

Metros claim USA national title



PROVIDED PHOTO

The Sioux City Metros celebrate their national championship after defeating Monarch (Colo.) 3-2 in Plymouth, Minn. on Monday.

Sioux City avenges pool loss to Monarch, 3-2

JOURNAL STAFF

PLYMOUTH, Minn. — Dave LeGree's words were as true today as they were when his team won a state title.

The Sioux City Metros captured the USA Hockey High School Division II National Championships title Monday morning, 3-2 over Monarch (Colo.) at Plymouth Arena. It adds to an impressive list of accomplishments that included the team's first Midwest High School Hockey League Tourna-

ment Championship since 2003.

"I wrote a thing on the board at state, 'Win today, we walk together forever,'" said the Sioux City Metros head coach. "This here you will remember for the rest of your life. When you get older you will start remembering back and this is very special."

Drake Beller's goal with 2:31 remaining in the final period lifted the Metros to victory. James Page assisted on the goal for the squad, which avenged Friday's 8-1 pool play loss to Monarch.

Beller attacked on a 1-on-2 and made a good move to his left side to deliver the national title.

"It means a lot to our league because we are not just representing Sioux City but the Midwest High School League," LeGree said. "I don't know when the last team, in any sport, from Sioux City won a national championship. We are competing against the rest of the country."

The Metros rallied from an early 2-0 deficit to tie the game on Page's goal at the 12:11 mark in the second period. Beller and Kolton Kane assisted on Page's goal.

Reece McDonald cut Monarch's lead to 2-1 with a goal at the 12:25

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mark in the first period, assisted by Connor Sand and Chase Lewison.

"What we had that they didn't have was grinders in the corners," LeGree said. "They happened to make a mistake in the neutral zone and Reece got it and went in and that put the game 2-1. Now we are right back in this game."

"If you look at our team over this past season we were in close games all the time and it paid off today because how were they going to react once we went up 3-2?"

Monarch began the game with

a flurry as Adam Burtzlaff scored 2:45 into the first period off an assist from Cannon Akerson. The lead doubled when Yuta Young scored at the 11:01 mark.

McDonald's tally would come 1:24 after Young's goal and sent the momentum back to the Metros. Monarch was unable to find its offense again as the Metros put the defensive clamps on.

"How were they going to react to the pressure?" LeGree said. "They started making some long stretch passes that were turning into icings, and we had the lead and we just played smart hockey in our defensive zone."

Sioux City goaltender Blake Beller, who started all 38 of the

team's games this season, came up big in the final period to help his team preserve the victory.

"When we played them the first time they scored about three backdoor goals and he made a stop with about eight minutes left in the game ... they moved it over and Blake made the stop," said LeGree, who pulled his goaltender in the first meeting between the two teams. "That was the game right there."

"When something like (being pulled) happens to you it shows your character and I knew he was going to be tough today. He was a different goaltender than they saw the first game."

Neither team was able to get

anything going on the power play as they both went 0 of 3 in the game.

The Metros reached the finals with Sunday morning's 5-1 quarterfinal win over the Billings (Mont.) Bulls before turning away Plano West (Texas) 2-1 in overtime in the semifinals. The title game came with some sweet redemption.

"We were flat," said LeGree of the first meeting with the Colorado team. "We won our first game against Florida and we were kind of flat and didn't catch on fire until the last period. (Monarch) has speed and they got a couple of cheap ones and then they got a power-play

goal so we were down right off the bat. Things just didn't go our way."

The Division II field featured 16 teams from across the country with players from more than one high school. Division I is for teams all from the same school.

It proved to be a special group of players who sent their retiring coach out on the highest of notes.

"I am going to remember how I watched a group of peewee kids and how they are men today," said LeGree, who has coached many of the players since their youth hockey days. "I am going to remember these kids for a long time."