

Photos clockwise from left:
JOSH LANGFELD is bathed in lights as he waits for his name to be announced during the Stars' pre-game introductions. (Photo by Scott Bruhn)
GOALTENDER NICK KALWINSKI straps on his pads in preparation for his start in a Jan. 11 game against the Twin Cities Vulcans at the Ice Box. (Photo by Scott Bruhn)
FORWARDS MARC SUDERMAN, left, and Derek Reynolds struggle to gain control of the puck from — of the Dubuque Fighting Saints during a winning effort on Jan. 3. (Photo by Matthew Walte)
FORWARD DEREK REYNOLDS stands on point looking for an open inside man during the Jan. 4 game against the North Iowa Huskies. (Photo by Matthew Walte)
RICH ANDERSON, standing, and Rich Spiller go through last-minute preparations before putting on their uniforms. (Photo by Scott Bruhn)

Rules of the Ice

Attack/Defensive zone

Neutral zone

Attack/Defensive zone

Graphics by
Aaron Steckelberg

Still, while Reynolds' future in hockey looks secure for now, he said he has to be realistic about his career goals.

"I'm hoping to go all the way with this, yeah, but everyone has to realize they can't play forever," he said. "I have to stay focused and make sure I get a degree in case I can't go all the way."

Reynolds is working for a degree in psychology. After college, if playing hockey is not his future, Reynolds said he hoped to at least keep the game a part of his life.

"I'm hoping to be able to coach at some level," he said. "You play a game your whole life, then suddenly the possibility exists that you may not be able to play it anymore."

"You have to have a plan to back yourself up."

A group that includes experienced players like Mass and Reynolds can mean little in the USHL, though, where age requirements and policy demands force a sizable turnover each season.

"You have a different kind of turnover with an amateur expansion team," Mass said. "You can have a bunch of veterans mixed in with guys who haven't played too much, but it's like a rebuilding year every one or two years."

However, Johnson said he liked the challenging aspect of a constantly changing roster.

"I'm happy with what we have here," he said, "but you've always got to look to the future. If you make the right decisions, you can keep power in this league as easily as you can lose it."

More important to Johnson and the coaching staff is giving players the skills they need to continue playing the game they all love.

"If we do our jobs right," Johnson said, "we can have 10 players a year come out of here with scholarships to major colleges."

"If that's how we lose them, that's fine by me."

Icing on the Cake

The Stars' Jan. 5 victory against the Waterloo Black Hawks marked the end of a three-game home stand. After three straight wins over the weekend, players and fans alike are ready for a little rest.

The players either go out together or go home but are required to be in their own houses by the team's 11 p.m. curfew. Each team member must be back at the Ice Box by 8 a.m. the next day for a regular two-hour practice.

The Stars split a two-game home stand the next weekend, but for the players, the following week will be practice as usual.

Many of the 4,000-plus fans file out of the arena in a somewhat dazed fashion, knowing their team has won, but somehow unsure of how the team did

it. Apparently, Johnson has seen the look on some of the fans' faces.

"The fans aren't real knowledgeable, but they'll learn," Johnson said. "Hockey's a simple game; it doesn't take too long to figure it out."

