

## MIDWEST HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY LEAGUE



Elisa Petersen/QUAD-CITY TIMES

From left, Quad-City Blues players Elliot Holstrom, Josh Prygon and AJ Richards sit with second-place trophies after the team's 7-3 loss to the Des Moines Oak Leafs at the Quad-City Sports Center on Sunday.

# Case of the blues

Penalties pile up as Blues fall in championship

By Brian Heinemann  
FOR THE TIMES

The Quad-City Blues hung with two-time defending champion Des Moines for more than two periods Sunday in the Midwest High School Hockey League title game.

But a rash of penalties against the Blues allowed the Oak Leafs to pull away for a 7-3 victory at the Quad-City Sports Center.

The outcome was not

what had head coach Paul O'Dacre disappointed.

"I thought, I was hoping, we would have been allowed to compete," he said. "We took a lot of penalties. The only one they got was the joke call with 1:40 left. I don't know what the ref was doing there."

That penalty was the first time the Oak Leafs got called for an infraction without a Blues player joining him in the box. Quad-City, meanwhile, was struck with seven penalties that resulted in five Des Moines power plays.

Things started to get out of hand when a Quad-City

player was handed a game misconduct penalty for the third time in two days. It was the third checking from behind call over the last two rounds and the third Blues player ejected. This time, the victim was the team's star defender.

"(Collin) DeBuysere was tossed in a 4-3 game," O'Dacre said. "My best player. Why didn't he (referee Paul Koskovich) just allow us to compete?"

The Blues were left with almost solely junior varsity players on defense for the last half of the third period. Des Moines went on to score three goals while DeBuysere

watched from the locker room tunnel.

"It was 4-3 when I left," DeBuysere said. "We were already missing a defenseman from yesterday (AJ Richards, to suspension), had one with a bad shoulder injury (captain Ryan Gieritz), and then myself. We only had one regular defenseman left."

It didn't help that the Blues were constantly playing catch up. Des Moines scored just 40 seconds into the game, took a 3-2 lead midway through the second and then scored just over a minute into the third to take

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the lead back at 4-3.

"We were going toe to toe with them through two periods," Pete Kalber, who scored two goals for the Blues, said. "We were playing all right, but after Collin went out for the game we caught some unfortunate penalties, and they capitalized."

Des Moines seemed to take advantage of every Quad-City misfortune, scoring

three power-play goals and constantly testing Blues goaltender Reed Festing-Smith while physically pummeling the hosts.

Regardless, it was a milestone for a Blues team that had never been to the finals of this tournament and it's something their coach knows can be built upon for the future.

"We sure got heart," O'Dacre said. "These kids have nothing to be ashamed of. Their legacy of finally getting to this stage will live on."