

High School Hockey League Launches Full Season

The Midwest High School Hockey League will challenge covid-19 and begin the 2020-21 season on time with a full 32-game regular-season schedule, ending with the Varsity and Jr. Varsity year-end tournaments in Ames, March 4-7, 2021.

The League faced an early challenge creating a schedule. Several of the high school teams skate in arenas that host a USHL team which has priority in choosing ice times. The USHL delayed the start of their season because of the pandemic and two teams cancelled their season at the last minute. The USHL did not finalize its schedule until early October. In addition, two high school teams, Des Moines Capitals and Cedar Rapids RoughRiders, had their home rinks damaged during the August derecho storm. Buccaneer arena in Des Moines is being repaired and will be ready at the start of the season. The Cedar Rapids arena was severely damaged and is closed for the season. With persistent effort, the High School RoughRiders will remain in the League by playing all their home games on the road.

The League is now comprised of 12 teams. The Boji Mammoths, skating out of Spirit Lake, and the Fremont, Nebraska, Flyers have exited the League due to low player numbers and hope to return for the 2021-22 season.

The Midwest High School Hockey League season opens Friday, October 30, when Omaha visits Mason City. Mason City hosts Omaha again on Saturday while the other 10 teams begin two-game sets on Saturday and Sunday. The Des Moines Capitals are at Sioux City, Dubuque at Lincoln, Kansas City at Waterloo, Ames at Quad City, and Cedar Rapids visits the Des Moines Oak Leafs.

The regular season ends Sunday, February 28, 2021, followed by Championship Weekend, March 4-7, in Ames, where the top-eight regular-season Varsity and Junior Varsity finishers battle for a tournament title.

The Waterloo Warriors, the defending regular-season Varsity champions, and the Kansas City Jets, last year's tournament champions, will meet the first weekend of the season. The Lincoln Jr. Stars will defend their Junior Varsity 2019-20 regular-season title while Waterloo looks to retain the Junior Varsity tournament championship.

Waterloo's Kole Latusick set a new mark for Varsity career assists last season with 130 during four seasons of high school hockey. The old record of 125 assists was held by Mason City's Cole Despenas from 2000 to 2004.

Dubuque has made the transition from Devils to Saints. The high school team operates under the Dubuque Youth Hockey Association, which is affiliated with the USHL Dubuque Fighting Saints. In an effort to further unite the organizations, the high school team has been renamed the Saints and is emblazoned with an earlier Fighting Saints logo.

In late January of 2021, the Des Moines Oak Leafs will make the move from the Metro Ice Sports Facility in Urbandale to the newly constructed MidAmerican RecPlex in West Des Moines. The 300,000 square foot facility provides year-round access for growing youth sports programs of hockey, soccer and basketball. The 66-acre project will include three outdoor turf fields and parking for 1,000 vehicles.

For the second time, the Omaha Junior Lancers will host the USA Hockey High School National Tournament, March 18-22. The Junior Lancers hosted the event in 2014. Participating high school teams from across the

country will be divided into two divisions. High school teams made up of players attending the same school will compete in Division I and teams with high school-age players from multiple schools will compete for the Division II title. Teams from the MSHSL will compete in Division II. The Midwest High School Hockey League has the option of sending the highest finishing team during the regular season from Iowa, Nebraska and Kansas. The Sioux City Metros captured the Division II championship in 2018 when the event was held in Plymouth, Minnesota.

The National Tournament is a great opportunity for Omaha and the MSHSL to showcase the hockey spirit of its players, coaches, volunteers and fans who have sustained the League for 45 years. The MSHSL motto is:

“Competitive high school hockey scoring big on family and academic values!”