

Blues advance to tournament title game

By Brian Heinemann

FOR THE TIMES

For the first time in team history, the Quad-City Blues advanced to the championship game of the Midwest High School Hockey League tournament.

They did so at a heavy price, however.

The Blues earned their second straight 3-2 overtime victory Saturday afternoon, this time over the Waterloo Warriors. What they lost was two key components to the team for today's 2 p.m. championship game against the Des Moines Oak Leafs, also 3-2 overtime winners.

Starting center Brad Teplicky and starting defenseman AJ Richards were ejected from the game in the second period for game misconduct penalties on checks from behind. Both are suspended for the championship, much to the chagrin of coach Paul O'Dacre.

"That was an absolutely

awful call," Blues coach Paul O'Dacre said of the penalty that resulted in Richards' ejection. "The kid (Waterloo's Jacob Schutte) told the doctor that he was fine and he just stayed down to get the five-minute major called."

Quad-Cities was down two men for more than 1 1/2 minutes after the penalty for Richards. Then the Blues killed off 3 1/2 minutes of a five-on-four situation after the major and game misconduct to Teplicky.

Waterloo made the most of the opportunity, tying the game during the two-man advantage.

The Blues gained momentum from the big penalty kill, which carried all the way through the third period and into overtime, where the Blues' Jeff Morris propelled the team to its first championship game with a goal halfway through the first extra frame.

"My two linemates were feeding each other," Morris

said of the game-winning goal. "I just crashed the net and batted the puck in."

Even though they will be down two teammates and, according to O'Dacre, adding several junior varsity players to the roster to fill the void, Quad-City is riding high after a second consecutive overtime win.

O'Dacre has something special planned for the team to help keep that momentum going and to get them ready for what will be the biggest game of their lives to this point.

"I've been saving this for forever," O'Dacre said of the pre-game speech he plans to deliver. "I've been saving it ever since my good friend (former University of Maine coach) Shawn Walsh died. It's a tribute to him. This will be the best speech these guys will ever hear."