

# Metros earn spot in title game

## Sioux City beats Dubuque in overtime in semifinal tilt

By Terry Hersom  
Journal sports editor

Call it a family tradition or just call it a major sigh of relief for Sioux City Metros Coach Walt Johnson.

Cory Mozak's rebound goal seven minutes and 28 seconds into a sudden death overtime Saturday propelled the Metros to a tension-packed 9-8 victory over the Dubuque Devils, keeping alive Sioux City hopes for a third consecutive Iowa High School Hockey League championship.

The victory sets up a title game matchup at 1:30 p.m. today with the Des Moines Capitals, who defeated the Waterloo Warriors 6-3 in Saturday's other semifinal at the IHSHL state tournament.

Both semifinals were dramatic affairs, but the

Metros' escape didn't become that way until the final 11 minutes of the third period, when a courageous Dubuque comeback wiped out an 8-4 deficit and eventually sent the game to overtime.

"I guess we had to make it interesting," said Johnson, still visibly shaken by the nerve-wracking finish. "But we accomplished what we set out to do — we beat Mason City (on Friday) and we skipped by Dubuque. We're in the hunt for our ultimate goal, winning the championship for a third straight year."

No team has ever won the post-season crown three consecutive years in a tournament that began in 1977.

Mozak, an East High freshman, backhanded the game-winning rebound after Dubuque goalie Joe Steuck's stick save on Chris Porter's close-range shot from the left side.

It was the second goal of the contest for Mozak, one

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of only two ninth-graders on Johnson's 22-player varsity roster. It also gave him a feat to rival some of the heroes his older brothers Trent and Brant have achieved for previous teams Johnson has coached.

"Brant had the game winner in overtime in the championship game against Kansas City last year," said Johnson. "And, Trent scored a game winner for me over a Russian team in the Silver Stick tournament at Sarnia, Ontario."

Trent Mozak, a 1999 East graduate, is now playing for the Sioux City Musketeers while Brant, who would be a junior at East, is playing Midget 'A' hockey this winter in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Five of the Metros' other seven goals came from the No. 1 line of Ben Deck, Ricky Nearman and Robby Lessard, one of just two seniors on an exceptionally young squad.

Sioux City got two goals each from Deck and Nearman, both juniors, and one from Lessard, a Sergeant Bluff-Luton student.

Nearman, Porter and Deck, one of 10 North High athletes on the team, each contributed goals as the Metros reached the first intermission with a 3-0 advantage.

Dubuque caught a spark with three second-period goals, chipping the Metros' lead to 5-3, but the tournament hosts scored four times in the middle session and took a 7-3 advantage into the final 15 minutes.

Brandon Lake's goal made it an 8-4 lead at 3:58 of the final period, but Chris Steuck scored less than a minute later for Dubuque, then Tim Roth made it an 8-6 contest at the 7:17 mark.

The two-goal deficit was wiped out by Steuck on goals at 11:17 and 11:58 — the latter on a power play — and it was a cliffhanger from there.

"Dubuque has a nice team and they're a young team," said Johnson. "They really showed a lot of character, coming back like that. We knew what they do and we let 'em do it."

"The third period, I think we had the pizza in the oven and were ready to eat pizza."

Narrowly missing the title game was a Dubuque team that struggled through a hard-luck 7-1-5-0 regular-season showing, winding up fourth in the IHSHL's East Division.

The Des Moines Capitals, mean-



Sioux City Metros Chris Porter is tripped by Dubuque's Justin Muehlenkamp as he charges after puck. (Staff photo by Jim Lee)

while, won the East at 19-3-0, the at 13-0-1, gave the Capitals some best record in the league. That made breathing room, then Drew Keller it three straight years the Capitals slid the puck into an empty net at 14:10 to conclude the scoring.

Sioux City, 14-7-1 in regular season league action, split two IHSHL games with the Capitals, both

at the IBP Ice Center, bowing 7-2 on Jan. 29, then prevailing 5-3 on Jan. 30.

In consolation round action Saturday, the Omaha Junior Lancers defeated the Lincoln Junior Stars 5-2 and the Omaha Gladiators clipped Mason City 5-3.

Mason City and Lincoln will play for seventh place at 6 a.m. today, then the two Omaha squads face off in a fifth-place matchup at 8:30, followed by Waterloo and Dubuque in an 11 o'clock contest for third place.

Brett Murphy's second goal of the contest, a breakaway power play goal