

# Jimenez lifts Mohawks in 3OT

Jimenez the hero as Mohawks punch ticket to title game

BLAKE SCHULTZ  
blake.schultz@johobepaarte.com

AMES — It was a perfect moment for the Mohawk Hockey Club.

Led in a 1-1 tie and heading to a third overtime period in the semifinals of the Midwest High School Hockey League vs. the De Moines Oak Leafs, a long game was either going to end in elation or heartbreak. Zach Jimenez chose the former.

With just over 30 seconds elapsed in the third overtime,

the Mohawks' Jacobo Lang got the puck behind the Oak Leafs' goal and tried to wrap around and score. The puck slid past goal Oak Leafs goalie Spencer Northway and onto the waiting stick of Jimenez, who didn't miss his chance.

When he saw the puck cross the line, the rest was a blur for the senior. He and his teammates raced to the Mohawk section of the crowd, jumped up on the glass and the party was on, celebrating the Mohawks' first trip to the finals since 2000.

"We had two or three similar plays throughout the other overtimes and I buried that one, and wow, what a great moment. What a great moment for the boys and I," Jimenez said.

It was a battle all game to get to that point.

The Oak Leafs scored 1 minute, 45 seconds into the first period to put the Mohawks in a 1-0 hole. Nothing changed about them,

## Jimenez

From B1

though, as they brought the physicality and energy throughout the game. Sometimes the physical play spilled into penalty trouble, but the Mohawks shined in that department as well, killing all eight of the Oak Leafs' power-play opportunities, including a 5-on-3 in the first. The reason: goalie Erik McHenry.

"I knew that I had to stop everything else to give us a chance," McHenry said. "I

knew we had to start playing our game and I needed to help them by stopping everything I could."

McHenry finished the game off with 40 saves on 41 shots, and made a couple of nice saves in the overtime periods just to keep the game going. To his coaches, his rebound control was the difference.

"Whether he took it in or deflected it to the corner, he just did a magnificent job with that," co-coach Rich Gores said. "That's what the Oak Leafs were looking for to try to get those re-

bounds. They were crashing that hard and he swallowed them all up."

Offensively, chances were not hard to come by, but Northway turned away nearly everything he faced.

The Mohawks finally tied the game up on a goal by Ben Blaha, assisted by Wesley Stricker and Isaac Donahoo, in the second period.

The 1-1 battle resumed all the way through two tough overtime periods before Jimenez's goal ended it early in the third.

"It's the greatest feeling ever," McHenry said

of his vantage point. "The game is finally over, we've been working so hard and I stopped so many pucks, and it's the greatest feeling ever."

The Mohawks advance to Sunday's 11 a.m. championship to meet the winner between Sioux City and the Des Moines Capitals. A win would give them their first title since 1997.

"It means everything," Jimenez said. "We're playing for our city right now, playing for our families and playing for everybody back home. Everybody is on this journey with us."



Jimenez



McHenry