

# Warriors play K.C. for right to face No. 1 Mason City

DES MOINES—The Waterloo Warriors open play in the Iowa High School Hockey League Tournament Friday at 10:30 a.m. against 3-23 Kansas City.

The tournament, to be held in Des Moines, will run through Sunday.

The winner of that first-round game will face top-seeded Mason City (22-3-1) at 8:30 p.m. Saturday. It would be a challenge that the Warriors won't back down from, said head coach Mike Brown.

"It's not good when you have to play the No. 1 seed," said Brown.

"We're definitely playing better hockey now, ever since mid-season. We'll just make them have to beat us. We'll play hard and leave it out there on the ice."

Waterloo is 5-21 in the league and has split a pair of games with Kansas City. The Warriors took the first meeting, 6-5, before dropping the second, 3-2.

In the other "pigtail" opener Friday, St. Joseph (2-24) meets Ames (10-16).

First-round games will send sixth-seeded Dubuque (13-12-1) against No. 3 Omaha Gladiators (19-7) and No. 5 Sioux City (16-10) against No. 4 Des Moines (17-8). The second-seeded Omaha Junior Lancers (21-4) await the winner of St. Joseph/Ames.

Ben Brown leads the Warriors in goals (10) and assists (15). Jason Verbraken is second on the team with seven goals, while Jim Dwyer has 14 assists.

Goaltender Steve Cak, who's figured into all of the Warriors' decisions, currently owns a save percentage of .852. He's averaging 28 per game and has allowed 127 goals for the season.