

Warriors begin new journey on Saturday

■ **New head coach Cook shaping largely new roster**

DOUG NEWHOFF
doug.newhoff@wctcourier.com

WATERLOO — It's a new season for the Waterloo Warriors in more ways than one.

When Waterloo visits the Des Moines Capitals for games Saturday and Sunday, the Warriors will have a new head coach, a new group of assistants, a new system and a wealth of new faces in the lineup.

The new man who is shaping the 2015-16 team is Brian Cook, who took over after Doug Dietz resigned following an 18-6-1-3 season that included a third-place finish at the Midwest High School Hockey League tournament. Cook has been interested in coaching at the high school level for awhile, but until recently the timing hadn't been right.

Cook inherits a young roster with just eight regulars returning from a year ago. However, it's a nucleus he believes the team can build around.

"With a new system and new coaches for the most part, this will be more of a learning year than anything for all the players," said Cook. "Hopefully, we can kind of put everything together by the time we get to the state tournament and be a difficult out at tournament time."

The Warriors will count on veteran forwards Noah Roach (17 goals, 16 assists) and Nolin Bartlett (7 goals, 13 assists) to lead the attack. Defensively, Cole Murphy (1 g, 5 a) and Trevor Katz (4 g, 8 a) will anchor that group. Other players back with varsity experience include Lake Powell (3 g, 6 a), Cade Saeugling (5 g, 1 a), Dylan Stech (2 g, 3a) and Drew Westphal (2 a).

Cook is less concerned about big offensive

numbers than he is about hard-nosed, disciplined defense.

"We will be a defensive-minded team," he noted. "Even though I was more of an offensive player, the coaching I've done and the refereeing I've done have taught me that good defense wins games and it wins championships. I tell our guys that stopping a goal is just as important as scoring a goal. I don't think we will win too many games 5-0 or 6-2 or anything like that."

Waterloo will have new goaltenders in Dawson Sturch, who played on the junior varsity team last season, and Chase Pabst.

"Our goaltenders are young — one's a sophomore and one's a freshman — but I think they are both capable of stepping in and doing a good job," said Cook. "They're both big goalies. We'll be able to tell a lot more this weekend. You can practice a lot, but it really comes down to what you do in the games."

Cook said he has about 36 players on the varsity and JV rosters, enough that he hopes to have just one of his varsity lines playing for the JV this season.

"The JV team, I think we will see some really good things out of them," he said. "We have a good group of freshmen and sophomores who have come through the Junior Hawks system and seem to be pretty good hockey players at that young age."

So, the journey of discovery begins Saturday night.

"I imagine it will be a great learning experience for both the players and myself," said Cook. "Many of them haven't played high school hockey. We're starting on the road against a very good team. It will be interesting and it will be a quick learning experience right away."

"Right now, that's what we need."

2015-16 schedule

Oct. 31 — at D.M. Capitals, 8 p.m.

Nov. 1 — at D.M. Capitals, noon, Nov. 6 — Cedar Rapids, 6 p.m., Nov. 7 — Ames, noon, Nov. 14 — at Lincoln, 8 p.m., Nov. 15 — at Lincoln, 10:30 a.m., Nov. 21 — Kansas City, 6 p.m., Nov. 22 — Kansas City, 7:45 a.m., Nov. 24 — Cedar Rapids, 6 p.m., Nov. 27 — Quad City, 6 p.m.

Dec. 5 — at Omaha, 4:30 p.m., Dec. 6 — at Omaha, 9:30 a.m., Dec. 15 — Mason City, 6 p.m., Dec. 18 — at Quad City, 7 p.m.

Jan. 2 — Dubuque, 6 p.m., Jan. 8 — at Quad City, 7 p.m., Jan. 9 — at Cedar Rapids, noon, Jan. 15 — at Dubuque, 6:10 p.m., Jan. 23 — Sioux City, 6 p.m., Jan. 24 — Sioux City, 7:45 a.m., Jan. 28 — Mason City, 6 p.m.

Feb. 5 — Quad City, 6 p.m., Feb. 6 — at D.M. Oak Leafs, 8 p.m., Feb. 7 — at D.M. Oak Leafs, 11 a.m., Feb. 9 — Ames, 6 p.m., Feb. 12 — Dubuque, 6 p.m., Feb. 13 — at Dubuque, 11:45 a.m., Feb. 19 — at Cedar Rapids, 6 p.m., Feb. 26-28 — MHSFL Tournament, Ames.