

Warriors lacking depth but not talent

■ Roster of 30 ready to
open prep hockey
season Saturday.

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W A T E R L O O

Nobody on the Waterloo Warriors' varsity roster should

complain about playing time this

season.

When the team of local and area players opens the Iowa High School Hockey League season this weekend, coach Shawn Weiske will ask a lot from a team that is short on numbers.

"We have about 30 kids total in the whole program," said Weiske, whose team visits Omaha Saturday and Sioux City Sunday on the first weekend of league play. "Our varsity squad right now has about 13 or 14 kids who are going to play on a regular basis."

"We're short there, but the guys we have just have to step up and get after it."

Weiske has talent, although it won't all be available immediately.

Eric Thompson, the team's top returning scorer after a 46-point season (25 goals), will serve a suspension to start the season. So will Dustin Guss, who scored 32 points to lead the Warriors' defensemen a year ago. Joe Giachino, another double-digit scorer, is still playing football.

Until those players return, the rest of the Warriors will have to pick up the slack, Weiske said. It starts with strong goaltending.

"Ryan Larrabee is just a sophomore, but he played every game for us last year," said the second-year head coach. "He will be as good as anybody in the league. He should compete for the lowest goals-against average in the league."

"That's a good start for us."

Larrabee will need help from the players in front of him, but that should also be a strength.

The top returnees include Jon Kolthoff, Brad Hansen, Guss and Giachino.

"We'll have four guys as strong as anybody in the league," said Weiske. "Joey is the smallest of the group at 5-foot-8, but he's a hard worker who likes the physical game. The other guys are all 6-foot-plus and have good hands. They can move the puck out of the zone and keep it to the perimeter."

Offensively, the Warriors probably won't hit their stride until Thompson returns.

"If he stays healthy and eligible, he should be in the top five in scoring, if we get some help around him," said Weiske. "He's a natural scorer who is comfortable around the net. When he gets a chance, he doesn't miss too many."

Weiske is also looking for a big contribution from senior Matt Davis (23 points last season).

"He's a good athlete and a good competitor," said the coach. "He wasn't as productive as he would have liked last year. That will change from what I've seen during the preseason. He competes every shift out there."

From there, the Warriors will look to Cory Robbins, who missed most of last season with a broken ankle.

"This preseason, he has looked good," said Weiske. "He has picked up some speed, and he will go down and do the dirty work on the defensive side and get the pack up to Thompson and Davis."

Justin Nicol is the fourth senior expected to lead the offense.

Junior Scott Doherty scored 22 points last year.

"After that, we drop off in a hurry with some youth, but we have kids who should be able to step up and need to step up," said Weiske.

Waterloo's mantra is to do more with less.

"We have preached to our kids to overachieve," he said. "We are changing the mindset around here, trying to get the mindset that every game we need to come out and compete."

"Let's get the best out of everything we have. Let's keep it close and give ourselves a chance to win at the end of the game. That will kind of be our story this year. Hopefully, we will be on the right side of that more times than the other side of it."