

High School Hockey Making Plans for Full Season

After a chaotic 2020-21 season impacted by Covid, the Midwest High School Hockey League is ready to begin a new and complete hockey season starting Friday, October 29, and ending Sunday, February 27. Varsity and Jr. Varsity teams then meet March 3-6, 2022, for the year-end ***Championship Weekend*** tournament.

All teams take the ice on opening weekend. Friday night the Des Moines Oak Leafs visit Cedar Rapids and intra-division rivals Lincoln Junior Stars and Omaha Junior Lancers clash at Omaha's Ralston Arena. Remaining teams will begin play Saturday and Sunday. The League begins its 45th year of continuous operation since 1976-77.

The League saw three important developments during the off-season. The Fremont, Nebraska, Flyers will rejoin the League after low player numbers forced them to sit out last season and rebuild. The total number of League teams now stands at 13, divided into three divisions. The Flyers will compete in the West Division, along with Kansas City, Lincoln, Omaha and Sioux City. The Central Division includes Ames, Des Moines Capitals, Des Moines Oak Leafs and Mason City. Filling out the East Division are Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Quad City and Waterloo. Teams will play each team in their respective division four times and each team in the other divisions twice. Teams in the Central and East divisions will play two additional interdivision games.

The 2022 MSHSL year-end ***Championship Weekend*** tournament will move from Ames to the new *MidAmerican Company RecPlex* in West Des Moines, March 3-6, 2022. Besides a 1,500-seat hockey arena, the new state-of-the-art facility features 300,000 square feet of indoor space for other sporting events and activities. The MSHSL is excited to move its marquee event to the premier sports venue in the region. League member, Des Moines Oak Leafs, will call *RecPlex* its home arena during the regular season. The Des Moines Capitals will remain at *Buccaneer Arena* in Urbandale.

Because teams played an unequal number of games last season due to Covid, the year-end ***Championship Weekend*** tournament format was changed to include all Varsity teams and six Jr. Varsity teams. Because the change was popular with players, team officials and fans, this format will continue. All 13 Varsity teams and six Jr. Varsity teams will qualify for the event with seeding based on final regular-season standings. The top three Varsity teams will earn a bye. The remaining ten teams will play a qualifying round. The top two Jr. Varsity teams will earn a bye while the remaining four teams play a qualifying round.

Last April, a milestone event for the MSHSL occurred during the *USA Hockey High School National Championships*, hosted in Omaha. The Omaha Jr. Lancers advanced through a field of 16 top high school teams from across the country, to reach the championship game where they overcame an early three-goal deficit to defeat the Capistrano (Calif.) Coyotes 5-4 in overtime. Omaha's victory marked the second time an MSHSL team has captured the title in the last three tournaments. The Sioux City Metros won in 2018. (the event was canceled in 2020 due to Covid)

The Cedar Rapids RoughRiders will return to their home arena this season after playing all of last year's home games on the road or in Iowa City. The Cedar Rapids ice arena was closed for the entire hockey season after suffering major damage during the devastating derecho storm that struck Iowa in August 2020. Hats off to the RoughRiders' organization for working through a challenging year.

Last season the Kansas City Jets captured both the Varsity regular-season and year-end tournament titles. The Jets ended the season with a record of 24 wins, 3 losses and 2 shootout losses. The Jets then topped the Waterloo Warriors 4-0 in the title game of the year-end **Championship Weekend** tournament. The Jets also finished first as regular-season Jr. Varsity champions, but were edged out in the year-end tournament championship game by the Des Moines Oak Leafs, 3-2.

The Midwest High School Hockey League is a member of the Pointstreak Scoring Network. All games are scored live and can be tracked on the Pointstreak Scoreboard located at the top of the League's home page. The League's website also provides up-to-date standings plus team and individual statistics. The League's companion site, mhshl.com, offers year-by-year team and individual statistics and the League Record Book.

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