to 100 pounds heavier than most of the players in the tournament," said the observer.

■ If you believe heights and weights of the players, then Scott, a senior who also played football at East High, is *only* 155 pounds heavier than Waterloo Columbus forward Cory Simon, a 5-foot freshman listed in the program as weighing 105 pounds.

Simon, though, put out the "Don't Tread on Me" sign Friday when he rifled home a goal in Columbus' 9-3 victory over Urbandale. He was accorded the loudest ovation of the opening-day competition.

■ Mason City, the regular-season IHSFL champion, is led by two high-scoring forwards who were also difficult to contain during the prep football season last fall.

Troy Thelen, a 6-1, 175-pound senior and Mohawk hockey captain, actually attends Newman High School in Mason City. Last fall, Troy rushed for over 1,000 yards for the Newman football team.

Thelen went into a Friday night game with Ames with 17 goals and 19 assists in 18 games this season.

Chris Steward, a 6-foot-1, 190-pounder with 17 goals and 14 assists entering the tournament Friday, also rushed for over 1,000 yards last fall for the Mason City High School football team.

■ Tournament officials brought off the first day of competition without a major hitch in their rookie campaign at hosting a state tournament.

The two middle games of the open-

State hockey

ing session actually started a few minutes before the scheduled faceoffs.

However, tourney officials are hoping attendance in the tournament will increase today and Sunday.

Approximately 400 fans attended the game matching Sioux City and West Des Moines Valley-Dowling Friday night, but the afternoon attendance was significantly smaller.

■ College and United States Hockey League coaches attending the opening day games targeted Waterloo Columbus team captain and goalie Pat Lanigan, Waterloo Public forward Marc Gillard and Waterloo Columbus' Brian Wehr among the vanguard of Iowa preps possessing potential to move to a higher competition level.

Both Gillard and Wehr, the league's premier centermen, had three-goal hat tricks in opening victories.

The two meet today in the semifinals at 1 p.m. Gillard now has 31 goals and 61 points, while Wehr has 26 points and 52 points.

■ Sioux City Coach Jim Coyle praised his players after the Metros delighted their followers with the 1-0 win over Valley-Dowling.

"I was so tickled for our kids. Winning the first game was vitally important," said the first-year Metros coach, who wore a lucky University of Michigan shirt with a big blue block 'M' on the collar.

"It stands for the Metros, too," mused Coyle, a former University of Michigan hockey letterman.

Coyle promised two great semifinal games slated for today.

"You're going to see the best centers (Gillard and Wehr) in one game and the league champion against the league's best defensive team in the other," said Coyle.

Sioux City has allowed the fewest goals in the league, 46, in 18 regular-season games and a playoff win.

■ Wade Weltha, the captain of the Ames team, is a cousin of Paul Weltha, the Iowa state prep Class 3A heavyweight wrestling champion the past two years and a 6-foot-4, 240-pound all-state football tackle.

Wade Weltha is a 6-1, 190-pound forward for the Little Cyclone skaters.