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Hermantown Goes Back-To-Back with 3rd OT Victory



By [Heather Rule](#) - March 11, 2017

A video review and two celebrations later near the end of double-overtime, Hermantown completed the back-to-back Class 1A state titles. Senior defenseman Dylan Samberg got the game-winner and slid down the ice doing snow angels, ala Kyle Schmidt when he scored for the University of Minnesota-Duluth to win the NCAA Championship in 2011.

Samberg was at the bottom of the celebratory pile of Hawks after the 4-3, double-overtime win as the No. 1 seed over unseeded Monticello/Annandale/Maple Lake on Saturday afternoon at Xcel Energy Center.

"I thought I was about to pass out," Samberg said, recalling his teammates piling on top of him. "Everyone started getting off, and that's when all the emotions started to flow."

Yes, his game-winning goal with 19.4 seconds left in the second overtime capped a 29-1-1 season for the Hawks. It also was the exclamation mark to a very exciting Class 1A state tournament, with plenty of upsets and close games. On the winning goal, Samberg got the puck back at the point, said he saw a lot of bodies in front of him with not a lot of time to work with, so he decided to throw it on the net.

"I didn't see anything, all of a sudden I heard the thud of the back of the net, and everyone started celebrating," Samberg said.

Hermantown won its third state title with three overtime victories, including two goals scored in the final 30 seconds of an overtime period. All three OT winners came from different players. Saturday, they came back from 2-0 and 3-1 deficits.

Senior Jesse Jacques tied the game against the Moose 3-3 with 5:35 left in regulation.

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The last Class 1A final to need overtime was in 2011 when St. Thomas Academy beat Hermantown 5-4 in one extra session. The last double-overtime Class 1A final was in 2005, a 4-3 Warroad victory over Totino-Grace.

Now about that second celebration. The Hawks thought they had won with 5:16 left in double-overtime when junior Tyler Watkins appeared to get a hat trick. As helmets, sticks and gloves went sailing high in the air, officials announced the play was under review.

The goal was waved off because of goalie interference. Senior Ryan Sandelin was in the crease.

"I wouldn't have forgiven myself if we didn't win this game," Sandelin said.

There's no doubt it's a very rare momentum shift, for a team to collect their gear off the ice and go back to playing again. A letdown might be expected, giving the Moose a chance to capitalize. It's what Moose head coach Eric Nelson hoped would happen.

On the other side, veteran coach Bruce Plante said he trusted his boys because they were playing well and have character and determination.

"They just sucked it up and came back at it," Plante said. "Nobody on our team folded. Not one guy. In fact, some of them played better."

Throughout the game, they peppered Moose goaltender Tyler Klatt with shots. He made 52 saves when it was all over, including a few in the waning minutes of the game, after he thought he had already given up the game-winner. For the Hawks, Cade McEwen made 20 saves.

Saturday's game brought the end of Sandelin's high school hockey career. The Mr. Hockey finalist had another impressive showing at the state tournament. He scored four goals in the semifinal overtime victory over St. Cloud Cathedral, including the game-winner. He added two assists in the championship and also had a goal and assist in the overtime quarterfinal against Luverne.

It was a far cry from the Hawks victories for last year's state title, with scores of 11-3, 7-1 and 5-0.

"This year we had to scratch and claw for everything we got," Sandelin said, who mentioned the three deficits in games for this tournament. "We stuck with it, we believed. That's the biggest thing."

"Nobody on our team folded."

Plante talked after the semifinal game about Sandelin being instrumental in the comeback down 5-2 to Cathedral. He mentioned his great leadership again after the championship.

"The thing I loved about it was, a lot of guys say [stuff]," Plante said. "He said it and he went out and delivered it.

"He really carried us yesterday. The state championship has a lot to do with what he did yesterday."

Last year, Sandelin and teammate Cole Koepke tied with 11 points for the scoring leader honors in the state tournament on their way to a state title. Sandelin had four goals and seven assists. He totaled 64 points last season as a junior, with 27 goals and 37 assists. The season before that it was a modest four goals and 11 assists.

His father is Scott Sandelin, the men's hockey coach at the University of Minnesota-Duluth. Ryan will play hockey for Mankato State University next year.

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