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Coach unsure what to expect from ice team

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by Brent Hovey

Reporter

Aurora -- A new season brings a new division and a whole lot of new questions for the Aurora ice hockey team.

The Greenmen move from the Blue East Division to the Blue North in the Greater Cleveland High School Hockey League -- a step up in competition and a reward for establishing a quality program.

However, the switch comes at a time when coach John Sheridan isn't sure what to expect from his team.

Gone from the 2006-07 team is 54-goal scorer Robert Walker, four-year starting goalie Brad Puette and energy and emotions leader Mike Altmann.

Sheridan said he used the preseason to find an identity for the 2007-08 version of Greenman hockey.

"At times we look pretty good and at times we looked pretty bad," said Sheridan after three scrimmages. "I look at the preseason as a time to find positives and develop an identity.

"Guys are going to have to step up. We've got a core of players who we're going to rely on."

Sheridan is taking a "wait and see" approach. He said as much as the squad lost, "It's not like we are depleted."

Those returning who will move from supporting roles last year to leading roles this year include senior forward captain Joe Lawrie.

"He's going to be one of the better players in the division," Sheridan predicted.

Other returnees at the forward position are senior Matt Rausch, junior David Walker and sophomores Aaron Jaskiewicz and Jon Deacon, who also will play as defenders.

LEADING THE defender returnees is junior Adam Bellamy, who is coming off a spectacular football season. Sheridan hopes some of that fall success translates to the ice rink.

Joining Bellamy as a returnee is senior Jay Adams and junior Kyle Wright, while between the pipes will be a combination of two talented but untested freshmen.

Ron Schwartz and Steve Angus will split duties until one emerges as the stopper.

"We're going into the season with a lot of questions to be answered," Sheridan said. "We're confident we'll be good, but we'll probably hit some bumps along the way.

"It should be an interesting year. I'm positive, but also realistic. We're young and have to be patient. We have to work to get better each week.

"It will not be the same as the past two years, but we have a good nucleus."

In the new Blue North division, Aurora is joined by Kenson, Chagrin Falls, Solon, Mayfield and Midview.

"It's going to be a very competitive division," Sheridan said. "If we win [games], it's going to be by a goal or two and if we lose it's going to be by a goal or two."

All the uncertainty around his team has Sheridan excited, though.

"It's going to be a fun year," he said. "Who knows? We might come out and surprise people right from the start. We have the nucleus to do that."

"It's going to come down to the guys buying into the system and taking care of our end of the ice, and then capitalizing on opportunities. We have guys to do that."

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