



ARIAN SCHUESSLER/The Globe Gazette

Mason City's Nils Berggren takes a shot on goal during the first period of Saturday's contest against the Kansas City Outlaws at the state hockey tournament in Urbandale. Mason City won 3-2 to advance to today's championship game.

One to go

Mohawks move to title game with win over Kansas City

By JAMIE SUHR
Of The Globe Gazette

URBANDALE — The toughest lead to protect in hockey, Mark Hicks' father used to tell him, is a 3-0 advantage.

If the Mohawk hockey coach disagreed with pops, he won't anymore.

Mason City held off a gutty Kansas City squad 3-2 to advance to today's 1:45 state title game against the Des Moines Oak Leafs, a 3-1 winner over Omaha on Saturday.

"We didn't play our best and we tried to get too cute in our own zone, and it almost cost us," said Hicks, who is leading

the Mohawks to the title game for the second time in three



Maginnis

years. "But we're in the state championship game, so it doesn't matter." Early on it looked as if the second-seeded Mohawks would cruise past the sixth-seeded Jr. Outlaws. Nils Berggren opened the scoring 11 minutes, 58 seconds into the game. Just 40 seconds later, Ben Juhnke lifted the

Mohawks to a 2-0 first-period lead.

Mitch Paulsen then gave Mason City the dreaded 3-0 lead with a goal 3:49 into the second period.

"We knew it was going to be a tough game," said forward Brent Schloemer, who had two assists. "Part of us thought we had the game won, but we had to hold on."

It all started with a Jr. Outlaw goal with 31 seconds remaining in the second period. By the time Kansas City returned from the locker room, the momentum was entirely in its favor.

"That goal at the end of the

second period let them back in it," goaltender Austin Maginnis said. "It gave them all the momentum in the world."

If that was the case, it'd only get worse.

Less than three minutes into the final period, Kansas City had trimmed the lead to a single goal, setting up 10 minutes of frantic hockey.

The Mohawks rattled off 14 shots on goal over the final 15 minutes, but sophomore goaltender Herbert Kyles stopped every shot.

"That goalie was standing on his head in the third period," Hicks said. "We could have

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easily went up 5-1."

Instead, the Mohawks hung on for dear life, and the Jr. Outlaws gave them a couple of breaks as Kansas City was called for four penalties over the finals 10 minutes.



Hicks

"That definitely calmed things down for us," Maginnis said. "It was good they took those penalties and set us up for the win."

Still, the Jr. Outlaws were able to get off nine shots in the period, including one off the post with two minutes left.

"It was intense," Schloemer said.

Hicks will take it.

"I'm not going to overanalyze this. We won the game," Hicks said. "But we can't play as lacks. We'll have to tighten things up."

The Mohawks, who haven't won a state title since 1997, went 1-2 against the No. 1-seeded Oak Leafs, led by the league's top scorer Joseph Harcharik, who will play for the Junior A North Iowa Outlaws on Monday. In Des Moines' two wins, it outscored Mason City by a combined 10-2.

"It's going to take a big defensive game for us," said Maginnis, who helped give the Oak Leafs one of their two losses this season. "We can't have any letdowns."