

FROM  
**SILVER**  
TO  
**GOLD**



**TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF YOUTH HOCKEY AND COUNTING**



Note for the photo below:

The player in front, 5th from the left is Jay Bloomfield. He and Tony Gregor were the only players to go through the first 10 years of the hockey program. Jay was the first Mohawk to be named First Team All-State in high school. He was also the first player to move on and play with the North Iowa Huskies.

Cover by Jim Zach

## From Silver to Gold. What's it Mean?

As with so many things in life, it's hard to know where you're going, if you don't know where you've been. And so, as we celebrate the silver anniversary of Mason City Youth Hockey, and look to the next 25 years and our golden anniversary, we're examining our "roots". That's the purpose of this special 25th Anniversary newspaper: To help us all better understand how Youth Hockey got to where it is today.

### Tradition

When Youth Hockey was founded so innocently on that outdoor rink behind the Sears store 25 years ago, we lacked tradition, history and actual hockey experience. Few players, parents or coaches had ever been on hockey skates or knew the rules. Now, those kids from the 70's are the hockey dads and moms of the 90's. Their kids are now in the program. And there's a better overall understanding and appreciation for hockey than ever before. We have a "tradition" of attracting exceptional people...whole families who love the game of hockey.

### People

As with so many volunteer organizations, how soon we tend to forget the people who helped make a difference. As you look through this newspaper, you may recognize several names and faces. They represent only the tip of the iceberg of those who have willingly given of their time and talents.

### Apologies

Summarizing 25 years into 12 pages isn't an easy task. Thanks to the 28 boxes of hockey memories collected by Ron and Dolly Hanna since Youth Hockey began, and by talking with dozens of hockey parents, we were able to piece together the history of the association. But we hope you'll forgive us: We know we've unintentionally left out

names, or our chronology may be off on some happenings. But, 25 years is a lot to remember and we apologize for any inaccuracies.

### Thanks

We wish we could name every person—every sponsor—every player—and every parent, who has had an impact on Youth Hockey. We simply want you to know, whomever you are, that whatever your role, it's been appreciated. Also, thanks to the dozens of people who gave of their time and energies to make this special newspaper possible.

Sincerely,  
Jim Paape  
Editor

## Mason City Youth Hockey: Its purpose and goals

The Mason City Youth Hockey Association (MCYHA) endeavors to provide a facility and the opportunity for the youth of Mason City and surrounding area to participate in:

- 1) learning the skills necessary to play hockey;
- 2) to participate in a physical activity;
- 3) to teach sportsmanship;
- 4) to promote the development of each player's hockey skills to the fullest potential.

The goal of the Youth Hockey Program is to provide an opportunity for group and individual enjoyment of the game and to provide competitive recreation in the form of organized play of hockey.



1972-73

## Early Teams of MCYHA

### 1972-1973 Elks Trophy Team

Jay Bloomfield, Danny Christeson, David Garrett, Joseph Gebel, Mike Krittenbrink, Bill Lange, David Mariner, Paul Michelson, James Palmer, Eric Schmitt, Kenneth Song, Bruce Stephan, Dan Tubridy, Brian Waller, Coach: Paul Tubridy

## Early Teams of MCYHA

### 1973-1974 Pepsi-Cola Midget House Champs

First Row(l to r): ?, ?, Bill Maginnis, Sean Fitzgerald, Fred Anderson

Back Row: Coach Jerry Maginnis, Jim Johann, ? Cameron, Randy Kotz, Ken Clark

(Photo Taken Behind Sears)



## A Historical Time Line of Mason City Youth Hockey

The Mason City Youth Hockey Association was founded in the fall of 1972 thanks to the tireless efforts of a small group of people who wanted area kids to enjoy hockey. The association will be forever grateful to the Mason City Exchange Club, headed at that time by Dana Peck, president, and Ted Young, vice-president. The organization helped launch youth hockey by providing the financial and physical support the fledgling organization sorely needed in its infancy.

Following is a time line of the association's long and storied history, summarized by season:

### 1972-73

- \*Youth Hockey League is organized Fall, 1972
- \*Rink is built by Mason City Exchange Club behind the Sears Department Store.
- \*Cost of materials for rink is \$1,390.
- \*Don Elder donates single-car garage for warming house in December.
- \*Vandals burn down warming house a few days later.

### 1973-74

- \*First league youth hockey game played Jan. 15. Scot Huff scores four goals as First National Bank beats VFW 8-0.
- \* A second small rink is built behind Hoover School, in Fall 1973.
- \*Bob Ransom donates a warming house at Hoover.

### 1974-76

- \*Sears rink is moved to Hoover School.
- \*Dr. Art McMahon of Mason City and Dave Tyler of Waterloo, arrange for first hockey team to compete in another town. A Squirts team, coached by Ron Hanna, travels to Waterloo.

### 1976-77

- \*Mason City Youth Hockey Association is incorporated.
- \*A second large rink is added at Hoover and a third smaller rink is used for practice.
- \*Brian Millard, age 10, sells 206 boxes of candy to raise money for youth hockey. Wins bicycle.
- \*Board begins planning for new indoor ice arena. Donations and pledges are sought.

### 1977-78

- \*Large warming house is donated by Dean Huff and is put between the two big rinks. (It's still there).
- \*\$300,000 in cash and pledges is raised for multi-purpose building to be constructed at fairgrounds. It includes ice rink.
- \*Blueprints are finalized for new arena.
- \*Construction is scheduled for early 1978.
- \*County Board of Supervisors reject idea of ice rink in proposed multi-purpose building. (Building is constructed as All-Seasons Building at fairgrounds).
- \*Pledge money for building is returned to financial supporters.
- \*First high school team plays in Division II league.

