



Ames High School Hockey Coach Marc Rogers talks with players during practice at the Ames/ISU Ice Arena on Tuesday. PHOTO BY GRAYSON SCHMIDT/AMES TRIBUNE

## Nearly 50 years later: Ames Hockey Association continues to grow the sport in central Iowa

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When Al Murdoch pitched the idea of a hockey and ice skating workshop for the youth in Ames in 1969, he had no idea what type of turnout he would get. But that small workshop ended bringing in nearly 500 kids, and almost 50 years later, the Ames Hockey Association club has continued to maintain strong numbers, and help promote the game around central Iowa.

"It's been a great ride, from me coming to Ames, Iowa, to get a master's (degree) in 1969 to today," Murdoch said. "Ames is a great community, and if you throw out an idea, 'Hey how

would you like to learn how to skate?' it's kind of like 'Oh yeah. That sounds great.'"

From skating in Brookside Park, to playing the Olympic team in Hilton Coliseum, and opening the Ames/ISU Ice Arena, Murdoch has been actively involved in Ames hockey from the start and has seen it spawn interest in other sports like curling, broomball, and figure skating.

"It got to a point where there were so many ice programs going that the ice rink was getting used 15 to 20 hours a day in the winter time, and even in the summer it was going eight to 10 hours a day," Murdoch said.

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# HOCKEY: 'For our population base, we have a pretty good amount of interest in hockey'

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According to Ames Hockey Association Coach Marc Rogers, the sport's numbers in Ames have stayed fairly steady since he began coaching the team in 1996, however, he did say that the level of competition and skill has significantly increased just from the way the sport is coached. When he started coaching in Ames, Rogers — originally from Eau Claire, Wis. — said that the program was already well-established.

"My first impression of Iowa high school hockey was all the kids were big, and they loved to hit. It was very physical," Rogers said.

Considering that the sport has only gained popularity in pockets across the state (Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, Dubuque, Quad Cities), he said that Ames has been able to hold its own in terms of player numbers against some of the larger metropolitan teams in Iowa and the Midwest.

"For our population base, we have a pretty good amount of interest in hockey," Rogers said. "There are a lot of other winter sports that probably have more popularity, but more familiarity also, so it's a generational thing. The players that I've coached, I see them come back now with their kids, and those kids are playing hockey, and that's what really makes it grow and explode in a community."

The Ames Hockey Association plays teams from Iowa (Des Moines, Dubuque, Cedar Rapids, Mason City, Sioux City, Quad Cities) as well as competes in tournaments in Omaha, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and Milwaukee.

And in a state that values wrestling, and a city that values basketball, Rogers said that hockey has still found its place.



Ames High School hockey players practice at the Ames/ISU Ice Arena on Tuesday. PHOTOS BY GRAYSON SCHMIDT/AMES TRIBUNE

Though Rogers said he recognizes the significant cost differences between hockey and wrestling or basketball, he said that once kids get involved with the sport, they usually don't switch back.

"If you can get a kid on the ice, the game sells itself," Rogers said.

That is exactly why Murdoch said that he was never worried about competition with the other winter sports. From sharing Hilton Coliseum with ISU basketball and wrestling, to recruiting kids from elementary school through high school, Murdoch said that hockey has always stood out on its own in Ames.

"We never really looked at it as a competition; we weren't competing," Murdoch said. "Hockey players and skaters in general are different a different kind of individuals. They're a little bit of everything."

Currently the Ames Hockey Association has

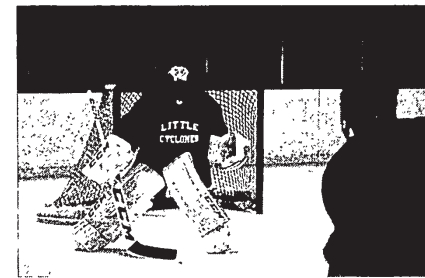
just over 150 players across seven age groups. According to both Murdoch and Rogers, a major contributing factor to the success of the Ames Hockey Association has been the partnership with the Iowa State University Hockey Club, which have had former Ames players on the roster.

According to Murdoch and Rogers, many of the players that Rogers has coached have decided to come back and coach.

"Everybody that comes out of hockey and the hockey culture has this thing where they want to give back," Rogers said.

"There's almost an obligation to give back something to the sport that's given them so much."

That mentality is what Murdoch said has allowed



hockey to continue to flourish in Ames, and is what he said will hopefully help grow the sport in Ames and across the state.

"There's a very strong nucleus of people, and some of them are parents or grandparents now, and they take pretty good pride in being a

participant and being a part of that growth, and I think they're very loyal," Murdoch said. "(The club) has some good people, and you can feel the history when you step in (to the Ames/ISU Ice Arena). It's an example of a successful joint venture between Iowa State University, and the city of Ames."