

Buium's Electric OT Winner Breaks Pattern for



(photo: Aaron Eckmann)

by **Heather Rule**/Special to CHN

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Denver broke the pattern.

In the second semifinal of the NCHC Frozen Faceoff on Friday night, the 3-seeded St. Cloud State Huskies scored the first goal, and Denver answered to tie it up 1-1. That back-and-forth continued through the first period (2-2 tie) and second period (4-4 tie) before Denver freshman Zeev Buium finally gave the No. 2 seed Pioneers the lead — and 5-4 win — at 6:21 of overtime with a backhand move to the net.

The win sends Denver to the Frozen Faceoff championship game against No. 5 seed Omaha on Saturday night at Xcel Energy Center.



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Denver came into the game leading the country in offense, averaging 4.89 goals per game. It led to an overtime victory Friday. Denver coach David Carle was pleased to see his team's resilience during the game. While the Pioneers have been in a lot of high-scoring games this season, they haven't had a Friday night where they kept getting down a goal.

"I think it was a great challenge for us as we learn how to win these types of games," Carle said. "It's about our youth and how we want to grow and be a different team now than we were at the start."

"I don't know if we win that game in October or November."

Carle added that his team has shown a lot of growth, maturity, confidence and belief in themselves. They execute instead of being deterred from being down a goal four straight times against the Huskies.

"That's not an easy thing to overcome," Carle said.

Buium's move electrified the crowd, and is not one many other defenseman can make. The leader of the team and World Junior gold medalist for Team USA, which was led by the two head coaches in this tournament, was the first-round pick in June's NHL Draft.

The offense was also a welcome sight for the Pioneers on this stage in this tournament. Carle noted that Denver has scored a goal on the Friday of the Frozen Faceoff in St. Paul since March 2018, the last time. The Duluth shut out Denver in the semifinals at the X in 2019 by a 3-0 score and in 2022 by a 2-0 score. The College shut out Denver 1-0.

Even late Friday night after the overtime victory, Denver was already looking ahead to the championship game.

“I think, obviously the job’s not done,” said Denver senior McKade Webster, who tied the game in overtime. “So, focusing on tomorrow. We’re obviously happy with tonight. But there’s still a lot to do.”

The Huskies, which got points from nine different players, took the lead 1:40 into the game on a goal from Adam Buium, who ended up with a three-point night, was the first answer. Minutes later, the Huskies went up 3-2 on a goal from Adam

But Miko Matikka scored the first of his two goals a few minutes later, a power-play tally. Matikka scored in the final two minutes of the second period, which was where the game stood knotted until the wire.

“Obviously, whenever you get the lead, you don’t want to let them score and get back into it, get the goal and mindset through playoffs was just to get the next one,” said St. Cloud State junior Joe Larson. Unfortunately, they were able to answer every time we got the lead. It stings, but our guys left

Larson credited the Huskies goaltender, freshman Isak Posch, for keeping his team in the game during a five-minute major penalty in the second period. “The most important part of the game” during a five-minute major penalty in the second period off without allowing a goal and only giving up six shots on goal.

“That game could’ve really gone downhill the other way had they scored a few,” Larson said.

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For the Huskies, the overtime goal not only ended its chances at back-to-back NCHC Frozen Four appearances, it ended its season. St. Cloud State had advanced to the championship game in this tournament in 2016 and 2023.

“It does sting, for sure,” Larson said. “For the older guys, especially. We wanted to make a run at the championship. We knew that it was a big challenge against Denver.”

Though Larson said he’d take being in a one-shot game as they were Friday with Denver, he admitted it was a “lost too many games in overtime” this season. The Huskies lost six games this season in overtime. They also tied five times during the regular season and had only one overtime victory, back in 2016 at Colorado College.

But, the Huskies “were always right there” and still one of the 20-some teams fighting for a spot in the championship, Larson said.

“A lot of people labeled us as a little bit of a rebuilding year with as much as we lost after last y
feel like a rebuild. These guys competed all year.

“I wouldn’t call it a rebuild at all. I thought these guys had a heckuva year.”

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