

# Veteran Warriors squad sets sights high for 2011-12

By DOUG NEWHOFF

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**WATERLOO** — A year ago, the Waterloo Warriors learned where discipline, dedication and hard work could take them.

Now, on the eve of the 2011-12 Midwest High School Hockey League season, the Warriors' destination is in clear view.

With a dozen key contributors returning from a squad that went a surprising 24-6-2 and finished just two points behind the regular-season champion Des Moines Oak Leafs, Waterloo has its eyes on the big prize this year.

"We had great success last year, and I think the expectations the kids have this year have expanded," noted second-year head coach Doug Dietz. "They know what their success was and how hard they had to work to get it.

"They're buckling down and working hard again this year."

The preseason has been productive. With so many veterans on the ice, the Warriors are farther along collectively than they were a year ago.

"We're moving along," said Dietz. "We're learning some new stuff. I'm pleased with where we're at right now.

"The kids are a little bit older this year and more mature, and I think they retained some of the stuff we taught them last year. We haven't had to teach a lot this year.

"And it seems like a tighter bunch of kids this year than they were last year. What I told them is, there's a different aura in the locker room as far as just their togetherness."

Dietz can look in a number of directions for offensive production. While Waterloo lost Marshall Cook and

## Warrior watch

■ **Head coach:** Doug Dietz

■ **2010-11 record:** 24-6-2 (3rd in MSHSL)

■ **Returning letterwinners (12):** Connor Hyde, Rhodes Dolan, Jon Skarlis, David Becker,

Austin Jackson, Alex Schutte, Jacob Sessler, Jake Lichty, Bryce Frost, Sean Cavanaugh, Collin Brecher, Tim Brown.



his team-leading 46 points, it returns its next five scoring leaders in forwards Jon Skarlis (20 goals, 21 assists), Jake Lichty (14-24), Austin Jackson (19-16) and Connor Hyde (13-18), along with defenseman Rhodes Dolan (10-17).

Jake Sessler is also back after a 20-point freshman campaign, while Bryce Frost (14 varsity points, 46 at the JV level) and David Becker (12 points) provide more depth, although Becker is rehabbing a football-related injury.

"We expect big things from all those guys, and we've got a sprinkling of freshmen who will get spotted in because they need to learn but I think they can help us, also," said Dietz.

On the blue line where five veterans return, the Warriors look more like a basketball team than a hockey team. Dolan and Sean Cavanaugh are 6-foot-4, Alex Schutte and Tim Brown are 6-5, and Collin Brecher is 6-2.

"We've got five good defensemen who can jump into the play any time," said Dietz. "I feel good about that group, too."

The big question heading into Friday's 6 p.m. season-opener against Ames at Young Arena is who will fill the skates of departed goaltender Jordan Sheeley, who ranked among the league's statistical leaders last season.

Dietz has three goalies in sophomore Chance Kremer, junior Connor Weber and freshman Brady Kraabel. Weber posted an 18-13-1 JV record a year ago with a 2.82 goals-against average and an .890 save percentage, while Kremer has looked good at times during the preseason.

As for the MSHSL, Sioux Falls and the Kansas City Stars have departed, leaving 12 teams split evenly in two divisions. Ames, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Mason City, Quad Cities and Waterloo make up the East with the Des Moines Capitals, Des Moines Oak Leafs, Kansas City Stars, Lincoln, Omaha and Sioux City in the West. Each team will play 32 regular-season games with the top eight teams advancing to the MSHSL Tournament in Ames.

"I think you'll have the traditional teams that are always at the top," said Dietz. "Hopefully, we're at the top again."

"What I've told the kids this week and the last two weeks is that teams are gonna have to beat us. We can't make mistakes and beat ourselves."

## 2011-12 schedule

Oct. 28 - Ames, 6 p.m.; 29 - at Sioux City, 5 p.m.; 30 - at Sioux City, noon.

Nov. 4 - Kansas City, 6 p.m.; 5 - Kansas City, noon; 13 - Quad Cities, 7:45 a.m.; 19 - at Ames, 6:30 p.m.

Dec. 2 - at Dubuque, 7:20 p.m.; 4 - at Des Moines Capitals, noon; 9 - Lincoln, 6 p.m.; 10 - Lincoln, 6 p.m.; 16 - at Quad Cities, 6:30 p.m.; 17 - at Quad Cities, 4:30 p.m.; 20 - Ames, 6 p.m.; 22 - at Mason City, 8:15 p.m.

Jan. 6 - at Cedar Rapids, 6 p.m.; 7 - at Cedar Rapids, noon; 8 - Dubuque, 7:45 a.m.; 13 - at Des Moines Capitals, 8 p.m.; 14 - at Ames, 3 p.m.; 20 - Mason City, 6 p.m.; 21 - Des Moines Oak Leafs, 6 p.m.; 22 - Des Moines Oak Leafs, 7:45 a.m.; 29 - Quad Cities, 7:45 a.m.

Feb. 2 - at Mason City, 8:15 p.m.; 3 - Dubuque, 6 p.m.; 10 - Cedar Rapids, 6 p.m.; 11 - Cedar Rapids, 6 p.m.; 12 - at Dubuque, 11:20 a.m.; 16 - Mason City, 6 p.m.; 18 - at Omaha, 7 p.m.; 19 - at Omaha, 10:45 a.m.; 24-26 - MSHSL Tournament, Ames.