

METROS HOCKEY

Metros find right combination in time for MHSHL Tourney

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SIOUX CITY | Brant Mozak and the Sioux City Metros found the right combination last weekend.

And, just in time.



Carlson

Tonight, Brandon Carlson, the squad's leading scorer with 36 points (19 goals, 17 assists), will play his third straight game with center Braden Cherkas and left wing Keegan Lyon. The eighth-seeded Metros (12-15-0-1) will face top-seeded Des Moines Oak Leafs (25-2-0-1) in the first round of the Midwest High School Hockey League Tournament starting at 6 p.m. at the ISU Ice Arena in Ames.

Carlson is a right wing with 76 points (40 goals, 36 assists) in three varsity seasons. Mozak, the squad's fourth-year head coach, has tried different combinations for his top line throughout the season and took one last chance last weekend at the IBP Ice Center.

It produced successful results. Carlson, who has scored at least one point in all but five games this season, collected one goal and four assists in a weekend sweep of Lincoln, winning 5-4 on Saturday and 4-3 on Sunday.

Carlson has scored in each of his last five games for a program that's in the MHSHL Tournament for the first time since 2010. Lyon (7 goals, 2 assists) scored the first two goals of Saturday's win while Cherkas (6, 8) had two assists in Sunday's victory.

"Those three have been playing for about a week and a half," said Mozak. "I'm glad it happened now as opposed to never. Braden and Keegan set Brandon up and hope that Brandon can finish.

"They played two solid games together so we're going to keep that first line the way it is. We'll lean on the other two lines to grind it out and outwork people. That's their role."

Last weekend's wins were the first for Sioux City since a 4-2 win over Quad City on Jan. 12. The Metros waded through a tough schedule since then, dropping two-game weekend series to division-leading teams from Waterloo (East), Des Moines Oak Leafs (Central) and Kansas City (West).

"We had a good first part of the season, then we got in a slump and

MHSHL Varsity State Championship Tournament

At Ames, Iowa (ISU Ice Arena)

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 22

Noon: #4 Omaha (17-11-0-0) vs. #5 Des Moines Capitals (15-11-0-2)

2 p.m.: #3 Waterloo (20-7-0-1) vs. #6 Mason City (15-12-1-0)

4 p.m.: #2 Kansas City (23-5-0-0) vs. #7 Lincoln (12-12-0-4)

6 p.m.: #1 Des Moines Oak Leafs (25-2-0-1) vs. #8 Sioux City (12-15-0-1)

NOTE: Championship semifinal and consolation semifinal games will be played Feb. 23 while games for first, third and fifth place will be played Feb. 24.

then we backed ourselves into a corner," said Mozak. "We had to win to get in. Saturday and Sunday's games were the best we've played all year, in terms of putting out a full three-period game. It's a good way to get into the playoffs."

Carlson has three goals and five assists in his five-game scoring streak. Cherkas has two goals and three assists in his four-game scoring streak. Skyler Beller and Lyon, who will play for the Metros squad that will compete in next weekend's MHSHL Junior Varsity Tournament in Ames, will rotate on the top line.

The Metros' second line consists of Luke Keeble (3, 4), Sam Bauer (6, 5) and A.J. Boose (8, 9). A combination of Sam Brower (2 assists), Zach Twillman (4, 4), Drew Koontz (5, 5) and Brandon Glissman (1 goal) will play on the third line.

Taylor LaScala (6, 8), who scored one goal and one assist in each game of the crucial series against Lincoln, heads the squad's top defensemen. Connor Schlotfeldt (2, 9) and Luke Boose (6, 13) will also play in front of goaltender Josh Stoos (12-11, 3.54 goals-against average).

The Oak Leafs are led by Connor Cox (28, 25) and Michael Doherty (28, 24). Cox has scored in all but three games while Doherty (56 goals, 83 assists in four varsity seasons) has scored in all but two.

"Those two kids can really score and know how to put the puck away," said Mozak. "We need good coverage in the zone and one thing, we gotta hit them and slow them down. If we do that, we can wear on them throughout the game. We also need better offensive presence in their zone."