

Metros, Oak Leafs square off in opener

By Jerry Giese

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The Sioux City Metros won their last three games of the regular season by playing a style totally different than the vast majority of their previous contests.

Metros Coach Jim Peck believes the only chance for his team to beat the heavily favored, top-seeded Des Moines Oak Leafs in the first round of today's Iowa High School Hockey League state tournament game in Urbandale is by continuing the trapping game they first learned two weeks ago.

The Oak Leafs (31-2), heading into tonight's 6:45 game at the 95KGGG Arena against Sioux City (14-19), outscored its opponents 188-37 this season. The line of Joseph Harcharik (52 goals, 49 assists), Derek Hansen (32 goals, 53 assists) and Matt Trout (22 goals, 21 assists) combined for 229 points.

"That's an unbelievable line and we don't match up with that," said Peck. "So, we have to play a different style to try to shut down that line. It's a style of hockey we don't play a great deal of and I'm not a fan of that kind of hockey, but you have to play to win and this gives us our best chance."

"The entire squad has practiced it two weeks knowing if we made the tournament, our first-round opponent would be the Oak Leafs."

"The easiest way to explain it, we're not going to try to score. We'll go into the opponent's end, stay deep, work a forecheck and try to trap them in the neutral zone. The guys have to think, play defense, force a turnover and then, try to capitalize."

It won't be easy. The Oak Leafs were never shut out this season. Only once they were held to one goal, in a 3-1 loss at Kansas City Nov. 5.

In three other games they were limited to two goals and won each time.

The Metros' defensive effort will be led by 6-2, 190-pound junior defenseman Marshall Tuttle and 6-4, 210-pound senior defenseman David Hansen.

"They'll have to play the games of their life," said Peck. "They'll have to put a body on someone every chance they can get and don't give up any space. They're both over six feet tall and they're both solid guys, so they'll have to get up there, use their size, keep those guys away from the net."

Tuttle is the Metros' top scorer with 28 points (7 goals, 21 assists). Sophomore forward Nick Cownie is second with 23 points (5 goals, 18 assists) while senior forward Chad Corbett is third with 21 points (15 goals, 6 assists).

Sioux City scored only three goals in three losses to the Oak Leafs this season, 4-1 and 3-1 at the IBP Ice Center and 7-1 on the Oak Leafs' rink.

The state tournament starts with a noon game between Quad Cities (20-11-2) and Omaha (19-13-0). Second-seeded Mason City (25-5-2) plays Waterloo (15-17-1) at 2:15 p.m.

The two-time defending state champion Des Moines Capitals (25-5-2), the third seed, will play Kansas City (18-12-2) at 4:30 p.m.

Consolation and semifinal games will be played Saturday. The tournament concludes Sunday with seventh-place, fifth-place, third-place and championship games.