### 1978-79

- \*Many hockey supporters making pledges decline to take their money back. Instead they encourage association to raise more funds for an indoor arena.
- \* After much controversy across the entire state, Mohawk Pat Denny becomes first female to play in Iowa High School Hockey league.
- \*High school wins last Division II title. League merges into one division.

### 1979-80

- \*Construction of a skating pavilion at McNider Woods complex is considered.
- \*Due to warm weather, high school team practices in Austin and Albert Lea during much of season. They are only team in league without indoor ice facility. Their "home ice" for games is Riverside Arena in Austin.
- \*Calvin Martin, figure skater and friend of youth hockey, passes away. He sharpened hundreds of kids' hockey skates.

### 1980-81

- \*Mason City high school is only team in league without indoor ice facility.
- \*Building sites for indoor arena are explored.
- \*Warm weather forces travel teams at all age levels to practice in Austin's Riverside arena. (Our thanks to arena manager Dave Rathke).
- \*Youth hockey players, Shane and Brenden Collins, die in an accident in summer of 1980.
- \*John Brandt is named 2nd team All-State in high school league.

## Original Founders of Mason City Youth Hockey

Following are the individuals who played a major role in starting Mason City Youth Hockey.:

Bob Anderson  
Gerry Maginnis  
Don Anderson  
Dr. Art McMahon  
Al Fitzgerald  
Carl Mikkelsen  
Ron Hanna  
Ron Peterson  
Keith Lindberg  
Phil Stephan  
Larry Lower  
Paul Tubridy

**1981-82**

\*Dr. Art McMahon and Ron Hanna meet with Fair Board and Kinney Lindstrom Foundation regarding a recreational arena at fairgrounds.

\*Pee Wee travel team is invited to play in international tournament in Austin. They play against chubby little kid from Canada named Brett Hull. (Good slap shot, needs work ethic).

\*Jay Bloomfield and John Brandt are first Mohawks to be named First team All-State in high school league.

\*Arena fund and pledge drive goes into full swing.

\*Blueprints for arena are finalized.

\*First annual Collins Tournament is cancelled due to warm weather.

**1982-83**

\*Estimated cost of arena is \$1.3 million.

\*With overwhelming support from the community, Mason City Youth Hockey Association raises \$600,000 for arena. Kinney-Lindstrom matches amount.

\*Arena construction contracts signed June, 1982. Work begins shortly after.

\*Kevin Jordison proposes USHL junior A hockey team for 1983-84 season.

\*"Longest road show is over", after seven years of planning. Arena opens February 5, 1983.

\*First game is played in arena February 5. Mason City Pee Wee travel team loses to Waterloo 7-0.

\*Later, on February 5, Waterloo defeats Mason City Mohawk High School varsity, 8-1. Jeff Kleven scores first arena goal, unassisted.

\*On Feb. 8, we host USHL Junior A All Star game. Hockey legend, John Mariucci among notables on hand.

\*On Feb. 11th, Mohawks gain first high school win, 4-1 vs. Waseca, in new arena. Arena is evacuated due to propane leak.

\*On March 3, we host our first Iowa High School Hockey League state tournament. It's nicknamed the "Mud Bowl". (Parking lot is sea of mud).

\*First Collins Memorial Tournament is held March 19-20, after being cancelled twice by warm weather.

\*Figure Skating Club holds its first indoor Ice Revue Show.

**1983-84**

\*North Iowa Huskies begin first year of operation. Kevin Jordison is head coach. Bob Motzko assists.

\*No games are cancelled due to weather! Everyone proclaims arena is beautiful.

\*Arena parking lot is sea of mud in spring. Parking is banned. It's a long walk to arena with hockey gear.

**1984-85**

\*Mason City Youth Hockey Association buys the North Iowa Huskies franchise.

\*Youth hockey board of directors is reorganized into current structure.

\*John Lloyd coaches first Mohawk team.

**1985-86**

\*Thanks to the Norris Fund and Kinney-Lindstrom foundation, new aluminum bleachers are added and improvements are made to the heating and sound system.

\*Figure skater Todd Price (10 years old) and Christen Beasley, perform at spring ice show.

\*Defenseman George Pappajohn is named to All-State high school hockey team.

\*Squirts win the Collins Tournament.

\*Defenseman Pat Cullen named "Huskie of the Week." He's now Huskies assistant coach.

\*Kevin Constantine, Huskies coach, resigns to take coaching position at prep school in Lake Placid, New York

**1986-87**

\*Canadian Ian Campbell arrives. His skills help us improve our referee program.

\*Five high school players are named All-State.

\*The battle with mud ends, as parking lot is paved.

\*Mohawk junior varsity team wins state hockey title.

\*Mohawk varsity team wins first-ever Division I State hockey title.

\*66 year-old Charley Nye of Fertile, skates at left-wing in old-timers league. He's our "Gordie Howe" of hockey and still refs Sunday nights.

What is the hardest shot to stop?

Generally speaking, the most difficult shot is low, a few inches off the ice, to the stick side. Some goaltenders overplay to the stick side, presenting a more inviting target on their glove side.

