

HIGH SCHOOL HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Capitals drop Oak Leafs to reach state title game

Eric Keese breaks out of second-period deadlock with third goal of season.

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Eric Keese needed two tries, and a change in strategy, to get the result he wanted for the Des Moines Capitals.

His second-period goal — after back-to-back faceoffs deep in the Des Moines Oak Leafs' zone — sent the Capitals to today's Iowa High School Hockey League state championship game.

The Capitals defeated the Oak Leafs, 2-1, in a state tournament semifinal Saturday afternoon at the ice arena in Urbandale.

Keese took the puck off of the first faceoff and skated in on Oak Leafs goaltender Tim Thomas. Thomas covered the puck, resulting in a second faceoff to his left.

This time, Keese shot the puck out to defenseman Rock Naert, who passed it back.

Keese broke a 1-1 second-period tie with his third goal of the season.

"I acted like I was going to walk in again," Keese said. "Rock made a perfect pass."

The regular-season champion Capitals play in the final at 2:45 p.m. today against Mason City.

A Des Moines team advanced to the final for the fifth year in a row.

"I hoped to be on the other end of the 2-1 game," Oak Leafs coach Doug Borud said. "It just wasn't our day. It was good either way, though, because a team from Des Moines goes on to the championship."

OTHER SEMIFINAL

MASON CITY 8, KANSAS CITY 2

Iowa High School Hockey League leading scorer Cole Despenas scored three goals for the Mohawks in Saturday's second state tournament semifinal.

The third-seeded Mohawks defeated seventh-seeded Kansas City to advance to today's state final vs. the Des Moines Capitals.

CONSOLATION GAMES

OMAHA 7, WATERLOO 3

Tim Smith had two goals and an assist for Omaha, which will play Sioux City in the fifth-place game today at 10:15 a.m. at the ice arena in Urbandale.

SIoux CITY 7, AMES 4

Kevin Lohry scored three of Sioux City's first four goals while Alex Kuuttila scored two goals for Ames.

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

8 a.m. — Seventh-place game: Waterloo vs. Ames

10:15 a.m. — Fifth-place game: Omaha vs. Sioux City

12:30 — Third-place game: D.M. Oak Leafs vs. Kansas City

2:45 — Championship: D.M. Capitals vs. Mason City

The Oak Leafs, runners-up last season, play for third place against Kansas City at 12:30 p.m.

Des Moines' teams met for the fourth time this season, and for the second straight year in the state semifinals.

Last year, the Oak Leafs won.

"I just brought it up once at breakfast," Capitals coach Scott Krueger said. "I asked, 'How did it feel last year going to the banquet after losing?'"

The game was intense from the first whistle. The first penalty came 25 seconds in, and the teams continued a hard-hitting, tight-checking pace.

Capitals goaltender Steven Erbstein made nine saves in the opening session. Thomas stopped eight shots for the Oak Leafs, including a late-period breakaway chance by the Capitals' Naert, who intercepted a pass near the blue line.

"It was really intense," Oak Leafs forward Drake Allen said. "My legs are really hurting right now."

Capital Brad Krueger put the first point on the board during a power play 1:07 into the second period.

Oak Leaf Jason Steward beat Erbstein in the ninth minute of the period to even the score, 1-1.

Brian Spring, the Oak Leafs' points leader, had a chance to tie the score with a shot on goal in the final 10 seconds of the game, but Erbstein came up with the save.

SCORING BY PERIODS

D.M. Oak Leafs 0 1 0-1
D.M. Capitals 0 2 0-2

First period—Penalties—Steward, O.L. unsportsmanlike conduct 25; Lorence, C. slashing 1:52; Holmes, C. roughing 6:32; Allen, O.L. roughing 6:32; Spring, O.L. high sticking 9:50.

Second period—1. Capitals: Krueger (Elliott) 1:07 (PP); 1. Oak Leafs: Steward (Harcharik) 9:42; 2. Capitals: Keese (Naert) 12:03. **Penalties**—Spring, O.L. tripping 55; Torney, O.L. checking from behind; misconduct 5:59; Brock, C. roughing 6:27; Naert, C. slashing 14:41.

Third period—Penalties—Du Bay, O.L. roughing 10:05; Keese, C. roughing 10:05; Carter, O.L. interference 10:24; Drew, O.L. roughing 14:59; Lorence, C. roughing 14:59.

SHOTS ON GOAL

D.M. Oak Leafs 9 9 7-25
D.M. Capitals 8 8 9-25

Power-play opportunities—Oak Leafs 0-3; Capitals 1-5. Goaltending—Oak Leafs: Thomas 1-25 shots, 23 saves; Capitals: Erbstein (W) 25 shots-24 saves.