

HIGH SCHOOL HIGHLIGHTS



Members of the Des Moines Capitals' junior varsity and varsity teams celebrate after winning their respective tournaments in the Iowa High School Hockey League. The varsity players are in street clothes.

Dedication, defense key to stellar seasons for DM Capitals

Varsity and junior varsity high school teams win regular-season and state tourney titles

By TODD ERLEN
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It would be difficult for the Des Moines Capitals to do more than they did this season to promote themselves and their sport.

The Capitals' varsity and junior varsity teams both won regular-season Iowa High School Hockey League crowns, then each team went on to claim its second consecutive state tournament championship title.

It's the first time a team has won varsity and junior varsity regular-season and tournament titles in a single year in the league. The Capitals' varsity again won the regular-season league crown last year.

Capitals' forward Derek Elliott of West Des Moines and defenseman Marc Lawrence of Ankeny were named to the all-league team and coach Scott Krueger was named co-coach of the year.

"If you look at all the championship banners, you know Scott is doing something right," said Ron Byrd of Johnston, whose son, Scott, played on the Capitals' junior varsity team.

Krueger, a Clive resident and former Des Moines Backsaver, has coached the Capitals for 11 years. He's won five league and three tournament titles in that time.

He noted that this season's one-loss varsity performance came despite losing 12 of the 20 players from last year's championship team.

"It wasn't expected by me," he said.

Lorenson said his coach never stopped challenging the Capitals to play great defense, and the rest took care of itself.

"That's just Capitals' hockey," he said. "We've always been about defense. If they can't score, we can't lose."

The varsity Capitals finished the regular season 13 points ahead of Mason City with a 28-1 record. They moved on to defeat the cross-town rival Des Moines Oak Leafs, 4-2, in the state tournament championship game March 6 in Shawnee, Kan., home of the league's Kansas City team.

The junior varsity team was 24-4-2 for the regular season.

Tri-state honors

A number of players from the Des Moines Capitals and Oak Leafs have been named to the tri-state team that will compete in the 2005 Chicago Showcase April 13-17.

Defense—Tyler Carter, Oak Leafs; Alexander Gillespie, Oak Leafs; Matt Jacobson, Capitals; Marc Lawrence, Capitals.

Forwards—Derek Elliott, Capitals; Brendan Fancio, Oak Leafs; Mike Gies, Capitals; Brian Spring, Oak Leafs.

Alternate forward—Derek Hansen, Oak Leafs.

Finishing four points ahead of the second-place Oak Leafs, the junior varsity Capitals beat Quad City 5-3, March 13 at Buccaneers Arena in Urbana, to complete their organization's title sweep.

Team manager Mark Erbstein of West Des Moines says the Capitals' success has also been the product of years of commitment.

"It's a group of very dedicated hockey players and parents," he said. His son, Steven, was the varsity squad's starting goalie.

"To play competitive hockey in Iowa at a young age, well-known road trips are required to Chicago, Minnesota and other more prominent hockey locations in order to get exposure against quality opponents. The trips have paid huge dividends in recent years."

"Now we are able to win tournaments in Chicago, where we never doing that five years ago," said Ron Byrd, who is also president of the Midwest Hockey League, the youth system that feeds the Capitals and the Oak Leafs many of its players.

There are other dividends that make the adult time and money well worth it.

"A lot of the parents got a great deal of enjoyment traveling with each other," Mark Erbstein said. "I've made a lot of good friends."

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Members of the Des Moines Capitals' junior varsity team celebrate scoring a goal during the tournament earlier this month. Clockwise from bottom left are Robbie Andersson of Urbandale, Justin Alth of Waukee, Brady Johnson of Johnston, Ross Johnson of West Des Moines and Scott Byrd of Johnston.