**1987 State High School Tournament****Champs Roster:** Ryan Bailey, Colby

Hanf, Jason Baskerville, Mark Montag,

Chris Hasselman, Chris Cline, Pat

Donnelly, Dustin Duea, Andy Hubbard,

Mark Peterson, Matt Pete, Ben Hannan,

Dick Young, Bill Gillan, Mike

Hasapoplous, Jeremy Scheetz, Jeff

Curtis, Chris Steward, Troy Thelen,

Danny Nelson, Aaron Laaveg, Peter

Baillos, Brian Bahnsen, Tim Cowan,

Derrick Johnson, Peter Ackerman, Jon

Chamberlin, Tino Muniz, Todd Thoreson,

Chris Peterson, Tony Muniz, Mike

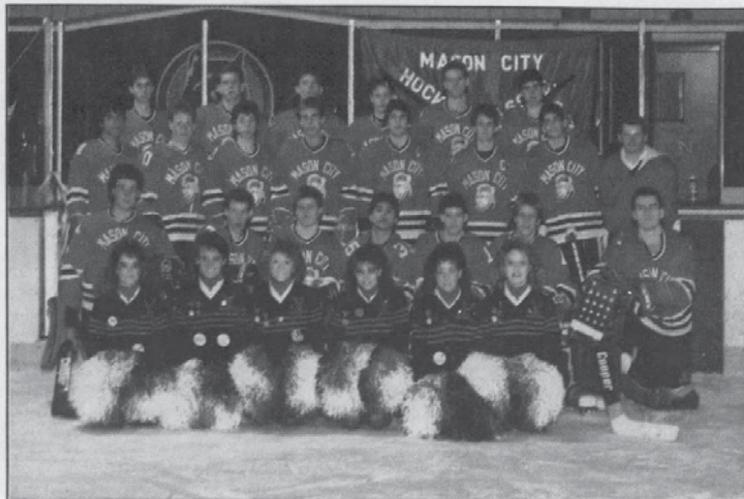
Despenas, Jeremy Chamberlin, Coaches:

John Lloyd, Mike Goar; Team Rep.: Al

Duea; Cheerleaders: Tracy Detra,

Melissa Hulsing, Kim Ditter, Tara

Swanson, Tiffany Lees, Didi Zahariades



# 25 Years of M C Y H A

## 1987-88

\*North Iowa Fair Board votes to award youth hockey two additional weeks of ice time from North Iowa Horsemen.  
\*We host state high school hockey tournament.

## 1988-89

\*Pee Wee travelers are Tri-State champs.  
\*USHL's North Iowa Huskies are national champions after remarkable playoff run.

## 1989-90

\*Squirt travel team wins Midwest Tournament championship.  
\*Figure skater, Ken Miller, at 60, wins four gold medals in national meet.  
\*Sarah Larson, 13, and Hunter Schurtz, 12, win figure skating medals at Braemar-McCandless Championships in Minneapolis.  
\*Mohawks' Chris Peterson is first Mason City player selected to play in "Chicago Showcase".

## 1990-91

\*Doug Grabinski named chairman of the board of the North Iowa Huskies.  
\*Former youth hockey player standout, Jeff Kleven, killed in motorcycle accident.

## 1991-92

\*Former Huskies coach, Kevin Constantine, hired as head coach of San Jose Sharks farm team, the Kansas City Blades.  
\*Pee Wee travel team wins the Midwest Tri-State Tournament. Finishes third in the U.S. Central Regional Finals.  
\*Mason City High School players Ethan Scheetz, Casey Holck and Kirk Thoreson score goals in High School All-Star game.  
\*High School Junior Varsity team wins state title.

## 1992-93

\*We host 1993 USHL All-Star game.  
\*We host 1993 High School All-Star game.  
\*We host 1993 Iowa High School State Hockey Tournament. Balking ice-making equipment delays games eight hours.  
\*High School Junior Varsity team wins league championship.  
\*High School players, Ethan Scheetz and Matt Weber, invited to "Chicago Showcase" games.

## 1993-94

\*Junior Varsity team wins state tournament title with 3-2 win over Sioux City. Bobby Ruehlow scores unassisted winning goal with 1:05 to play. Crowd goes bananas.  
\*Varsity high school team invited to play at Target Center in Minneapolis.  
\*MCYHA sells Huskies to Wm. "Butch" Johnson of Hayward, WI.  
\*Russian dynamo team plays Huskies at arena.  
\*Pee Wee travel team wins Midwest Tri-State Tournament. They advance to Regional tournament in Ames and finish second.  
\*Former Huskies coach, Kevin Constantine, named head coach of San Jose Sharks.

## 1994-95

\*Mikko Laukka, Mike Anderson, Andy Blaisdell and John Kleven named to high school All-State team.  
\*Mason City figure skater, Todd Price, named to U.S.

International Figure Skating Team.

\*Super Mites finish 3-0-1 in annual Ames Mites Jamboree.  
\*Former Huskies player, Jacques Joubert, captains Boston University to NCAA title.

## 1995-96

\*Arena gets \$60,000 general refurbishing. Includes new front entry. Back rests on center seats. New color scheme.

## 1996-97

\*High school team is "young, but talented", says coach John Lloyd.  
\*Super Mites (ages 8 & 9) win Midwest title.  
\*Huskies set team record for most wins in season.  
\*Sixth-rated Mohawk high school team wins state title with dramatic 3-2 win over 24-1-1 Omaha Lancers.  
\*Squirt house team, Play It Again, finishes first in House League.  
\*Goalie Isaac Sorensen is first Mohawk player to be most valuable player in State High School Tournament.

## Youth Hockey Presidents: 25 Years of Leadership and Vision:

Since youth hockey was founded 25 years ago, it has been blessed with the talents, energy and leadership of individuals who helped shape Mason City Youth Hockey into what it is today. We'd like to honor the presidents of youth hockey since the organization's inception in 1972, by listing their names and the years they served.

1972-73 Don Anderson & Carl Mikkelsen (founders)  
1973-74 Steve Jicka  
1974-75 Dick Blanchard  
1975-76 Phil Stephan  
1976-77 Mitch Morrison  
1977-78 Mitch Morrison  
1978-79 Mitch Morrison  
1979-80 Dr. Art McMahon  
1980-81 Dr. Art McMahon  
1981-82 Judy Duda  
1982-83 Ron Hanna  
1983-84 Ron Hanna  
1984-85 Ron Hanna  
1985-86 Roxie Espinosa  
1986-87 Jerry Bahnsen  
1987-88 Jerry Bahnsen  
1988-89 Dr. J.D. Thoreson  
1989-90 Dr. J.D. Thoreson  
1990-91 Dennis Fryar  
1991-92 Dennis Fryar  
1992-93 Dennis Fryar  
1993-94 Dennis Fryar  
1994-95 Bob Klocke  
1995-96 Bob Klocke  
1996-97 Bob Klocke  
1997-98 Bob Klocke

Which is more difficult for a goalie to stop, slap shot or a wrist shot?