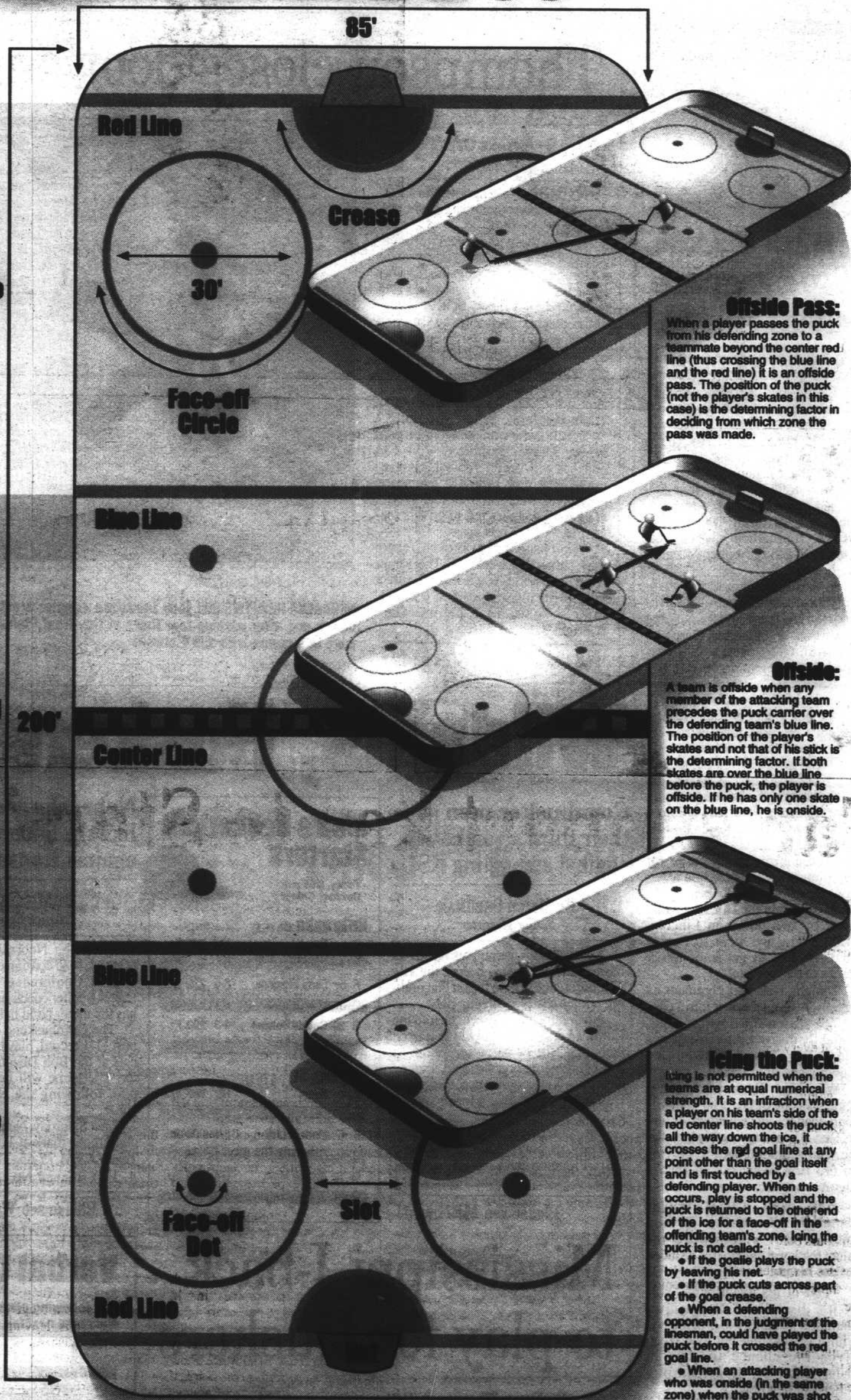
But according to Johnson, Stars fans will have plenty of time to learn about both the game and the players. Johnson said he planned on staying with the Stars for the next few years to ensure the team will be successful.

"I'm excited," he said. "It's a lot of fun already. There's not much better of a place than Lincoln."

The 63-year-old grandmother and her three grandchildren file out with the rest. Russell said she considered herself a new die-hard fan and said she hoped hockey was as easy to learn as it was to watch.

"I really, really like hockey," Russell said. "I can't quite figure it out, but I will."

"I'm sure pretty much everyone will...eventually."



Offside Pass:
 When a player passes the puck from his defending zone to a teammate beyond the center red line (thus crossing the blue line and the red line) it is an offside pass. The position of the puck (not the player's skates in this case) is the determining factor in deciding from which zone the pass was made.

Offside:
 A team is offside when any member of the attacking team precedes the puck carrier over the defending team's blue line. The position of the player's skates and not that of his stick is the determining factor. If both skates are over the blue line before the puck, the player is offside. If he has only one skate on the blue line, he is onside.

Icing the Puck:
 Icing is not permitted when the teams are at equal numerical strength. It is an infraction when a player on his team's side of the red center line shoots the puck all the way down the ice, it crosses the red goal line at any point other than the goal itself and is first touched by a defending player. When this occurs, play is stopped and the puck is returned to the other end of the ice for a face-off in the offending team's zone. Icing the puck is not called:
 • If the goalie plays the puck by leaving his net.
 • If the puck cuts across part of the goal crease.
 • When a defending opponent, in the judgment of the linesmen, could have played the puck before it crossed the red goal line.
 • When an attacking player who was onside (in the same zone) when the puck was shot down the ice manages to touch it first.
 • When a team is playing shorthanded because of a penalty or penalties.