Varsity schedule

Nov. 6: Capitals 6, Kansas City 0
Nov. 7: Capitals 5, Kansas City 0
Nov. 13: Capitals 6, Quad Cities 1
Nov. 14: Capitals 4, Quad Cities 3
Nov. 18: Capitals 2, Omaha 1
Nov. 23: Capitals 4, Sioux City 2
Nov. 23: Capitals 3, Oak Leafs 2 (OT)
Dec. 4: Capitals 5, Lincoln 2
Dec. 5: Capitals 7, Mason City 1
Dec. 18: Capitals 5, Kansas City 1
Dec. 19: Capitals 5, Waterloo 1
Dec. 17: Mason City 4, Capitals 3
Dec. 18: Capitals 5, Ames 0
Dec. 23: Capitals 5, Oak Leafs 3
Jan. 7: Capitals 6, Waterloo 0
Jan. 8: Capitals 4, Sioux City 3 (OT)
Jan. 14: Capitals 5, Ames 1
Jan. 15: Capitals 4, Lincoln 3 (OT)
Jan. 16: Capitals 7, Lincoln 1
Jan. 28: Capitals 6, Quad Cities 0
Jan. 29: Capitals 4, Sioux City 1
Feb. 4: Capitals 3, Omaha 2
Feb. 4: Capitals 5, Oak Leafs 4
Feb. 11: Capitals 5, Waterloo 4 (OT)
Feb. 12: Capitals 10, Dubuque/Cedar Rapids 0
Feb. 18: Capitals 4, Ames 1
Feb. 18: Capitals 8, Dubuque/Cedar Rapids 0
Feb. 20: Capitals 4, Dubuque/Cedar Rapids 0
Feb. 28: Capitals 2, Mason City 2
Feb. 27: Capitals 2, Omaha 0
Varsity State Tournament at Kansas City
March 4: Capitals 6, Kansas City 2
March 4: Capitals 3, Sioux City 2
March 6: Capitals 4, Oak Leafs 2

Junior varsity schedule

Nov. 6: Kansas City 3, Capitals 2
Nov. 7: Capitals 6, Kansas City 1
Nov. 13: Capitals 2, Quad Cities 0
Nov. 14: Capitals 6, Quad Cities 0
Nov. 18: Capitals 5, Omaha 1
Nov. 23: Capitals 3, Sioux City 2
Nov. 23: Capitals 4, Oak Leafs 4
Dec. 4: Capitals 4, Lincoln 0
Dec. 5: Capitals 4, Mason City 3
Dec. 18: Capitals 2, Kansas City 0
Dec. 19: Capitals 7, Waterloo 2
Dec. 17: Capitals 3, Mason City 1
Dec. 18: Capitals 8, Ames 0
Dec. 23: Capitals 3, Oak Leafs 0
Jan. 7: Capitals 4, Waterloo 2
Jan. 8: Capitals 4, Sioux City 2
Jan. 14: Capitals 8, Ames 3
Jan. 15: Capitals 4, Lincoln 3
Jan. 16: Capitals 4, Lincoln 1
Jan. 28: Quad Cities 1, Capitals 0
Jan. 29: Capitals 3, Sioux City 1
Feb. 4: Capitals 3, Omaha 0
Feb. 4: Oak Leafs 5, Capitals 4
Feb. 11: Capitals 4, Waterloo 2
Feb. 12: Capitals 7, Dubuque/Cedar Rapids 0
Feb. 18: Capitals 5, Ames 0
Feb. 18: Capitals 3, Dubuque/Cedar Rapids 0
Feb. 20: Capitals 7, Dubuque/Cedar Rapids 1
Feb. 28: Mason City 2, Capitals 0
Feb. 27: Capitals 2, Omaha 0
Junior varsity tournament
March 11: Capitals 8, Lincoln 0
March 12: Capitals 2, Mason City 1
March 13: Capitals 5, Quad Cities 3

MVP Spring 'great all-around player'

Brian Spring of the Des Moines Capitals earned most valuable player honors in the Iowa High School Hockey League's state tournament earlier this month.

Spring scored both of his team's goals in the 4-2 championship game into the Des Moines Capitals.

The Urbandale resident and Dowsing Catholic High School senior gave credit to the Capitals

for jumping out to a 4-0 lead after two periods.

"We just got outplayed," he said. "We only had three shots on goal in the first two periods. The Capitals just play good team hockey."

Oak Leafs coach Doug Bonard said Spring is a special player.

"You put him in the ice anywhere you need a goal scored," Bonard said. "He's a great all-around

player. He enjoys the game better than anybody."

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