

Preps try to gobble up Turkey Cup

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Thoughts of an upcoming intra-city rivalry game were unavoidable when the Des Moines Oak Leafs played Omaha last Saturday.

The Oak Leafs played the Omaha Junior Lancers in an Iowa High School Hockey League game in Des Moines, but their focus was on tonight — resulting in a five-goal loss.

Today the Oak Leafs' concentration is solely on the Des Moines Capitals.

The Capitals and Oak Leafs have the only in-town IHSHL rivalry in the state. The presence of two teams in the same city forces classmates to be divided into separate teams, and helps fuel the competition.

The teams face off at 7:45 tonight at the ice arena in Urbandale for the first Des Moines Turkey Cup.

"The coaches could read our minds (Saturday)," Oak Leafs senior defenseman Drew Schade said. "They knew we were thinking about the Capitals game."

The rivalry between the Capitals and Oak Leafs is not new, but awarding a trophy to the winner of their annual Thanksgiving week game starts today.

Tonight's game

WHAT: Des Moines Turkey Cup

WHO: Des Moines Capitals vs. Des Moines Oak Leafs

WHEN: Varsity game at 7:45 p.m.

WHERE: Metro Ice Sports Arena, Urbandale

COST: \$5 adults; \$2 students

The two teams have played each other the past four seasons after the Oak Leafs joined the IHSHL in 1998.

In an attempt to introduce hockey to new fans, and bring in large crowds, the coaches of the teams came up with the idea of the Turkey Cup. A turkey-themed trophy will be awarded to the winners of tonight's game, which they will keep at their home arena throughout the year.

"The idea was to create a cup to communicate to the community what a great event this is each year," said Oak Leafs team manager Tom Drew. "We encourage people to come out and give hockey a look."

The Capitals (6-0) have a 7-2 advantage in the series with the Oak Leafs (4-3). The two teams will

meet three times this season.

"I don't know if the trophy means much yet since it's the first year, but the first game against the Oak Leafs, they are always ready," Capitals assistant coach Jeff Baker said. "No rah-rah speeches are needed."

A total of 74 players make up the varsity and junior varsity squads of the teams, and represent 12 Des Moines-area schools.

The two teams are divided by a draft rather than school boundaries.

Kelly Marean, a senior Capitals defenseman, attends Valley — with both Capitals and Oak Leafs — and said the rivalry isn't too serious away from the arena.

"We just joke around about it," Marean said.

Leafs forward Jason Brown, also of Valley, said he doesn't hold hockey grudges in school.

"I leave it on the ice," Brown said.

On the ice tonight, though, everyone's focus is on winning the first Turkey Cup.

"It's a big game," Marean said. "We want to win."

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