

Blues expecting breakthrough

This year's seniors played together in termite leagues

By Sean Moeller
QUAD-CITY TIMES

The Quad-City Blues began their fifth season of Iowa High School Hockey League play two weeks ago with a road game against Ames.

But coach Jim Thomson considers it the first year that the area's hockey prowess truly can be compared with the rest of the state's.

The varsity/junior varsity squad has 13 seniors among its 35 players, and they represent the first group that has gone through the entire gamut of playing levels, beginning with

the termite house leagues.

"This is the first time we've put an experienced group out there," said Thomson, whose team plays one of the league's two remaining undefeated teams, Mason City, on Saturday night at the Quad-City Sports Center. "This senior class and this sophomore class have been strong over the years."

That alone should change much of what resulted in a 6-22 league record and a second-to-last position in the 2003-04 season standings, he said.

"The team looks pretty promising," Thomson said, adding that the Blues "fully expect" to make the playoffs. "If they didn't do that, we'd be very disappointed."

Last season's team scored about one-third as many goals

as its opponents. The Blues (0-4) have had a slow start this year, too, getting outscored 24-6 in four games, but with the scorers back and the new talent, Thomson thinks there's enough firepower to make the team's offensive futility a thing of the past.

After all, two of those games were against the defending champion Des Moines Capitals.

"There's no question we'll score more goals," Thomson said. "I counted how many goals they scored last year as a team, and it was a miserably low number (53).

"Just in the preseason, we put the puck away pretty well. I think we're going to see a lot of guys scoring 10-to-15 goals. We can put nine good forwards out there. You love that you can put any line out there that you want."

Fortunately for Thomson, the arrival of the Quad-City Express didn't drastically affect the Blues' roster.

Only one would-be Blues player, all-state defenseman David Waterman of Davenport Central, was taken. And the Blues might regain his services for a few games in a rehab stint as he comes back from an injury.

"I'd say it's been a pretty positive thing," Thomson said of the Express coming to town. "We lost David to them, but they had a very good kid (Riverdale's Zach Crawford) who tried out for the team, didn't make it and had nowhere to play back home, and he's on our team now. So perhaps it works both ways."

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