

# Sioux City Metros win Division II USA Hockey national championship

Ryan Timmerman

WEST CHESTER, Penn. -- There's a national championship trophy coming back to Sioux City.

With a 5-2 victory over the East Islip (NY) Chiefs, the Sioux City Metros high school hockey team earned the USA Hockey Division II national championship on Sunday at Ice Line Arena in West Chester, Penn.

"Getting there and winning that game is a great feeling," said defenseman Grant Harder. "(Being able to celebrate) after the game was absolutely electric. This team is my family, and after we game we saw the video of everyone watching at P's Pizza (in Dakota Dunes), and that meant so much to us. We love that we get to bring home a national championship for them."

The sides were even at 2-2 heading into the third period before Karson Fitch scored what ultimately amounted to the game-winner.

Fitch scored on a Sioux City power play with 3 minutes, 46 seconds left in the final period and was assisted by Tegan Doelman.

Nathan Solma, the Metros' all-time leading scorer, added a goal less than 15 seconds later on a Harder assist, and just for good measure, Fitch added an empty-netter on a Solma assist with just over a minute remaining.

"When we need scoring, we'll get it, but my role on this team is to get stops," Harder said. "It's what me and the rest of the defense is there for. It's our job to keep it as low-scoring as possible."

"At the end of the day, we have about 70,000 people in our area, and we go against teams that play in cities that draw from millions of people. When you're out there on the ice, it doesn't matter where you're from you just have to put in the time and work hard. It all starts with the leadership."

Sioux City, which went 6-0 at the national tournament.

The Metros went 28-4-0-0 to win the Midwest High School Hockey League regular season title this season and took third at the state tournament prior to nationals.

Sioux City fell behind 1-0 after East Islip's Anthony Marazzito scored an unassisted power play goal with 13:37 left in the first period.

"It these types of games, you will -- and should -- have some lead changes," said Sioux City head coach Jesse Monell. "You have two high-caliber clubs that aren't used to losing. So you just have to play all three periods."

"We just kept our composure and kept players."

The Metros got an equalizer with 1:50 left in the second when Noah Graham assisted a Hunter Echter goal after Sioux City killed a two-minute East Islip power play early in the frame.

Twenty seconds after the Echter score, Tegan Doelman put Sioux City up 2-1 on a goal assisted by Charles Egdorf.

That lead was short-lived, however, as the Chiefs evened it at two when Bryan Slattery scored with 1:33 left in the second with an unassisted score.

Sioux City again killed an East Islip power play after two-minute roughing minor was called against the Metros' Caiden Patrick at the 8:57 mark in the third.

The Chiefs weren't as successful playing short-handed, as a two-minute tripping minor that went against Christopher Lawlor gave Sioux City an opening for Fitch to put the Metros ahead for good.

Sioux City took 36 shots to East Islip's 28.

In the six games at nationals, Solma had 10 goals to tie East Islip's Ryan Anatra for most at the tournament. For his career with the Metros, Solma scored over 100 goals.

“All through season, we’ve had great leadership from our captains, Nate Solma, Grant Harder, Caiden Patrick and Cash Frigge,” Monell said. “One of the things about going into this weekend all season long, really, is they bought into leading by effort.

“It’s not so much about the talent or fancy play, but about effort and how hard they skate. Once they play their game by effort and not by skill, that just molds a championship club.”

Cameron Patrick was superb in goal for the Metros in stopping the vast majority of those East Islip shots. Cameron Patrick was a key figure in Sioux City’s success throughout the season, and especially at the national tournament as the Metros outscored opponents 43-8 over their six games at nationals.

The Sioux City net-minder even stopped an East Islip penalty shot with 1:21 left in the third to preserve a 4-2 Metros lead.

“If your skill guys show they’re willing to take a puck to the face or take a hard hit along the boards but still skate with maximum effort, you’ve got a championship-caliber team,” Monell said. “That was on display this weekend, and I’m just really excited to give these kids this opportunity. I’ve been with this program since 1980, and we’re a small community, but since we started Siouxland hockey in the 1970s, we’ve completed against the Des Moines and Omahas, and have the most championships out of any team in our league.

“We’ve won eight state tournaments and two national titles. That’s quite amazing. It takes great leadership from our board, our coaching staff and our players. We’ve got really great people within our organization.”