

Riders' preps consider safe season a success

By Justin Webster, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS — With all of the cancellations in the sports world abroad, local teams are thankful just to be given the opportunity to attempt a season.

"Every year your goal is to win a championship, but our primary goal as a club is to have a safe and successful season," Dustin Timm, executive director of RoughRiders Hockey Club said.

"Everything else, between COVID-19 and the derecho storm, just the fact that we are having a season is a huge positive and we're going to take that for what it is."

While the junior hockey RoughRiders that usually would compete in the 62-game USHL season are about the same age as the high school team, the difference is level of competition.

The high school RoughRiders began their 32-game season Oct. 31 and stand 2-2 entering tonight's game at Dubuque.

"The majority of the USHL players are playing Division 1 or will be committing to a D-1 school in the future," Timm said. "So the caliber of play is slightly different."

Besides hockey in the

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Cedar Rapids area, the RoughRiders also have teams playing softball, soccer, baseball, basketball, rugby, lacrosse and even golf with partners in Colorado and Connecticut, and the club is working on expanding the programs to Kansas City, Mo., Milwaukee and Seattle.

"RoughRiders hockey club is just one entity of a larger unit across the country," Timm said. "It's a European-type model and it provides a couple of things. First, the marketing and branding of the RoughRiders across the country in multiple sports.

"Secondly, from a business operations standpoint, there's a lot of consistencies from program-to-program and sport-to-sport which allows a lot of the administrators a seamless process."

While many of the RoughRiders teams have been without competition since March when the club elected to shut down completely, the local high school hockey

club has been practicing since August and is ready to give it a go, with or without a home arena.

"Unfortunately, with our home arena not being operational for the season, we are playing 13 of our 18 home games on the road between Waterloo, Des Moines, Dubuque and the Quad Cities," Timm said. "The other five games will be played at Coral Ridge Mall in Coralville."

The return to the ice has been good for the players and the team.

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The team is composed of players mostly from the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area with the northernmost player commuting from Cedar Falls. Fourteen different high schools are represented on the varsity and junior varsity rosters.