

Warriors eager to get started

Waterloo returns plenty of talent, experience this season

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WATERLOO — When you've been to the top of the mountain, the view never measures up from anywhere else.

Two seasons ago, the Waterloo Warriors reached that pinnacle when they won the Midwest High School Hockey League postseason championship. Last year, the Warriors (15-10-1-2) left ISU Ice Arena in Ames with an empty feeling following a 2-1, double-overtime loss to eventual champion Sioux City. The nucleus of this season's Waterloo squad was part of both of those journeys, and that's one reason head coach Brian Cook is excited about what this season could hold for the Warriors, who get it started Saturday and Sunday at Mason City.

Four of the top six forwards are now seniors. The top four defensemen are two seniors and two juniors. Goaltender Chase Pabst is a senior.

"Usually in this league, the most successful teams are the teams with seniors leading them," notes Cook, who also thinks the agony of defeat in their last game has stuck with his veterans.

"I think they've grown up a lot



from that loss we had in the first round of the tournament," he said. "That group and the group I have now, all they had ever experienced was mostly success. Losing that game, I think they learned that you need to do all the little things correctly and come to play every day and work hard."

Senior forward Nick Samuelson agrees. "It stuck with me personally a little bit ... but I think it makes us a little more prepared for this season," he relates.

Waterloo's scoring should come from a variety of players. Five of the top six scorers from a year ago are back in Kole Latusick (18 goals, 20 assists), Samuelson (8-22), Ben Sinnott (16-12), Carter Herbst (14-14) and Keegan Smith (4-12).

There is a sense of familiarity that makes everything easier. "We already know how to play with each other and we're not being so selfish, like if we're second or first line," said Samuelson. "It doesn't matter to us. We're all just going to play together."

Cobie Morrissey, Jonah McFarland and J.P. Smith, the top three junior varsity scorers last season, could also add some depth to the varsity attack. That group will get some added punch with the addition of brothers Jack and John Harrison, whose family moved to Cedar Falls from New York. Jack is a senior and John is a sophomore.

"Jack is a very skilled forward," said Cook, "and John is also pretty talented and will probably be anchor-

Waterloo's Carter Herbst, left, runs Ames' Cole Rogers into the boards as they battle for a loose puck during a game in Waterloo last season.

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2018-19 schedule

Oct. 27 — at Mason City, 2 p.m., Oct. 28 — at Mason City, 9 a.m.

Nov. 1 — Cedar Rapids, 8 p.m. Nov. 3 — Omaha, 7 p.m., Nov. 4 — Omaha 11 a.m., Nov. 9 — at Ames, 7 p.m., Nov. 10 — Lincoln, 7 p.m., Nov. 11 — Lincoln, 11 a.m., Nov. 17 — Des Moines Capitals, 2 p.m., Nov. 18 — Des Moines Capitals, 11 a.m., Nov. 20 — Dubuque, 8 p.m.

Dec. 1 — at Sioux City, 2 p.m., Dec. 2 — at Sioux City, 10 a.m., Dec. 7 — at Dubuque, 7 p.m., Dec. 12 — at Cedar Rapids, 8 p.m., Dec. 20 — at Ames, 8 p.m., Dec. 21 — Cedar Rapids,

8 p.m., Dec. 29 — at Fremont, 6 p.m., Dec. 30 — at Fremont, 8:30 a.m.

Jan. 4 — at Dubuque 7 p.m., Jan. 11 — Dubuque, 8 p.m., Jan. 12 — Quad City, 7 p.m., Jan. 13 — Quad City, 11 a.m., Jan. 18 — Ames, 8 p.m., Jan. 25 — Des Moines Oak Leafs, 8 p.m.

Feb. 6 — at Cedar Rapids, 8 p.m., Feb. 8 — Ames, 8 p.m., Feb. 15 — Des Moines Oak Leafs, 8 p.m., Feb. 16 — at Kansas City, 4:40 p.m., Feb. 17 — at Kansas City, 10:40 a.m., Feb. 23 — at Quad City, 7:30 p.m., Feb. 24 — at Quad City, 11:30 a.m.

ing our third line as the center man. "We have two very solid lines, which I'm pretty excited about. You can go a long way in this league with one good line, but it's nice to have that second good line so the other team can't key on your top line all the time."

Defensively, the top returning veterans are Smith, Ethan Fox, Mason Lamb and Brady Buckley. Pabst shared time in the nets last season while posting a 7-6 record with a 2.75 goals-against average and a .915 save percentage.

"Chase is a very confident goaltender, and a big goaltender (6-foot-3, 180 pounds)," notes Cook. "We expect huge things from him this year. If we play well in front of him and let him see the puck and stuff like that, he can take us a long way

this year." Pabst said everyone benefits from the depth of experience on the ice at practice.

"I think the young guys want to get to that level where the older guys are, so that makes them want to play harder and push more so they're getting a lot out of it, too. And they push us," said Pabst.

The league has added a team from Fremont, Neb., this season which also expanded the regular-season schedule by four games. The top eight finishers in the standings make the postseason tournament, which is Feb. 28-March 3 in Ames.

"If we can just stay healthy ... we've had problems with that," says Cook. "But if we can stay healthy, we should be a pretty good team this year."