

HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY



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Waterloo's Max Schuchmann attacks the Ames net during a game against Ames at Young Arena in Waterloo in January.

Waterloo wins USA Hockey title

STAFF REPORTS

IRVINE, Calif. — After a runner-up performance in pool play, the Waterloo Warriors high school hockey team found a different gear in tournament play.

Waterloo pulled off an upset in the quarterfinals, cruised in their semifinals game, then came-from-behind to win the USA Hockey High School 1A National Championship Saturday.

The Warriors spotted Midwest Hockey League rival Lincoln two first-period goals before scoring five straight to win the title, 5-2.

"It's just a culmination of hard work the whole year and never giving up and fighting adversity and coming out a champion," Waterloo coach Brian Cook told USA Hockey.

After falling behind 2-0 after one period in the title game, Waterloo took control in period two. Denver High's Dayton Niedert, Cale Buchan (Waterloo West) and Jagger Raisty (Cedar Falls HS) all scored goals to give the Warriors a 3-2 lead going into the final frame.

In the final period, Waterloo scored

goals from Shayn Hesse (Denver HS) and Max Schuchmann (Columbus Catholic HS) for the final margin.

The Warriors defense took over the game the final two periods. After allowing nine shots and two goals in the first period, Waterloo limited Lincoln to five shots and no goals the rest of the way.

Andy Schell (Denver HS) earned the win in the net, stopping 12 of 14 shots on goal.

"We started off slow, we had some injuries, but we just kept building and believing the rest of the year," Cook said. "This tournament started off with a loss, but we came back with five victories, and we believed in ourselves and took home the hardware."

It's the program's first national championship.

Waterloo was the Cinderella team of the tournament. The Warriors didn't qualify for the tournament as a district champion. Waterloo didn't qualify for the district championship game after losing to Sioux City in the tourney semifinals.

But after other Midwest High School Hockey League teams were picked to go to other nationals, Waterloo received a ticket to Irvine.

Waterloo finished 2-1 in pool play, giving them a second-place finish in the USA pool and a spot in the quarterfinals of the national tournament.

The Warriors upset high-scoring George M. Steinbrenner high in Saturday's quarterfinals 6-5 in overtime.

The Steinbrenner Warriors had won their three pool play games by a combined score of 33-5.

Waterloo gave up four first-period goals and trailed 4-2 after one period.

Still trailing 5-3 going into the final period, the Warriors scored two goals in the final six minutes to tie the score.

In overtime, Schuchmann completed a hat trick with an unassisted goal to finish the upset.

The semifinals were easier for Waterloo. The Warriors built a 2-0 lead early in the second period and led 4-1 after two periods. Niedert and Buchan each had a pair of goals in a Wheeling Park, West Virginia, 5-1.