

Defense the key for Warriors

Waterloo strong in net, but young elsewhere

DOUG NEWHOFF
doug.newhoff@wfcourier.com

WATERLOO — A year ago, the Waterloo Warriors could win a hockey game any number of ways — from explosive offense to lock-down defense to stellar goaltending.

Ultimately, it was defense and goaltending that carried Waterloo to its first Midwest High School Hockey League tournament title since 2012 as the Warriors won by a 2-1 margin in both the semifinals and finals top cap a 24-7 season.

“I was an offensive player, but through my years of playing and refereeing and coaching, I know that defense wins games,” notes Warriors coach Brian Cook. “We will continue to preach a strong defensive zone, protect the middle of the ice and get scoring when we can.”

That approach will be especially important this season. Waterloo doesn't have proven scorers like Kyle Schott (26 goals, 29 assists), Cade Sauegling (14-19-33) and Jake Beal (15-16-31). In fact, the top five scorers from a year ago are gone.

What the Warriors do have is experienced, tested goaltenders in Dawson Sturch and Chase Pabst. Sturch led the MHSJHL in goals-against (2.11) and was sec-



MATTHEW PUTNEY, COURIER PHOTO EDITOR

Waterloo goalie Dawson Sturch, left, deflects a penalty shot by Lincoln's Coby Sketta, right, during a game last season at Young Arena.

ond in save percentage (.907) for a team that allowed a league-low 62 goals. Pabst saw limited action at the varsity level, but was impressive for the junior varsity squad.

“They'll probably be sharing time in the net,” notes Cook. “They're both high quality goalkeepers.”

“We did some drills over the summer and I said to the other coaches, ‘I don't think anybody has scored yet.’ They are very competitive in practice about not letting anybody score.

“We're going to have to rely on them this year. Last year we had some offensive output where we won a few games 7-5 or 6-5. This year, I don't expect that. We're going to have to win a lot of games 2-1 or 3-1... rely on our defensive zone and goaltending.”

Overall, it's a young Waterloo squad with only six seniors on the preseason roster. Two of them, Ben Boesinger and Coulter Dupree, are out indefinitely with a broken wrist suffered in practice and an illness, respec-

tively. “We're a fairly young team,” says Cook. “Some of the guys we chose as captains, I think they learned a lot from the seniors we had last year. We had a lot of senior leadership, which I think you kind of need to win in this league.”

The top returning scorers are Carter Herbst (5-13-18), Kole Latuschik (5-9-14) and Ben Sinnott (8-5-13). Nick Samuelson, Tyler Starbeck and Jason Katz will also see a lot of ice time.

“Where we're really young and

2017-18 schedule

Oct. 28—Mason City, 2 p.m.,
29—Mason City, 11 a.m.

Nov. 4—at Lincoln, 7 p.m., 5—at Lincoln, 10:30 a.m., 11—at Des Moines Oak Leafs, 5 p.m., 12—at Des Moines Capitals, noon, 24—Kansas City, 8 p.m., 25—Kansas City, 11 a.m.

Dec. 1—at Cedar Rapids, 8 p.m., 9—at Omaha, 4:30 p.m., 10—at Omaha, 11:30 a.m., 16—at Des Moines Capitals, 7:30 p.m., 17—at Des Moines Oak Leafs, noon, 22—Dubuque, 8 p.m., 30—Dubuque, 8 p.m.

Jan. 5—Cedar Rapids, 8 p.m., 6—at Quad City, 7:15 p.m., 10—at Dubuque, 6:30 p.m., 19—Ames, 8 p.m., 20—at Quad City, 7:15 p.m., 26—Ames, 8 p.m.

Feb. 2—at Dubuque, 6:30 p.m., 9—Quad City, 8 p.m., 10—Quad City, 2 p.m., 16—Cedar Rapids, 8 p.m., 17—Sioux City, 8 p.m., 18—Sioux City, 11 a.m., 24—at Cedar Rapids, 2 p.m.

March 1-4—at MHSJHL tournament, Ames

inexperienced is at the defensive end,” says Cook. “We only have one senior in our top six.”

Waterloo opens the season Saturday when it hosts Mason City at 2 p.m. at Young Arena.