There are many factors involved.

Generally speaking, however, the wrist shot takes the goalie more by surprise; the slap shot, while it is harder and faster, can frequently be timed better by the netminder.

## Mason City Youth Hockey Association: It's Impact on North Iowa

How thick is the ice?

The best ice for hockey is usually held at 16 degrees for the proper hardness and is approximately 3/4" thick. The thicker the sheet of ice becomes, the softer and "slower" it is. Commercial ice shows perform on "warmer," slower ice.

Just what is this non-profit organization all about that calls the North Iowa Recreational Arena "home" for six months each year? How did it come into being, how many youths participate and what is the economic impact on the area?

The story begins 25 years ago, in 1972, when Mason City Youth Hockey was formed by a group of parents interested in helping area youth learn the basic skills of hockey. Thanks to a big helping hand from the Mason City Exchange Club, which was led by Dana Peck, the dream came true. The Exchange Club's financial support helped the youth hockey organization build an outdoor rink just west of the Sears store. Materials for the rink cost \$1,390. A typical season in those early years ran from about early-January until late February—with luck. Weather was always a factor.

In those initial years, Dann May and Joe Lucido of the Mason City Parks Department, and Bob Dvorsky of the Rec Department, also played a major role, by flooding the rink. Jack Knapp of the Park Commission lent assistance, too. Don Elder donated a one-car garage that served as a warming hut for the players and coaches. Heaters used for hog confinements were donated by Winnebago Industries.

Games were often played under brutally cold conditions one week and on melting ice the next. It was a time when mouth guards sometimes froze to players' lips and referee whistles regularly froze so they'd have to yell to stop play.

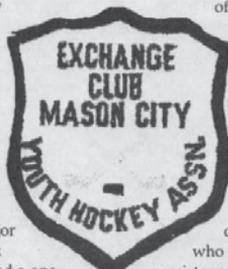
From those storied beginnings the program slowly began to take shape. The dream was to have indoor ice where wind chills, melted ice and canceled games would be a thing of the past. That dream came true in February, 1983, when a \$1.3 million indoor recreational arena was constructed on the North Iowa Fairgrounds. Members of Mason City Youth Hockey raised \$600,000 from individuals and corporations. The Kinney-Lindstrom Foundation matched that amount.

Since 1972, several thousand skaters have gone through

the youth hockey program. Currently, over 300 North Iowa youths are participating in the hockey program.

Approximately 30 adults play hockey in a novice program. And, 200 members of the North Iowa Figure Skating Association also utilize the arena. Participants travel from Forest City, Hampton, Northwood, Charles City and all points in between.

The combined budget for the arena, and MCYHA, is over \$225,000 each year. Fees charged to our youth make up a small portion of the budget, with additional revenue coming from games, tournaments, concessions, sign advertising, sponsorship of teams and other fund-raising programs.



As a service to the community, public skating is offered even though the fees charged do not cover the cost of ice time. Last season, we opened our doors for approximately 180 hours of open skating for the general public. Based on hourly arena operating costs, the MCYHA subsidized \$5,000 to provide public skating.

We operate and maintain the arena without any type of assistance from taxpayers. This is possible only because of the hundreds of dedicated volunteers who last year, logged over 7,000 hours of assistance in running the programs.

So just how big is the MCYHA program? It costs about \$150,000 per season just to operate the ice arena (\$850 per day for six months). Expenses incurred for maintaining \$350,000 of ice equipment, purchasing hockey equipment, setting up youth programs, etc. is additional. Last season, our youth logged 75,000 hours of skating. Over 1,200 families are expected to spend a Saturday and Sunday in our arena this winter for Youth Hockey tournaments. Based on statistics provided by the International Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau, and Iowa Division of Tourism, these tournaments alone have a direct dollar impact of over \$345,000, with a multiplier affect on our economy of over \$1.2 million. In addition to tournaments, over 40,000 people will attend single hockey games at the Huskies, High School and youth levels.

Any boy or girl in the North Iowa area wishing to participate in the skating program is welcome.

### Early Teams of MCYHA

#### 1972-1973 1st Bank Bantam House Team

First Row (l to r): Mike Wendler, Bob Genari, Jack Odegaard, Steve Ollenburg, Randy Pierce, Tom Mackin  
Back Row: Coach ?, Andy Torgeson, Scot Huff, Mark McManigal, Jim Mackin, Scott Hudson, Steve Nielsen



## Arena's Completion Brought Longest Road Show to a Close

Before the indoor ice arena was completed it wasn't unusual for Mason City hockey teams to travel to Austin, Albert Lea or even Fairbault for practices. Actual games (especially high school), were sometimes relocated to an indoor ice arena when the weather didn't cooperate. "We just couldn't count on having good ice and weather conditions," recalls Dr. Art McMahon, one of the original catalysts behind construction of the new arena.

So when the arena officially opened its doors on Saturday, February 5, 1983, it symbolized the fulfillment of a dream that began years earlier. Ron Hanna, who was MCYHA president at the time and a driving force behind making the million-dollar arena a reality, summed up the feelings of everyone involved with youth hockey: "The (Mohawks') longest road show in history has come to a close. Seven long years are over. Finally we have a place to call home," he said.

