



BOB NANDELL/REGISTER PHOTOS

Speed drills: Members of the Des Moines Capitals hockey team prepare for the new season at the Metro Ice Sports Arena.

Hockey teams keep eyes on the GOAL

By **ROB GRAY**
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Des Moines Oak Leafs defenseman Trevor Waldron remembers the humiliation, taunting and mocking laughter his team sustained in its first season two years ago.

"Sioux City beat us so bad, they were doing leapfrog after scoring a goal," said Waldron, who hopes to be voted team captain for the third straight year. "It was 13 or 14 to nothing, that's how bad they whipped us."

The Oak Leafs and the defending state champion Des Moines Capitals begin the Iowa High School Hockey League season this weekend, the Oak Leafs on Friday and Capitals on Saturday. Both teams open at Omaha against the Gladiators.

While the Capitals will defend their crown against traditional powers from Sioux City, Mason City and Omaha, the Oak Leafs hope to make the state tournament and finish well above .500.

Both teams look to Jan. 5 as a highlight of the regular season. On that night, the Oak Leafs play host to the Capitals. The rivalry — which typically draws 600 to 700 spectators — is intense. Many of the current rivals were formerly teammates in youth hockey. Off the ice, many are good friends.

"There aren't going to be any friendships out on the ice," Capitals

defenseman Charlie Urbanek said.

Trevor's father, Steve, who helped organize the Oak Leafs and now is a team board member, said: "It's ugly, but at the end they go through the line and shake hands. They don't mean it, but they understand the tradition of the game."

Many of the 74 ninth- through 12-graders that comprise the two teams' varsity and junior-varsity squads forego football, weekends with friends and even girlfriends.

"You really have no social life from November to February," Waldron said.

Everyone involved with the teams becomes invested financially as well as emotionally. Parents must spend up to \$2,500 in order to outfit, feed, transport and secure ice time for each player. Traveling to road games as spectators adds to the expense, and after a while the teams begin to resemble a vast extended family.

"It's like having 35 sets of aunts and uncles," said Steve Waldron.

The Capitals' home opener is Nov. 10 against Kansas City at the Metro Ice Sports Facility, 5100 72nd St., Urbandale. The Oak Leafs' home opener is Nov. 18 against Dubuque at the Metro Ice Sports Arena, 73rd Street and Hickman Road. Tickets cost \$4 for adults, \$2 for students.



Practice: Robb Wigger of Johnston, a Capital, chases the puck.

Schedules

DES MOINES CAPITALS HOME SCHEDULE

Nov. 10 — Kansas City
Nov. 18-19 — Sioux City
Dec. 2-3 — Quad City
Dec. 8 — Omaha Lancers
Jan. 20 — Ames
Jan. 21 — Omaha Lancers
Jan. 26 — Mason City
Feb. 2 — Dubuque
Feb. 4 — Waterloo
Feb. 9 — Mason City
Feb. 10 — Omaha Lancers
Feb. 24 — Ames
Feb. 25 — Kansas City

DES MOINES OAK LEAFS HOME SCHEDULE

Nov. 18-19 — Dubuque
Dec. 2 — Lincoln
Dec. 9 — Omaha Gladiators
Dec. 15 — Omaha Gladiators
Jan. 5 — D.M. Capitals
Jan. 19 — Waterloo
Jan. 27 — Waterloo
Feb. 3-4 — Sioux City
Feb. 11 — Omaha Lancers
Feb. 16 — D.M. Capitals
Feb. 23-24 — Kansas City