

Warriors need to have patience

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WATERLOO

The book is open on the 2001-02 Iowa High School Hockey League season, but don't start writing the chapter about the Waterloo Warriors yet.

Until the high school football playoffs are history, Waterloo's melting pot is short a couple of key players. And while the games all count the same in the league standings, Warriors coach Mike Brown is taking a patient approach into what he views as a promising season.

"When we get everybody out, we should be at about 39 or 40 players," said Brown, whose roster includes players from 11 high schools and at least eight cities. "It's one of the biggest squads we've had."

When the season opened Nov. 2, Waterloo was still missing defensive standout Michael Fritts and offensive weapon Shane Metz-Fritts was busy trying to help Cedar Falls advance in the prep football playoffs while Metz was doing the same for Dike-New Hartford.

They will make a noticeable difference once they get their



BRANDON POLLOCK / Courier Staff Photographer

A nucleus of veterans will lead coach Mike Brown's Waterloo Warriors into action this season. In front is Luke Langdale. In the second row are Matt Metcalf, left, and Jason Dobes. In the third row, left to right, are Bryan Brown, Michael Fritts and Jeff Loftsgaarden. In back, left to right, are Peter Schneider, Bryan Corwin, coach Mike Brown and Brandon DeWolf.

hockey legs under them, said Brown.

"Fritts will be in our top three defensively," he explained. "He's a big, strong, physical kid."

"Metz gives us another big weapon offensively. He can put the puck in the net, and that will help us, too."

More than their physical abil-

ities, Brown welcomes the leadership Fritts, Metz and Bryan Brown (West High) bring to the lockerroom. All three were part of winning football programs this season.

"They're winners," said Mike Brown. "I think that's contagious, and that's a good thing. They feel good about themselves, and they bring that to the next sport."

In the meantime, Brown is getting a good look at many of his younger players. Waterloo's roster includes 25 freshmen or sophomores.

"I think the biggest thing is we're going to have to prove that we're tough enough and strong enough," said Brown. "We're going to have to find some people who are willing to mix it up. I don't think we're going to score a heck of a lot of pretty goals or be very consistent, so we need some

kids who are willing to go get their noses dirty."

Brown and assistant coach Scott Murphy are counting on their veterans to lead the way through the early part of the season.

"We have real good skill," he said. "If we get a little veteran leadership early on until those young guys get their feet wet, I think we'll be alright."

The wear and tear of an expanded 33-game season also concerns Brown. Each of the IHSHL's 12 teams will play one another three times, and that means few weekends off.

"I think we have two Friday nights off between now and the middle of March," said Brown. "We have a week over Christmas, and that's it. One of the things I always enjoyed about going to Chicago to play over Christmas was that we got to play some different people, and it seemed like we came back refreshed. I think we will miss that."

In addition to the expanded schedule, the IHSHL has eliminated the East and West divisions this season. Rather than the top four teams from each division qualifying for the state

tournament, the top eight overall will make up the field for that event March 1-3 in Dubuque. The junior varsity tournament and varsity all-star game are set for Waterloo's Young Arena March 8-10.

Elsewhere around the league, the defending regular-season and tournament champion Omaha Junior Lancers are expected to put another strong team on the ice, along with the Des Moines Capitals. The Lancers lost most of their scoring from last season, but are loaded on defense and in the nets. The Caps have 17 veterans returning.

However, Brown doesn't see any team that can run away with the title like the Lancers did last season when they went 25-3 during the regular season.

"There are a lot of teams with good players returning," he said. "But I do think there will be more balance this year."

Individually the top returning scorer is Tim Roth of Dubuque after a 43-point season. Two of last year's top goalies are back in the Lancers' Ben Morris (.927 save percentage) and Kansas City's Stephen Reneau (.917).

WARRIORS SCHEDULE

HEAD COACH - Mike Brown
2000-01 RECORD - 13-13-2
Nov. 16 - at Kansas City, 7:45 p.m.
Nov. 17 - Sioux City, 8 p.m.
Nov. 23 - Ames, 8 p.m.
Nov. 24 - at Ames, 8:15 p.m.
Nov. 30 - Dubuque, 7:30 p.m.
Dec. 8 - Omaha Gladiators, 8 p.m.
Dec. 9 - Omaha Gladiators, 11 a.m.
Dec. 14 - at Omaha Gladiators, 7 p.m.
Dec. 15 - at Sioux City, 7 p.m.
Dec. 16 - at Sioux City, 1 p.m.
Dec. 21 - Quad-Cities, 8 p.m.
Dec. 22 - Des Moines Oakleafs, 8 p.m.
Dec. 23 - Omaha Jr. Lancers, 11 a.m.
Jan. 4 - Dubuque, 8 p.m.
Jan. 5 - at Des Moines Capitals, 8:30 p.m.
Jan. 11 - at Des Moines Capitals, 8:30 p.m.
Jan. 18 - at Des Moines Oakleafs, 8:45

p.m.
Jan. 19 - at Kansas City, 2:30 p.m.
Jan. 20 - at Kansas City, 10:35 a.m.
Jan. 25 - Lincoln, 8 p.m.
Feb. 7 - Lincoln, 11 a.m.
Feb. 11 - Mason City, 8 p.m.
Feb. 8 - Des Moines Oakleafs, 8 p.m.
Feb. 9 - at Mason City, 7:45 p.m.
Feb. 15 - Des Moines Capitals, 8 p.m.
Feb. 17 - Dubuque, 11 a.m.
Feb. 22 - at Quad-Cities, 8:15 p.m.
Feb. 23 - Kansas City, 8 p.m.
March 1-3 - at Varsity State Tournament (Dubuque)
March 8-10 - JV State Tournament
RETURNING LETTERWINNERS (10) - Peter Schneider, Luke Langdale, Jason Dobes, Matt Metcalf, Jeff Loftsgaarden, Bryan Brown, Shane Corwin, Michael Fritts, Nate Nelson, Bryan Corwin.

2000-01 standings

East	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
D.M. Capitals	20	7	1	2	43	108	60
Mason City	21	7	0	0	42	103	54
Waterloo	13	13	2	1	29	88	86
Dubuque	10	18	0	4	24	78	101
Ames	7	20	1	0	15	48	95
Quad Cities	4	24	0	0	8	46	145
West	W	L	T	OL	Pts	GF	GA
Oma. Lancers	25	3	0	1	51	121	32
D.M. Oakleafs	17	10	1	0	35	85	83
Sioux City	16	11	1	1	34	92	59
Kansas City	14	11	3	1	32	74	74
Lincoln	12	15	1	3	28	87	88
Oma. Gladiators	4	24	0	6	14	40	92