

# Metros hope to continue torrid play at tourney

By Jerry Giese

Journal sports writer

Heading into January, it was quite unlikely that the Sioux City Metros had a chance to qualify for the Midwest High School Hockey League state tournament.

Coach Corey Clarks' Metros wallowed near the bottom of the league at that point with a 4-14-0-1 record. However, a 4-1 win over Mason City on Jan. 25 started a stretch where the Metros suddenly caught fire, as they won nine of their last 10 games and climbed from 11th to eighth place in the league.

"The second half of the season, our guys knew what they were up against," said Clarks, whose 13-20-1-2 squad will face the top-seeded Des Moines Oak Leafs (31-2-2-1) at 8 o'clock in a first-round MHS HL Championship Tournament game at the

Quad City Sports Center in Davenport, Iowa.

"We had 18 games remaining and I figured we needed to win 10. Then we got into a bit of a slide, but two of the losses were in overtime.

"Then we had 10 games left and I told the boys we needed to win 10 in a row, but 9-1 could possibly do it. This team has shown so much heart."

The goaltending of 5-9, 145-pound Lee Noel was among the keys to Sioux City's turnaround.

Noel, who's 10-10 with a 3.03 goals against average, had two shutouts in the last 10 games while Tyler Brinkerhoff (3-8-1, 3.42 GAA) had the other.

Noel allowed one goal in three other games in the stretch that carried the Metros into the state tournament.

"Noel has been playing lights out," said Clarks. "All goalies have a sense where they're in the flow of the game, but they also have to watch the

angles and be able to locate the puck. Guys could sneak around you on the back door and charge to the net. A lot of guys falter under pressure, but Lee, nothing fazes this kid."

Noel isn't the only one shining defensively.

The play of defensemen Seth Pinney, Jameson Kackley, Mitch Vos, Dillon Smith, Zach Hagaman, Alex Hinrichsen and Tony Scherrman is another reason the Metros allowed just 12 goals in the last 10 games.

"You can see the confidence level of our defensemen is at a season high," said Clarks. "We feel we still need to work on our net control. Sometimes, we give up too much space, but Lee's making big saves and we have good defensemen around that get the rebounds and clean up the mess."

Forty-five of the Metros' 105 goals were tallied in the last 10 games. B.J. Jackson (21 goals, 20 assists) and An-

## MHS HL Tournament

At Quad City Sports Center,  
Waterloo, Iowa  
Friday's Games

7:30 p.m.: #2 Quad Cities (29-6-0-1) vs. #7 Mason City (21-14-1-0)

5:30 p.m.: #3 Waterloo (28-6-2-0) vs. #6 Lincoln (22-11-1-2)

8 p.m.: #1 Des Moines Oak Leafs (31-2-2-1) vs. #8 Sioux City (13-20-1-2)

5 p.m.: #4 Des Moines Capitals (25-8-1-2) vs. #5 Kansas City Jr. Outlaws (24-11-0-2)

*NOTE: Championship and consolation semifinals will be played Saturday. Games for first, third, fifth and seventh place will be played Sunday.*

seven goals in the span.

"Bauer, Wilde and Jackson are our three best offensive players and it shows on the scoreboard," said Clarks. "They're all seniors and extremely confident with the puck. They communicate well on the ice and it's great to watch."

The Oak Leafs were 6-1 and 9-2 winners over Sioux City in early November, but the Metros forced a 1-1 tie in the third meeting on Jan. 4.

Tyler Belling leads Des Moines with 31 goals while Chris Kuennen has 24. The Oak Leafs led the MHS HL with 196 goals.

"We like to think we're a different team since the last time we saw them," said Clarks. "If we play the way we're capable of, this team has no limit. I'll take a team of believers over a team that has a bunch of scorers. Believers will do anything and everything it takes to win and get the job done."

drew Bauer (19 goals, 26 assists) each scored eight goals in the stretch.

Ryan Thorsland (14 goals) and Jacob Wilde (15 goals) each recorded