The plans and dreams for an indoor arena had



Mohawk High School Seniors stand by new arena construction in fall 1982; Front Row (l to r): John Hanna, Eric Thompson; Back Row: Bill Peterson, Brian Millard, Jeff Kleven

been in earnest in 1976. But with all great things come disappointments along the way. Hockey supporters made \$300,000 in pledges and donations for a proposed multi-purpose arena, only to see the idea of an ice rink in it rejected by the County Board of Supervisors. The All-Seasons building was constructed instead.

But dreams don't die easily. Most of the financial supporters declined to have their money returned. Instead, they urged the association to push on for another building. "Other building sites were explored over the next two years, but we kept coming back to the fairgrounds as the best site for such a facility," said Hanna.

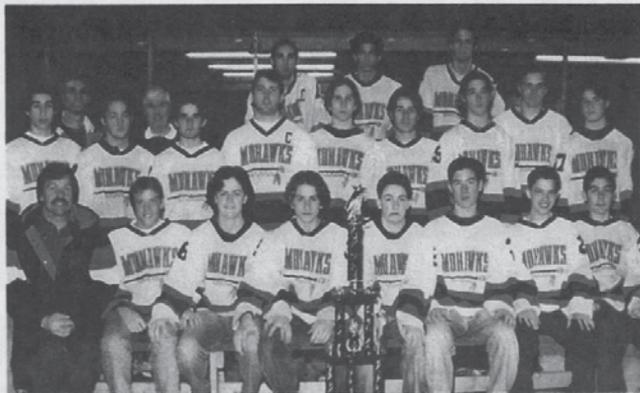
Then, in 1980, Hanna and Dr. (Doc) Art McMahon, met with the Fair Board and the Kinney-Lindstrom Foundation regarding a multi-purpose recreational arena. With the cooperation of the Cerro Gordo County Board of Supervisors, an agreement was reached and fund-raising went into full swing, with Dave Kingland heading up these activities.

The rest, as they say, is history. \$600,000 was raised and the Kinney-Lindstrom Foundation provided a major financial boost by matching it. Meanwhile, blueprints were finalized. Ground breaking took place June 28, 1982 at the North Iowa Fairgrounds.

The arena was christened during festive pregame ceremonies prior to a high school game with Waterloo. About 1,000 people and special guests attended. No one seemed to mind that the scoreboard at game's end read Waterloo 8, Mason City 1. Everyone knew there would be better times coming.

### What is the Puck Made Of?

The puck is made of vulcanized rubber, three inches in diameter and one inch thick. It is not only solid to remove the bounce but is frozen before entering play to make it even more bounce resistant. It weighs about six ounces.



### 1997 State High School Tournament Champions

Front Row (l to r): Dave Hopper, Isaac Sorensen, Nate Stanton, TJ Shovein, Jerry Springer, Brad Price, Dan Klocke, Ramy AbuJobarah; Second Row: Tom Zanios, David Hopper, Jeremy Solberg, Jason Anderegg, Jim Shovein, Michael Blaisdell, David Russell, Shawn Graven, Eric Harlan, John Lloyd, Head Coach; Third Row: Steve Fistler & Ron Hanna, assist. coaches; Cory Clopton, Zane Kantaris, Ben Fistler

Mohawk High School  
Players named to First  
Team All-State:

1977-78  
First year of play

1981-82  
Jay Bloomfield

John Brandt

1985-86  
George Pappajohn

1986-87  
Jeff Curtis

Dustin Duda

Andy Hubbard

Chris Stewart

Troy Thelen

1987-1988

Dustin Duda

Jeremy Scheetz

1988-89  
Brian Bahnsen

Nick Hudin

Chris Peterson

1989-90

Chris Peterson

1991-92  
Neil Gilmore

Casey Holck

Scott Johnson

Matt Weber

1992-93  
Neil Gilmore

Aaron Larson

Ethan Scheetz

1993-94  
Mike Fryar

Jani Saarinen

1994-95  
Mike Anderson

Andy Blaisdell

John Kleven

Mikko Laukka

1995-96

Mike Anderson

Frederick Lindvall

Jason Anderegg

Jonas Samuelsson

Geoff Thomas

1996-97  
Jason Anderegg

Zane Kantaris

## First Female High School Hockey Player was Embroiled in Controversy

Nineteen years ago high school hockey player Pat Denny slipped on a bulky uniform and began playing for the Mason City Mohawks. Pat was a sturdy 5-foot 5-inch junior who took the hits and spills like any other hockey player.

What opposing players, coaches and the Iowa High Hockey League didn't realize at first was that "Pat" was a girl...the first girl to ever compete at the high school level in Iowa. "We didn't see any reason to call attention to it," Mohawk coach John Pete said.

But Denny's appearance on the all-male hockey team shocked some and angered others—especially some of Mason City's opponents. It also threw the Iowa High School Hockey League into turmoil. Suddenly it was confronted with the issue of whether to allow girls to compete on boys' teams.

The issue became so controversial that the league rang up a \$500 conference phone call (one-fourth of the league's annual budget) involving league representatives from around the state. There were two opposing viewpoints, one being that girls had no business playing a "male" game. The other opinion was verbalized at the time by Mark Mahoney, head coach of Waterloo's High School hockey program: "It's a game, and any kid good enough should be able to play. It was her option. If she tried out and made the team, why not let her play?" he said.

With no one able to or wanting to make a decision, Denny continued to play in the regular season. But just before the district playoffs, the league's governing board ruled that Denny could not compete. Mason City coach Pete appealed the decision; the team voted unanimously not to play in the tournament without her. Finally, at the eleventh hour, the league reversed its decision and Denny was allowed to play.

Denny talked about the controversy and how she adapted to playing with an all-male team. "I'm really not out to prove anything," she said back then. "I just love to play hockey and there aren't any girls' teams around. I tried out and made it just like anybody else," she said.

"I also love to sew and bake. I'm pretty normal except for playing on a boys' team."

When the team played road games, Denny dressed in the ladies room at the arena and joined the team in its locker room. At home home games she dressed at home.

