

Another ice title cometh to Aquinas

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

BROCKPORT — In a game this tight, it was befitting that the climactic play boiled down to a matter of inches.

Jeremy Giordano's tip of teammate Chris Sichak's shot barely trickled into the net, giving Aquinas Institute a 4-3 sudden-death overtime victory over McQuaid Jesuit in the Section 5 Class A hockey finals. The classic contest was played this past Saturday, Feb. 27, before more than 2,000 spectators at SUNY College at Brockport.

"The goal was beyond my wildest dreams," exulted Giordano, a senior forward. "It couldn't have come at a better time or in a better game."

Giordano's tally occurred with 15.3 seconds remaining in the 7 1/2-minute overtime period. It ended a battle marked by heavy hitting, yet brilliant overall play, between the two rivals.

"I don't know where you can get better value for your money than that.

It was a classic game; it'll be a long time before you ever see a game like that again," remarked Aquinas Coach Dave Montgomery, whose team captured its second consecutive Class A title — and third in his four years as head coach. The Little Irish defeated McQuaid in last year's finals as well, 9-5.

McQuaid, despite an impressive final 1992-93 record of 17-5, came away with no championships this season. The Knights also finished one game back of league champion Aquinas in the Monroe County Division I regular-season standings.

AQ, which raised its overall record to 19-2-2 with the championship-game win, now faces Williamsville North of Section 6 (Buffalo area) in a state quarterfinal game this coming Saturday, March 6, at Brockport State. Game time is 3 p.m.

Both top-seeded Aquinas and No. 2 seed McQuaid had reached the sectional title contest with semifinal vic-

tories earlier in the week. AQ won 5-2 over No. 5 Batavia on Feb. 23 at Lakeshore Rinks in Greece, and McQ scored an 8-3 rout over sixth-seeded Greece on Feb. 24 at Lakeshore.

Both teams came out scorching in the title game, but flawless offensive execution went for naught as McQuaid goalie Ron Lamendola and Aquinas' Alex Vigneri thwarted all first-period attempts.

The scoreless trend finally ended when McQuaid's Sean Ritchlin scored on a breakaway just 45 seconds into the second period. Aquinas quickly answered on Sichak's own breakaway goal at the 3:41 mark.

McQuaid's Larry Pierce gave his team a two-goal advantage, 3-1, by scoring twice in just over a minute — at 7:20 and 8:30.

Yet the Irish showed their resiliency when Joe Zabawa scored at 9:11 and Giordano tied the game at 3-3 with 3:25 left in the period. Both scores were set up by beautiful passes — Zabawa from Paul Camelio and Giordano from Dennis Annechino.

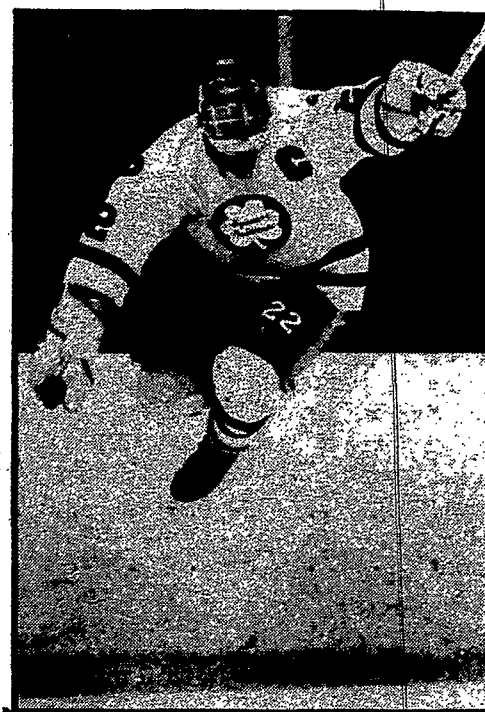
The second-period flurry was followed by yet another stanza in which no goals were scored over 15 minutes. During that third period, McQuaid killed off an AQ two-man advantage lasting about a minute.

Overtime also remained scoreless for the first seven minutes. Then Sichak flipped a shot on goal from the McQuaid blue line, which Giordano lunged for and deflected past Lamendola.

The goal judge's light immediately went on, but the referees hesitated briefly before indicating that Giordano's poke had, indeed, crossed the goal line.

"It hit the post and the back of (Lamendola's) pad. I saw it go over the line, but barely," recalled Giordano. "I had no doubt that (McQuaid) was going to argue."

Indeed, as Aquinas players began their massive celebration, several Knights vehemently protested the rul-



'Jumping' Jeremy Giordano of Aquinas lives up to his nickname after tying the game, 3-3, during the second period of the hotly contested championship hockey game.

ing.

McQuaid Coach Al Vyverberg, after watching television videotape replays, offered a different account of the final goal than Giordano's.

"The puck hit both posts and came out. The law of physics says that can't happen (and still cross over the line)," said Vyverberg. "To me, the game was never decided. I don't want to sound like sour grapes, and I can't do anything about it, but that's my personal feeling."

Superb defense took over for Aquinas down the stretch, as the Little Irish held an 18-3 shots-on-goal advantage over the Knights during the third period and overtime. The final overall shot tally was 40-18 in favor of AQ.

This stellar defensive play was recognized when Barry Hussar, an AQ senior defenseman, was honored with the game's Most Valuable Player award. Hussar was largely responsible for shutting down McQuaid's Ritchlin and Marty Reasoner — the two leading scorers in Division I.

"Without them, (McQuaid) can't do anything," Hussar remarked.



McQuaid Jesuit's Tom Savage (bottom) and Ron Lamendola keep their eyes on a loose puck along with Aquinas goalie Alex Vigneri (top). The Little Irish went on to a 4-3 sudden-death overtime victory over the Knights in the Section 5 Class A hockey final at SUNY College at Brockport Feb. 27.

Ex-Dallas Cowboys to participate in benefit event

ROCHESTER — Former Dallas Cowboy members will switch from pigskin to roundball when they play in a charity basketball game on Thursday, March 11, at the Community War Memorial.

Ex-Cowboys scheduled to play include Tony Dorsett, Bob Hayes, Drew Pearson, Robert Newhouse,

Doug Cosbie and Eugene Lockhart. They will face a team of "All-Star" Division I college athletes.

The game will begin at 8 p.m., with a limited autograph session from 6:30-7:30 p.m. Proceeds will benefit Camp Good Days and Special Times, Inc. For ticket information, call 716/624-5555.

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