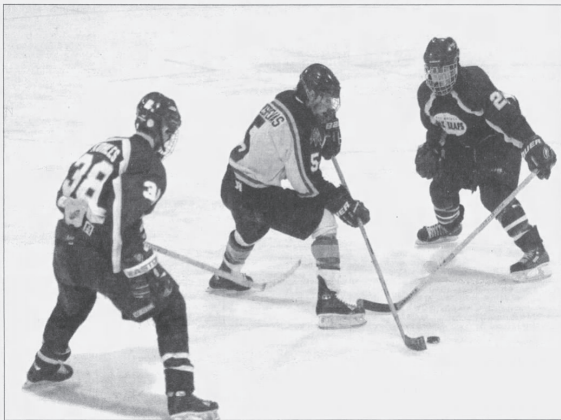


## STATE HOCKEY TOURNAMENT



SARAH SCHUTT/The Globe Gazette

Mason City's Cole Despenas (center) skates between two Des Moines Oak Leaf defenders during a regular season game at the North Iowa Ice Arena. Mason City faces Waterloo in the opening round of the state hockey tournament today at the Metro Ice Sports Arena in Des Moines.

# Ready To Roll

□ **Third-seeded Mohawks face Waterloo in opener at 1 p.m. today**

By **KIRK HARCASCADE**  
*Of The Globe Gazette*

**DES MOINES** — Cole Despenas of the Mason City Hockey Club doesn't lack confidence.

Third-seeded Mason City today in the opening round of the Iowa High School Hockey League tournament at the Metro Ice Sports Arena and the league's leading scorer is raring to go.

"We're all pretty equal," Despenas said of the top

teams in the league. "We're all the same, but when we get everything going, there's nobody the same as us."

"We're the best team by far."

The Des Moines Capitals and the Omaha

Junior Lancers are the tournament's top two seeds.

Mason City coach Mark Hicks said there's no pressure on his team, but the expectations are high.

"Our expectations are the same as they were last year,"

he said. "We feel like we have the team to do it, again."

"We just have to relax and play our game and we should be all right."

If Mason City wins today, it would face either Omaha or Kansas City in the semifinals at 2:15 p.m. on Saturday. A loss would send the Mohawks into a 7:30 a.m. Saturday consolation game.

Mason City entered last year's tournament as the top seed and placed fourth, so the Mohawks know first-hand that seeds don't matter.

"We've been looking forward to this for five or six months," Mason City center

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Burgmeier

### STATE SCHEDULE

#### TODAY'S GAMES

**1 p.m.** — (3) Mason City vs. (6) Waterloo

**3:15 p.m.** — (2) Omaha Junior Lancers vs. (7) Kansas City  
**5:30 p.m.** — (4) Sioux City vs. (5) Des Moines Oak Leafs  
**7:45 p.m.** — (1) Des Moines Capitals vs. (8) Ames

#### SATURDAY'S GAMES

**7:30 a.m.** — Mason City/Waterloo loser vs. Omaha/Kansas City loser  
**9:45 a.m.** — Sioux City/Oak Leafs loser vs. Capitals/Ames winner  
**Noon** — Sioux City/Oak Leafs winner vs. Capitals/Ames winner  
**2:15 p.m.** — Mason City/Waterloo winner vs. Omaha/Kansas City winner

#### SUNDAY'S GAMES

**8 a.m.** — Seventh-place game  
**10:15 a.m.** — Fifth-place game  
**12:30 p.m.** — Consolation game

"Nobody else has seven good goal scorers, good defensemen and good goaltending"

— Mason City's Cole Despenas

## Despenas leads league in scoring

### Mohawks

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defenseman Kyle Burgmeier said. "We were hoping for a better seed, but that doesn't matter now."

"All that matters is playing on Sunday in the last game."

Mason City enters the tournament winning seven

of its last nine games, including a 6-1 win over Omaha on Jan. 31 in Mason City.



Angell

"Since we played the Omaha Lancers, it's been a whole

different game for us," Despenas said. "We've been playing harder and we've been playing smarter."

"That's a key thing — we're starting to play smarter."

And Mason City is also playing better team defense, according to Hicks.

In the last 10 games, the Mohawks have allowed 2.2 goals per game. Take away a 6-3 loss to Omaha and the goal per game average dips to 1.7.

"I think the last 10 games we've played better as a team than any of the teams I've had in the past," Hicks said. "In the past, we've relied on the forwards to get us through the game. But we've started to play more of a team defensive game."

"We still have a lot of guys that can put the puck in the net, but I think we've played



SARAH SCHUTT/The Globe Gazette

Mason City's Cole Lang skates up the ice during a recent game.

better as a team."

And nobody puts the puck in the net as well as the Mohawks, who boast four of the top nine scorers in the league.

Despenas led the league with 76 points (33 goals, 43 assists) and Carter Angell was third with 62 points (24 goals, 38 assists).

"We're well balanced and I can't say that for any other team in our league," Despenas said. "Nobody else has seven good goal scorers, good defensemen and good goaltending."

There's that confidence thing again.

Reach Kirk HARCASCADE at 421-0540 or [kirk.harcascade@ioglobegazette.com](mailto:kirk.harcascade@ioglobegazette.com)

### TOURNAMENT

#### SCORING LEADERS

Player	G	A	Pts
Cole Despenas (MC)	33	43	76
Matt Metcalf (W)	27	35	62
Carter Angell (MC)	24	38	62
Brian Spring (DMC)	33	19	52
Mike Murrage (MC)	30	29	59
Kevin Lohry (SC)	24	32	56
Alex Luethart (SC)	21	32	53
Jacob Braun (O)	24	28	52
Alex Magnus (MC)	26	26	52
Alex Thompson (W)	29	29	49
A.J. Kuntz (A)	31	17	48
Tim Smith (O)	18	27	45