"The first time I walked into the locker room, I was scared to death. Everything stopped. One guy leaned over to another and said, 'There she is.' It was embarrassing." But it wasn't long before Pat was just one of the players.

At first, the sometimes candid locker-room conversation took a little getting-used-to. "I'd turn red and sit with my head down, staring at my skates," she said. "But I didn't blush as much after awhile. I kind of grew immune to some of the locker-room goings on."

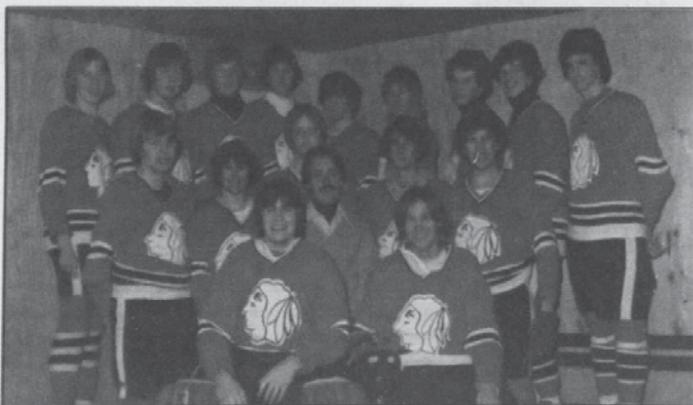
When word got out that Denny was playing, she took a lot of physical and verbal abuse from guys on other teams. "I know a few tried to rough me up because I was a girl, but I was never in a situation on the ice that I couldn't handle," she said.

Steve Nielson, and Scot Huff, who today is assistant coach for the Bantam A travel team, and a referee with several hundred games of experience, played for the Mohawks that season. Their sentiments on Denny and the female gender issue haven't changed since the controversy nearly twenty years ago. "Sure, she made mistakes sometimes. But she kept up with us pretty good," said Huff. "We stuck up for her when most people were turning their backs on the situation. We were behind her all the way, and we'd do the same thing today."

Denny's desire to play hockey has paved the way for several girls to participate in the MCYHA program, at various age and skill levels. Denny lives in Minneapolis.



Pat Denny



### First Mohawk High School Team 1977-78

Front Row (l to r): Jack Odgaard, Dan Duda;  
Second Row: Coach John Pete; Third Row: Mike Aspeborg, Pat Denny, Ned Anderson, Sean Fitzgerald, Dave Nelson; Fourth Row: Mike Duda, Scot Huff, Greg Dorenkamp, Steve Kritenbrink, Jeff Lees, Randy Pierce, Tom Mackin  
Note: Mike Aspeborg was our first foreign exchange student to play hockey

## Early Teams of MCRYHA



### 1974-1975 Carter Gillis Squirt House Champs

First Row (l to r): Todd Ranson, Jamie Walsh, Rob Voss, John Hanna, Ron Wendler

Back Row: Dan Smith, Tom Heiny, Jay Dorenkamp, Coach Ron Hanna, John Brandt, Brad Nielsen, Dave Kuehn.

## Three Who Dared to Make a Difference

Between the three of them they've coached oh, let's see, about 1,500 games since Mason City Youth Hockey began 25 years ago. And, they've refereed over 3,000 mite, squirt, pee wee, bantam and high school games. For good measure, throw in a couple hundred USHL games, too. If that doesn't get your attention, this will: They've been skating for a combined 175 years. The "kid" in the group has only logged 45 years on skates.

They are three of the early "movers and shakers" of Youth Hockey who wouldn't take "no" for an answer when roadblocks were met for a new indoor arena. They shared a common dream that at times looked like a dream...a bad one. Each has served as president of the organization and each took his turn at rekindling the fires of hope for an arena when the flame flickered.

Their names are Ron Hanna, Dr. Art McMahon and Mitch Morrison. Few people in the organization know better than they what it was like to coach or ref a game when the temperature hovered 15 below zero. Few have experienced taking off players' skates to help rub their feet between periods to get the feeling back in them...and then re-lacing the skates when there's no feeling left in fingers. Fewer have experienced the thrill of shoveling six inches of snow off the ice before refing a game. But in the 70's that's what Youth Hockey was like when kids braved the elements to

learn the game of hockey, first on an outdoor rink behind the Sears store and later, next to Hoover School. The first rink near Sears cost \$1,390 in materials and was built by volunteer labor.

Rarely was the temperature just right for hockey conditions. The opponent many a night wasn't the other team, as much as it was the weather.

One recent evening the three of them got together at the Hanna house to talk about...what else...hockey. As they talked they sorted through the hundreds of photos and news articles that the Hannas have collected virtually since youth hockey began in Mason City 25 years ago. It brought back lots of great memories...much of it humorous with a few ironic twists.

First there was Mitch explaining how he moved to the area from Minneapolis in 1975 and wanted to ref youth wrestling meets. "I went to what I thought was a wrestling meeting. The next thing I knew, I was coach of a youth hockey team. I'd gone to the wrong meeting." The rest is history, as they say.

Ron remembers it as a time when the hockey season was eight games long. It began in January and ended by mid-February, when the sun got too high. A typical team consisted of nine to eleven players. Equipment was pretty basic. In fact several players didn't own a pair of hockey skates. Instead, they filed off the serrated tips on the blades of their figure skates.

By February, the sun would reflect off the boards and turn the ice to slush. Often, the first few feet on one end of the rink was a combination of mud and ice, providing a distinct advantage for one team. "I remember the longest game I ever refed," said Dr. Art McMahon, who prefers to be called "Doc". "It went into six overtimes. The reason it took so long is because there was so much slush on the ice, the puck would hardly move. No one could get up any speed with the puck," he said.

