



CHRIS ZOELLER, COURIER STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Waterloo's Dayton Niedert holds the puck against Cedar Rapids on Friday at Young Arena.

## Waterloo returns to MHSHL tourney

**ETHAN PETRIK**

Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier

**WATERLOO** — A lot has changed since the Waterloo Warriors faced the Omaha (NE) Jr. Lancers in the opening weekend of the Midwest High School Hockey League (MHSHL) season in October.

According to Waterloo head coach Brian Cook, the Warriors are a completely different team since dropping both games against Omaha.

"We figured out our three lines that we have," Cook said. "That entailed bringing up some younger kids that are some very good talent. Also, solidifying our goaltending throughout the year. Then, just being able to run three lines consistently instead of just trying to play two lines.

"[Shane Lochner] has brought a big presence in net. He has made big saves when we needed them. And, we have done a pretty good job of winning the close games, the one-goal games."

So, when the sixth-seeded

Warriors (18-13-1-0) face Omaha (25-6-0-1) in the quarterfinal round of the MHSHL Championship tournament, Cook hopes to have the element of surprise on the side of the Warriors.

"Hopefully they will overlook us a little bit," Cook said. "I imagine it will be a close game. It will probably come down to goaltending in the end, but I do have a very good feeling about our chances in the first round.

After missing the MHSHL Tournament in the 2022-23 season, Cook said the Warriors are excited to be back.

"The biggest thing is we have a good week of practice this week," Cook said. "We do not want to change much for state week ... Nothing really changes. [Our players] will be excited and we are going to try to use that excitement and energy to stay with Omaha initially."

In 30 games backstopping the Warriors, Lochner posted a 17-12-1 record with three shutouts (the second-most in the league),

a 3.25 goals against average and a .890 save percentage.

Waterloo forward Dayton Niedert finished the season as the Warriors' leading scorer with 58 points (32 goals and 26 assists) in 32 games. The junior from Sumner led Waterloo in both goals and assists this season.

Niedert finished sixth in the league in points and fourth in goals.

The Warriors went 5-5-0 over their final 10 games of the regular season, splitting its final two games against the league-leading Sioux City Metros (28-4-0-0).

Puck drop for the Warriors matchup with the Jr. Lancers is slated for 4:30 p.m. on Friday at the MidAmerican Energy RecPlex in West Des Moines.

The Warriors junior varsity team also qualified for its postseason tournament as the No. 3 seed. The Waterloo JV squad will face Lincoln (NE) in the opening round.

The game will be available to stream on the Waterloo Warriors High School Hockey YouTube channel.