

Blues enter Midwest tournament red hot

Q-C team goes almost month without losing

By Brian Heinemann
FOR THE TIMES

The Quad-City Blues hardly could be entering this weekend's Midwest High School Hockey League state tournament any hotter.

The Blues will have gone just two days shy of a month since their last loss when they take the ice for their first-round game at 7:30 p.m. Friday at the Quad-City Sports Center. They face Mason City, a team they have beaten by a combined score of 16-4 in three victories this season. But they're not overlooking their first-round foe.

"Mason City has beaten every team in the league

MHSHL TEAMS

No. 1 Des Moines Oak Leafs (31-2-2-1) — Leading scorers: Chris Kunnen (24 goals/44 assists), Tyler Belling (31/22), Troy Du Bay (22/30). Goaltender: Tyler Pietz (16-2-0, 1.31 GAA, .929 save pct.)

No. 2 Quad-City Blues (29-6-0-1) — Leading scorers: Jake Hemmen (36 G, 21 A), Josh Prygon (17 G, 37 A), Nick Herberg (22 G, 31 A). Goaltender: Matt Truninger (17-1-0, 1.31 GAA, .941 save pct.)

No. 3 Waterloo Warriors (28-6-2-0) — Leading scorers: Jake Irey (47 G, 38 A), Jacob Schutte (26 G, 31 A), Dawson Kuhlmann (22 G, 26 A). Goaltender: Brian Dobes (28-6-2, 1.72 GAA, .925 save pct.)

No. 4 Des Moines Capitals (25-9-1-2) — Leading scorers: A.J. Krist (22 G, 37 A), Mathew Bunting (20 G, 22 A), Brady Johnson (18 G, 12 A). Goaltender: Derek Temple (21-9-0, 2.06

except us and they have several of the top five point-getters in the league," coach Paul O'Dacre said. "They are

GAA, .917 save pct.)

No. 5 Kansas City Jr. Outlaws (24-11-0-1) — Leading scorers: Mitchell Newhouse (16 G, 25 A), Dion Hill (14 G, 26 A), Jake Nichols (15 G, 22 A). Goaltender: Herbert Kyles (13-7-0, 2.18 GAA, .894 save pct.)

No. 6 Lincoln Jr. Stars (22-11-1-2) — Leading scorers: Jorgan Kontor (45 G, 43 A), Barron Gregson (28 G, 19 A), Bryce Buchmann (24 G, 17 A). Goaltender: Tyler Scully (14-4-0, 2.84 GAA, .900 save pct.)

No. 7 Mason City Mohawks (21-14-1-0) — Leading scorers: Ben Juhnke (41 G, 37 A), Chris Jessen (36 G, 41 A), Ben Wagner (20 G, 33 A). Goaltender: Max Lassise (10-5-1, 2.14 GAA, .885 save pct.)

No. 8 Sioux City Metros (13-20-1-2) — Leading scorers: Andrew Bauer (19 G, 26 A), B.J. Jackson (21 G, 20 A), Jacob Wilde (15 G, 26 A). Goaltender: Lee Noel (10-10-0, 3.03 GAA, .901 save pct.)

a force to be reckoned with."

Team captain Ryan Giertz agreed with his coach.

"They're going to bring

some offensive firepower in against us," he said.

"We know we are going to have to focus out there. We know that we're going to have a battle out there this weekend."

After losing two of their first three contests this season, the Blues went on a 15-game winning streak that lasted nearly half the regular season.

They finished with a 29-6-0-1 record, good enough for the second seed in this weekend's tournament.

"We started off like gangbusters, had a period in between where we were very average and then we peaked again toward the end of the season," O'Dacre said. "I think we're in a good position right now from a momentum standpoint."

The Blues have the benefit

of having two of the top 10 scorers in the MHSHL on their roster with forward Jake Hemmen and linemate Josh Prygon. Hemmen led Quad-City with 36 goals and 21 assists while Prygon and linemate Pete Kalber eclipsed 40 points.

"We have a lot of chemistry between us," said Hemmen, who along with Kalber did not even play hockey last season. "I owe a lot of the credit for my year to Josh Prygon and Pete Kalber."

Quad-Cities employs a two-goaltender system. Matt Truninger and Reed Festing-Smith rotated games. While Festing-Smith put up solid numbers with a 12-6 record, Truninger was nothing short of spectacular when between the pipes, leading the league with a 1.31 goals-against-average, a .941

save percentage and a 17-1 record.

"Reed is one of the best goalies in the league. When he brings his game, he's completely dominant," Hemmen said. "Matty is the top goalie in the league, though."

A potential second-round game would pit the Blues against either Waterloo or Lincoln, both have lost two of three to the Blues this season. Waterloo finished just one point behind them in the standings and Lincoln boasts the league's leading scorer in Jorgan Kontor.

"With our 15 seniors we have this year and being able to play on home ice for our last weekend of hockey, it could be like a storybook ending," Giertz said.

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