

Metros start title defense against Omaha icers Sunday

By Barry Poe

Journal sports writer

After a glorious first season, Sioux City Metros hockey Coach Jim Peck wonders what he can do for an encore.

Peck, who guided the Metros to the Iowa High School Hockey League regular-season and state tournament championships in his rookie season at the helm, returns plenty of experience from that 24-6 club.

His main concern, however, is generating some scoring power.

"We lost 60 percent of our scoring in Mikael Sundelin and Sami Heino," said Peck, whose 1994-95 club debuts on Sunday. "Not only were those two guys good scorers,

but they were also good hockey players."

The Metros entertain the Omaha Gladiators at 3 p.m. at the Sioux City Auditorium in a rematch of last year's tournament championship game. The varsity game follows a 1 p.m. junior varsity contest.

Sioux City has appeared in each of the last five state championship games, winning three times. Dave Davies piloted the Metros to state crowns in 1991 and '92 and runner-up finishes in '88, '90 and '93 before handing over the reins to Peck, his able assistant.

Sundelin, from Sweden, scored 24 goals and 27 assists, while Heino, from Finland, had 22 goals and 29 assists. The two exchange students shared the team lead with 51 points.

To replace Sundelin and Heino,

Peck will call upon Swedish native Johan Jigenstadt, who attends North High School, and Ari Helenius of Finland, who attends West High School.

"They're not at the level of Sundelin and Heino yet," said Peck. "They haven't quite gotten used to playing over here yet."

But rest assured, the two foreign players will adapt and become potent scorers, forming a strong front line with holdovers Nate Kelly (29 points), Mark Doren (34 points) and Mike Stoneburg (30 points).

Peck expects goaltending to be his team's strong suit, with Dirk Worner and Matt Sewalson returning in net. Worner, a sophomore from North, posted a 12-2 record, allowing 31 goals and making 242 saves.

Sewalson, a senior from East, had a 5-4 mark with 46 goals against and 212 saves.

"Goaltending is the most important part of the game and we're hoping they have the same attitude as last year," said Peck. "Goaltending got us through the first half, then our scoring came together and we had a pretty good season."

Worner and Sewalson will split time early, with the hottest tender earning full-time starting duty.

The Metros also bring back veteran defensemen Seth Schramm, Chris Hedquist, Josh Strong, T.J. Juon and Garret Heyns. Juon, a senior from North who played some forward, was named to last year's all-state squad.

Others expected to play key roles are wingers Eric Olson, Bobby

Jaynes, Sam Kincaid and Mark Munger, along with sophomore center Walt Johnson. Kincaid attends high school in Homer, Neb., while Johnson is the son of Sioux City Musketeer Hall of Famer Walt Johnson.

"The nice thing is, we've got a lot of kids back," said Peck, who has been conducting late-night practices at the auditorium. "And they're used to tournament play, so they know how to win."

Sioux City soundly defeated the Gladiators, 8-1, in last year's state championship game.

After today's opener, the Metros hit the road for three straight games, playing at West Des Moines Valley/Dowling next Saturday and Sunday and at Omaha on Dec. 2. The

next home dates are Dec. 3-4 against Mason City.

Clay Wiffen and Jeff Gray will assist Peck with the varsity, while Tracy Brunken and Burke Lane are the junior varsity coaches.

Metros Roster

Seniors: Mark Bukovich, Lawton-Bronson, 6-0, 185; Zac Boland, East, 6-1, 200; Seth Schramm, East, 6-0, 185; Davey Meyers, South Sioux City, 5-7, 115; Chris Hedquist, South Sioux City, 5-8, 140; Mark Doren, West, 5-9, 165; Josh Strong, Dakota Valley, 5-10, 165; Aaron Olson, North, 6-0, 190; Nate Kelly, East, 5-9, 155; Nate Loe, North, 5-9, 155; Johan Jigenstadt, North, 5-10, 160; Andrew Dooley, North, 5-9, 155; Mike Carson, East, 6-0, 190; Ari Helenius, West, 5-9, 165; T.J. Juon, North, 5-9, 190; Matt Sewalson, East, 5-8, 165; Garret Heyns, North, 5-9, 170; Robert Jaynes, North, 5-11, 160; Nick Loe, North, 5-9, 155; Chris Galinsky, North, 6-0, 215.

Juniors: Jarrad Berg, Akron-Westfield, 5-11, 170; Austin Bass, South Sioux City, 5-10, 150; Mike Stoneburg, North, 5-9, 170; J.J. Arthur, Heelan, 5-6, 160; Sam Kincaid, Homer, Neb., 5-9, 175; Jason Jeffords, 5-10, 145.

Sophomores: Ryan Goss, Heelan, 5-8, 125; Josh Lundahl, Heelan, 5-9, 145; Matt Andrews, South Sioux City, 5-9, 140; Mark Munger, North, 5-9, 135; Walt Johnson, North, 5-7, 140; Jason Augustine, Heelan, 5-10, 135; Brett Frette, East, 5-7, 180; Damon Keith, North, 5-8, 155; Dirk Worner, North, 6-4, 190.