



Photo by Patricia O'Blenes

Macomb Dakota senior forward Kyler Kolb skates ahead of Utica High senior forward Chris Schwartzkoff during the Cougars' 4-2 win Jan. 30 at Macomb Suburban Ice Arena.

Sweet repeat?

Macomb Dakota hockey eyes second straight MAC Red title

By Brad D. Bates
 C & G Sports Writer

Macomb Dakota hockey coach Dave Koons could get used to this.

Halfway through his third year leading the Cougars (9-8-1 overall), Koons has them atop the Macomb Area Conference Red Division at 5-0-1 — the same spot they were in at the end of 2007-08.

“It would be absolutely amazing,” Koons said about the prospect of repeating as Red champs. “Last year, we had the senior experience with kids who had been with us a couple years, so expectations were high.

“This year, we knew we were going to be good, but didn’t know if we could compete for the league.”

The Cougars graduated MAC Red MVP forward Josh Agrusa along with All-Conference forwards Ed Lewis and Dave Demick and blue-liners Tom Beres and Ken Kolb.

Dakota also had to fill a void in goal with the graduation of Paul Savage, who is currently playing goalie for Grand Valley State University.

“We knew, with the talent we had coming back and the travel players we had coming in, we’d be competitive,” Koons said of his preseason prospects.

“It took awhile, that’s why we lost some games early, but once the kids got used to our



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system, things settled down.”

Koons’ system is that of disciplined hockey with everyone filling his specific role on the team.

“We ask them to play a certain type of hockey,” Koons said. “If they don’t, then they don’t play for us. We’ve lost a couple kids because of that, but the ones that stay turn out pretty good.”

The influx of talent from the travel hockey ranks helped Koons replace much of the talent lost to graduation — particularly in net.

“We were very lucky there,” Koons said. “We had Trevor Mills coming in as our junior goalie, but lost him when he broke his shoulder in football.

“Luckily, we had Spencer Gold and Peter Tropper decide they were going to leave travel hockey to play for their high school.”

Topper and Gold have backstopped Dakota with a combined goals-against average of 2.50 to give Koons the kind of stability that makes him confident no matter who’s in net.

“I’ve done it both ways,” Koons said of using one or two goalies in the postseason. “As long as they both do a good job, and do it consistently, I have no problem using either one.”

The Cougars’ goaltending has been bolstered of late by an improving defensive corps, which Koons only expects to get better as the season progresses.

“Our six kids on defense have improved so much. I’m really pleased with them,” Koons said of seniors Corey Burgess and Ryan Marvin, and juniors Jordan Pinheiro, Tyler Zdybel, Shane Allen and Austin Mazur.

“Our forwards are guys we knew were going to be good, but the defense has really picked it up and is performing at a high level. I give them all the kudos.”

Dakota’s offense has come from a variety of contributors with seven different players tallying 10 or more points.

Junior forward Alex Johansons leads the Cougars with 20 points on six goals and 14 assists, while senior Steve Seaman leads in goals with 10 to go with six assists.

Along with providing leadership to complement junior standouts like Johansons, the Cougars’ contingent of eight seniors is driving their underclassmen and their quest for a championship.

“I point out that this is the seniors’ last chance,” Koons said. “Some might move on to play college or junior hockey, but, mainly, this is their last chance to play organized hockey.

“Enough of the juniors were on last year’s team, and they saw guys like Dave Demick, Eddie Lewis and the Agrusa brothers after their last game. They saw the emotions.”

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