



Members of Sioux City Metros hockey team celebrate after scoring in recent game. (Staff photo by Gary Anderson)

Metro icers skate along unbeaten in league play

By Terry Hersom
Journal sports editor

Moms, dads, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents.

And, oh yes, a few assorted friends.

The crowds are sparse, but the Sioux City Metros, the high school hockey team representing all of metro Sioux City, is starting to earn a few unrelated, unattached fans.

Rightfully so. More than halfway through their 26-game Iowa High School Hockey League schedule, the Metros are undefeated, sporting a league record of 13-0-1.

"I think the only time a team in this league was undefeated was Valley-Dowling (of West Des Moines), two years ago," said third-year Metros Coach Dave Davies.

"Of course, we've got a long way to go and, then, the only games that really count will be the state tournament," said Davies.

Credit for the Metros success can be doled out in many different directions.

It goes to the parents, who've answered the alarm clocks for pre-dawn practices when many of these teen-agers were still learning to skate, much less score goals.

It goes to the athletes, as well, who represent quite a talented collection of multi-sport performers.

And, now, taking them the rest of the way, it goes also to a pair of Toronto natives who both adopted Sioux City as their home after highly successful careers with the Sioux City Musketeers, playing back when the Muskies were a semi-pro operation.

Davies, a Musketeer mainstay for five seasons, from 1974-75 through 1978-79, shares the coaching reigns with former teammate Dave LeGree, an all-star goalie during the final three years of Davies' career here.

Longtime Musketeer fans could scarcely have picked two more meaningful figures to help share their expertise with local youngsters.

On the same bench, after all, the Metros have the tutelage of the Musketeers' all-time scoring leader (Davies) and the franchise's all-time winningest goalie (LeGree).

"It's worked out really well because I'll tell the kids one thing, then LeGree comes in and tells them the very same thing, but from a different point of view," said Davies. "Pretty soon, they're thinking, 'Hey, they're both saying the same thing, they must be right.'"

The Metros haven't simply climbed to the top of the 10-team IHSHL, which includes two teams from

Omaha and one from St. Joseph, Mo.

Rather, they've stormed to the forefront with a series of overwhelming wins, outpointing their rivals in 14 league games by a whopping 118 goals to 27, an average of 8.47 goals for the opponents' 1.93 per game.

"These kids have played together since they were 6 or 7 years old," said Davies. "The problem in the past has always been losing a lot of good athletes to other sports when the kids turn 13 or 14 or 15."

"There's usually pressure to play football or basketball or wrestling. Hockey's a long season. It starts in October and ends in March. Some of these other sports end up taking precedence."

Basketball and wrestling, conflicting winter sports, are out of the question, of course. However, many of the Metros still managed to play football last fall.

T.J. Reinsch and Brian Augustine, a pair of seniors who are two of the Metros' top performers, were both key members of Heelan's Sioux Interstate Conference football champions last fall.

Reinsch, a defensive tackle in football, has scored 19 goals, sharing team honors with Chris Sorum,

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Davies selected as coach for West in All-Star Game

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another senior, hailing from South Sioux City.

Sorum, adding 18 assists, has a team-high 37 points, while Reinsch ranks second with 32.

Close behind them is Dan Davies, son of the coach, whose 17 goals trail only the co-leaders and whose 31 points rank third on the team. As only a sophomore at Heelan last fall, Davies served as the Crusaders' varsity punter.

Augustine, meantime, was a two-year regular on the Heelan offensive line.

Similarly, he's been one of the hockey team's unsung heroes, as well, serving as a defenseman.

Another carryover from the grid sport is Jesse Basarich, a junior from North who had an injury abbreviated football season but is regarded as a highly promising wide receiver. Basarich trades off as the Metros goalie with senior Jeff Brogan, also from North.

Three of the four Sioux City high schools, all but West, account for 12 of the Metros' 15 varsity players, while South Sioux contributes Sorum along with junior forward Ryan Miller. A fifth high school represented on the roster is Sergeant Bluff-Luton, with senior forward Matt Lester.

Two more Heelan students, senior Jason Osbahr and junior Jade Pospeshil, bring their schools' ranks to five, or the most from any single

school.

Tracy Brunken, a senior, joins sophomores Jesse Monell and Landon Blatchford to represent East, while sophomore Corey Roberts and junior Guy Wayman bring North's number to four, counting the goalies.

The Metros have unloaded 10 or more goals five different times, blasting a first-year Omaha Junior Lancers squad 17-1 and 16-1 in two meetings. The team has thumped Urbandale 11-0 and 11-2 while shellacking Ames 10-0 in another one-sided outing.

The league's new Missouri entry, St. Joseph, put the flyspeck on the Metros record, forging a 4-4 tie in a Dec. 2 encounter. The Sioux City skaters had defeated St. Joseph 9-1 one night earlier and reaffirmed that triumph with a 5-1 victory in a third meeting last Saturday.

Valley-Dowling looms as the strongest challenger in the league's West Division and the Metros have prevailed 7-4 and 3-2 in the first two of four scheduled meetings.

Upcoming, though, are two straight weekend road trips involving three games each and including the regular season's two showdowns with Dubuque, the East Division leader.

The Metros visit the Omaha Gladiators, the stronger of Omaha's two teams, for a Friday night contest, then play Saturday at Ames and Sunday at Valley-Dowling.

The following weekend, they play Friday night at Waterloo, then visit Dubuque on Saturday and Sunday.

The 26-game IHSHL schedule, expanded with the addition of St. Joseph and the new Omaha entry, is the most ambitious since the league was started.

Nonetheless, Davies and LeGree squeezed in three non-league games at a recent tournament in West Fargo, N.D., where the Metros beat a Canadian team and a Minnesota high school squad before losing in the title game to Red Lake Falls, Minn.

Davies is hopeful the success of this year's team will provide impetus for the high school program, which was initiated in 1977-78.

Walt Johnson (another ex-Musketeers star) is working with the Squirts (10-12), who'll have an entry in this weekend's Silver Stick Tournament at Port Huron, Mich.

"Walt's got some very good hockey players down there," said Davies. "And if we're lucky enough to go through the season with a successful season and possibly win the state tournament, I assume that will draw some interest from some of those younger kids."

Davies, who guided the Metros to a state runner-up showing, their highest finish ever, in last year's state tournament, has been selected to coach the West Division team in next Tuesday's IHSHL All-Star Game at Des Moines.

As reported earlier this week, the West squad will include six players from the Metros — Brogan, the goalie, along with Augustine, the defenseman, and forwards Reinsch, Sorum, Brunken and Dan Davies.