And then there was the snow. "You take snow for granted until you have to shovel a whole hockey rink," said Ron. "The refs would come out early and move the snow to the boards and then the parents would shovel it over the side," he said. "There were mountains of it piled up just outside the boards. And, with all the freezing and thawing, it would turn to ice."

"I remember one game that Ron and I were refing," said Doc. "Ron was skating full tilt along the boards when one of the players accidentally bumped him and Ron went over the boards. He disappeared from sight for several seconds. The next thing we knew, he was waving from the parking lot. He'd slid down the pile of snow and ice and didn't get

MOHAWK HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS WHO HAVE PLAYED WITH THE NORTH IOWA HUSKIES:

1983-84

Jay Bloomfield

1984-85

Dana Despenas

David Despenas

1987-88

Chris Steward

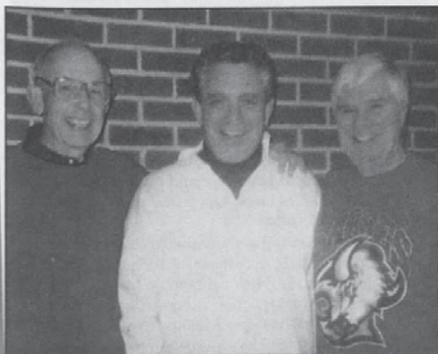
1992-93

Matt Swanson

Kirk Thoreson

1993-94

Mike Fryar



Dr. Art McMahon, Mitch Morrison, Ron Hanna

Can a puck be kicked into the nets for a score?

Not kicked in intentionally, but a puck can be deflected off a skate, or off a player's body if no attempt is made to throw it in or kick it in.

stopped until he hit the parking lot."

One of the biggest and most time-consuming jobs was reflooding the ice so the surface would be smooth. "We'd go out the night before with our cans of paint and do the lines and then the next morning Parks and Rec would come out and reflood the rink," said Mitch. "We got really good at painting straight lines."

"What's overwhelming today is to look back and see what it took just to get a team on the ice," said Mitch. "When the rinks were built at Hoover School, the association bought a tractor with a brush. It was our version of the Zamboni," said Mitch. "I'd take it home every night and back it into the garage so it was ready to go the next night. The problem is, it only went about three mph, and it took me 20 minutes to get to the rink but my driveway was always clear."

A few miles went on cars, too. "Many times we used Austin, Albert Lea and even Faribault for practices," said Ron. "Bad ice was always a concern."

The bantering continued as the three shared stories. "I still think Ron is a natural born coach even though he's refed a lot of games," said Doc. "Every once in awhile, when we were refing together, I'd catch him stopping and nodding approval on a good play," joked Doc. "Mitch and I still remember one of the first ref schools the three of us attended. Ron came in with his equipment in a white 5-gallon bucket. There were pucks, broken sticks, shin guards and a whistle in the bottom," laughed Doc.

"He's definitely a classier guy today" joked Mitch.

When the new arena became reality, each recalls the adjustment players had to make. "They all complained it was too hot," said Ron. "We had to tell them they didn't have to wear six layers of clothing anymore."

"Helmets no longer had to be adjusted every time we traveled to an indoor arena," said Mitch. "When the kids played outdoors they needed a stocking cap under the helmet and there'd be this furious last minute activity in the locker room as all the players would be adjusting their helmets just before a game."

"We owe a lot to Bob Anderson, Don Anderson, Keith Lindberg and Carl Mikkelsen who got the Youth Hockey Association started with the help of the Mason City Exchange Club," said Ron.

"If the next 25 years are anything like the first 25, I know one thing for sure," said Doc. The youth in this area will benefit greatly. And that's what this is all about. It's about kids," he said.

With that said, it was time to go. As the three said their good-nights, we all sensed we'd just witnessed a special part of Youth Hockey history... a common bond between three men from diverse backgrounds who stood together and dared to make a difference in Youth Hockey.

#### How large an area does the goalie protect?

The nets are six feet wide, four feet high, a target of 24 square feet.

#### How fast does the puck travel?

Some slap shooters propel the puck between 90-100 m.p.h. Speeds up to 120 m.p.h. have been recorded by some of the hardest shooters in the National Hockey League.

## Mason City Youth Hockey: From Silver to Gold

The celebration of Mason City Youth Hockey's silver anniversary is well under way. And what a celebration it's been thus far. If you attended Hockey Homecoming on November 22, you know what a great organization we have. The hours upon hours of preparation were rewarded with a turnout of people ranging from total newcomers to those who years ago, gave thousands of hours of their time to the organization. It was a time when we could mingle with "people from our past" and compare what Youth Hockey is like now to what it was like years ago.

Many toured the huge display of pictures, news articles and memorabilia in the arena mezzanine. It was simply phenomenal. Due to numerous requests, we plan to set up the displays several more times during this hockey season.



Parents and players enjoy themselves at Hockey Homecoming Banquet, Nov. 22

"Many times we used Austin, Albert Lea and even Faribault for practices."

It is amazing to me and others that have been involved "only" the last dozen or so years, how much time, energy and commitment was put in by members. The founders and subsequent "movers and shakers" of the association certainly had a vision for our youth. What we've learned in planning Homecoming, the display, and this special 25th anniversary newspaper, is that it is impossible to adequately recognize everyone involved because of the amount of time that's elapsed. Part of the reason to celebrate one's past is to reflect on the successes we've had. This provides a footing for the future. With this in mind I'd like to dream for a bit about the next 25 years...when we go from our silver to our golden anniversary.

What will the next 25 years bring? No one know for sure, but let's take a look at some possibilities. In our first 25 years we've grown from zero to 300-plus skaters. And that's just the hockey portion. Figure skating has had dramatic growth as well. If we could expand our program and provide better ice times, how many more participants would we have?

