

Warriors host defending champs to open prep hockey season

WATERLOO

Waterloo's Warriors open the 1995-96 Iowa High School Hockey League season Saturday night at Young Arena against the defending regular-season and tournament champion Omaha Jr. Lancers.

Omaha went 27-0 last year and returns a strong nucleus from that team.

"It'll be a tough opener," says Waterloo head coach Mike Brown, whose team opens the season with six consecutive home games.

The Warriors are working with 11 letterwinners, although top returning scorer Jason Boller has a shoulder injury and won't play Saturday.

Other veterans include defensemen Dave Hedeman and Neal Ticknor, who made the league all-star team last season, and goaltender Steve Cak, who earned honorable mention all-state recognition. Chad Rose may join the defensive corps this year after

playing forward the last couple of seasons.

Up front, the Warriors will rely on letterwinners Ben Brown, Jim Dwyer, Jason Verbraken, Travis Jones, Luke McCarty, Ben Kutz and Boller, when he returns.

Waterloo took part in the league's annual preseason jamboree last weekend in Des Moines and went 0-2-1. The Warriors lost to Mason City, 5-1, and to the Omaha Gladiators, 3-1, before tying Sioux City, 1-1.

The mini-tournament didn't tell Brown much about his team.

"A lot of the teams there had already played a number of games before the jamboree," he explains. "We hadn't. It used to be that you could get a pretty good feel for what was going on around the league at the jamboree. Most of those other teams already had a feel for it.

"That's something we'll have to look toward down the road, getting a few earlier games in."