

SIOUX CITY METROS HOCKEY

Metros set to begin MHSHL Tourney

Coach feels No. 2 seeded squad hasn't peaked

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SIOUX CITY — Jesse Monell knows it's late in the hockey season, but he believes his team hasn't peaked.

Monell's Sioux City Metros yielded the second-least goals in the Midwest High School Hockey League (MHSHL). It tied the regular season total from last year's squad that won both the league's



Beller



Archer

regular-season

and tournament

championships.

En route to a

26-3-3 record,

the Metros also

ranked third in

MHSHL, scoring

135 goals. Sioux

City finished the

final month of

the season on a

7-0-1 tear, out-

scoring oppo-

nents 37-11.

However, the

only blemish

was a 1-0 over-

time loss at Lin-

coln on Feb. 10.

Maybe that's the reasoning of the first-year head coach, whose squad is seeded second heading into Friday's 4 p.m. first-round game at the Ames/ISU Ice Arena against seventh-seeded Lincoln (17-14-1).

"We have not hit our peak yet," said Monell, an assistant coach from last year's Sioux City squad that after winning the program's seventh MHSHL Tournament title, went on to win the USA Hockey High School Division 2 national title in Plymouth, Minn.

The Metros bring back nine athletes who hope to defend their title.

"Believe it or not, we still see room for growth in players I feel who have room still to grow," said Monell. "Playoff hockey brings out the best in some people. You can have an average skater who does good for you, but that same player can be a great player in the playoffs. It's late in the season, but I believe we can still get better in certain areas."

The Metros' defensive strengths lie in a group of four defensemen (Max Beller, Alec Nieman, Colby Nieman, Ethan Barger) who have supported their partners and have also combined for 30 goals. They've also protected goaltender Blake Beller (23-3-3, 1.30 goals-against average) to the fullest.

Blake Beller repeated as a first-team goalie when the MHSHL announced its all-star team earlier this week. For the second straight season, Beller, a Hinton High School senior, played each of his team's minutes between the pipes, logging career-best statistics with his GAA, along with six shutouts and a .934 save percentage.

Beller finished his career with 60 wins, which doesn't include those earned in the playoffs. Six times last month and 16 times during the season, he yielded just one goal thanks the support of

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MHSHL

Midwest High School Hockey League Tournament

At Ames/ISU Ice Arena

Friday's Quarterfinals

(Bracket Order)

2 p.m.: #3 Cedar Rapids (27-5) vs.

#5 Des Moines Capitals (17-13-2)

4 p.m.: #2 Sioux City (26-3-3) vs.

#7 Lincoln (17-14-1)

12 p.m.: #4 Oriskany (22-9-1) vs. #6

Quad City (21-12)