

RoughRiders expect bigger crowds this year

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Cedar Rapids RoughRiders missed the USHL playoffs last year and saw their attendance decline by 8.3 percent from the previous campaign.

They plan to do something about it this year with a veteran team and an aggressive marketing approach.

Jeff Jauch, the team's president and CEO, said group sales, suites and business sponsors have increased compared with last year at this time.

"They're going very well," he said Tuesday. "That's been a real positive."

The RoughRiders averaged 2,905 fans during the 2011-12 season, but that number dipped to 2,663 last year. Jauch is confident the numbers will turn in the right direction this year.

"I anticipate we're going to be higher," he said. "I anticipate we're going to do much better."

Season ticket sales and individual game sales will begin next week. Tickets may be ordered online at www.RoughRide.com or rsHockey.com by phone at (319) 247-0340 or in person at the Cedar Rapids Ice Arena on Rockford Road SW from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The RoughRiders will host Dubuque in a preseason game this Tuesday, Sept. 10, at 7:05 p.m. They will open the regular season at Lincoln on Friday, Sept. 27, and hold their home opener

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against Sioux Falls on Saturday night, Sept. 28.

The RoughRiders have only nine home games in September, October and November, compared with 11 home dates during the same time span last season. Jauch is glad about that, because the RoughRiders traditionally do not draw big crowds during the fall.

He thought the 11 home games during the fall last year contributed to the drop in attendance.

"That's a tough time. That's a real tough time," said Jauch. "It was too many, too early. That's a lot of it (the decline). That really brought our average down. I feel a lot better about the schedule this season.

"Once high school football is done, then all of a sudden things start picking up."

The RoughRiders averaged 2,979 fans during the 2010-11 campaign. Jauch would like to see the team approach that number again this season.

"A real good crowd for us is 3,000-plus," he said. "If we can do that, that's where we want to be."

The Cedar Rapids Ice Arena can hold about 4,000 fans per game.

Single-game tickets range in price from \$12.75 to \$22.75, depending on the location. There are a variety of season ticket prices, group prices and package deals.