The arena is bursting at the seams to accommodate hockey, figure skating, recreational skating and a USHL Junior A hockey team. How many more skaters would participate if a second sheet of indoor ice was available? All of our programs have participants from outlying communities, but due to inconvenient time schedules, many cannot participate.

## Early Teams of MCYHA



### 1979 Pee Wee Travel Team

First Row (l to r): Todd Steil, Tom Gregor, John Shaefer, Kevin Gutsmer, Mitch Lees

Middle Row: David Despenas, Mick Merrill, Dana Despenas, Mark Ahrens, Rod Wilson, Mike Butler

Back Row: Shane Collins, Eric Held, ?, Ricky VanDusseldorf, Mike Kleven, George Pappajohn, Coach Mitch Morrison

What if we had year-round access to our current facility? The time the ice is in could be expanded by three months to allow for youth camps, an expanded house program....perhaps even an inline skating program when the ice is out.

Is a multi-purpose facility a possibility? Could North Iowa fund and support a facility to accommodate conventions, trade shows, concerts, swimming, ice skating, indoor soccer, rodeos, general recreational activities, and other events? The Avenue of the Saints makes one want to think of the possibilities.

We could dream a little further and ask, if there was additional ice availability, could this be incorporated into "learn to skate" and P.E. school programs.

Will the next 25 years bring a girls hockey program to North Iowa? Our neighbors to the north have vastly expanded hockey opportunities for girls.

Whatever the next 25 years bring, there's no doubt it will be exciting. I believe it's important to bring the best ideas and principles from our past and use them as a planning guide for the future. That's why we are so indebted to our founders and others who had the foresight to help grow our organization. So what are some of those founding principles?

First, we are a youth program. The programs we put in place today need to always be in the best interests of our youth.

Second, we are a program of participation. We need to

ensure that whatever programs we develop, will encourage participation of youth at various levels of competition.

Third, we need to give back to our community, by striving to provide not only a fine entertainment and recreational product, but youth that have had a positive learning experience in a program with well-defined high standards.

Last, be part of the community. Our success in the past resulted from our relationships with many other groups and organizations. Moving forward will require that same cooperation.

We've come a long way in these last 25 years. We are indeed blessed to have had the leadership, the skills, and the vision of people who truly cared about this organization. It shows. People from all walks of life and all levels of experience have blended their energies, their time, and their talents for one common purpose: To make Youth Hockey a shining example of what can happen when people work together for a common cause.

Whether you're a past or present player, a coach, ref or parent, your efforts have not gone unnoticed. As an organization, we have begun to establish "traditions" we can all be proud of. Winning may be part of that tradition, but what people will remember long after the game has ended and the pads are hung up for the last time, is what kind of kids came out of this program. May we always be able to say, "The Best".

In keeping with our goal of building lasting traditions, I am very proud to announce that Youth Hockey will soon have a trophy case in the upper mezzanine to honor teams and individuals who have made a difference in our organization. And when you have a chance to look at it, I encourage you to think about all the people it took to generate that piece of hardware. Good traditions don't happen overnight. Sometimes it can take 25 years.

Sincerely,  
Bob Klocke  
President  
Mason City Youth Hockey



Hay rides were very popular at Hockey Homecoming.

What if a puck stops on the goal line?

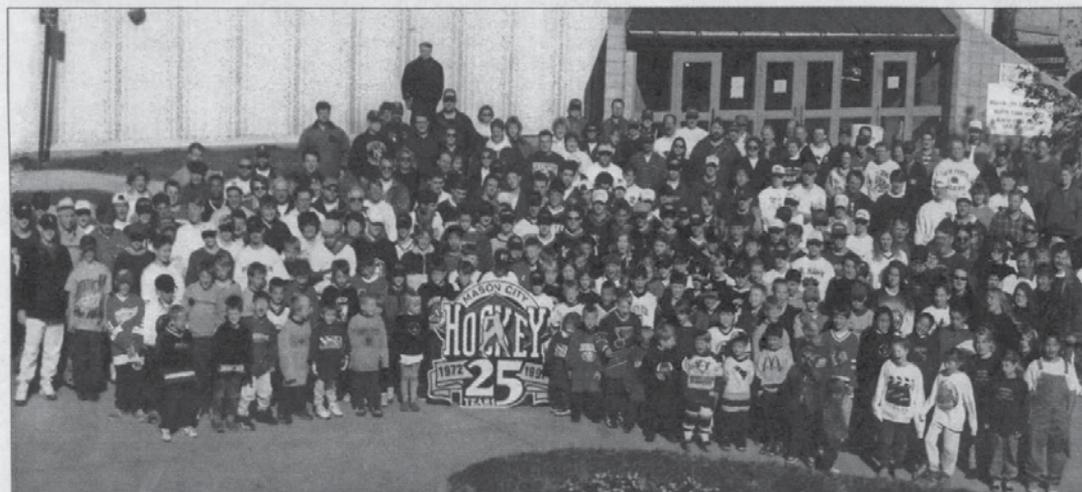
There is no score. The puck must completely cross the goal line between the posts to be counted as a score.

What are Hockey Sticks made of?

Generally, northern white ash, or rock elm. The handle is one piece and the laminated blade is affixed to it.



1988-89 North Iowa Huskies National Championship Team: The Huskies were owned by Mason City Youth Hockey Association at this time.



On a Sunday afternoon, a few hundred players, parents, and friends of Mason City Youth Hockey gathered in front of the arena for a photo.



Many founders and past presidents of Youth Hockey attended special ceremonies during Hockey Homecoming Nov. 22nd and were recognized for their efforts. Pictured left to right: Don Anderson, Ron Hanna, Dana Peck, Dick Hornbuckle, Dr. Art McMahon, Jerry Bahnsen, Dr. J.D. Thoreson, Mayor Carl Miller, (who proclaimed Nov. 22 Mason City Youth Hockey Day) and current association president Bob Klocke.

