

Wanserski nets OT goal, sends CW Storm to state

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STEVENS POINT — There is nothing to be elation on one hand and devastation on the

Michelle Wanserski made sure the Central Wisconsin Storm girls hockey team was the one smiling and celebrating after the WIAA sectional title game.

Wanserski scored a power-play goal at 2:12 into overtime to give the Storm a thrilling 4-3 victory over Wisconsin Rapids in Stevens Point at K.B. Willett Arena on Saturday.

Wanserski beat Point/Rapids' freshman goalie Laura Drake through the five-hole 15 seconds after the Red Panthers were called for a icing penalty. The girls and helmets were sliding through the air over the ice after the Storm earned their first trip to the state tournament. Central Wisconsin will meet

Storm 4, Red Panthers 3, OT

Point/Rapids	1	0	2	0	—	3
CW Storm	2	1	0	1	—	4

First period: 1. CW, Kathy Kalinski (Genevieve Charles, Lauren Duerst), 1:10; 2. Point/Rapids, Emily Haluska (unassisted), 4:18; 3. CW, Cally Gorski (Michelle Wanserski), 6:30 (pp).

Second period: 4. CW, Sam Hendrickson (Melissa Michalski, Wanserski), 11:39.

Third period: 5. Point/Rapids, Margot DeBot (Haluska), 2:27 (pp); 6. Point/Rapids, Haluska (unassisted), 2:07.

Overtime: 7. CW, Wanserski, pp., 2:12.

Penalties: Point/Rapids 7-14, Central Wisconsin 4-8.

Saves: Point/Rapids (Laura Pagliara) 38, Central Wisconsin (Hillary Drake) 21.

Records: Central Wisconsin, 15-7-0 overall; Point/Rapids, 15-7 overall.

Northland Pines in a semifinal matchup Friday at the Alliant Energy Center in Madison. Face-off is set for approximately 1:15 p.m.

"This is really special," Storm coach Denny Drake said. "The girls have worked their hearts out to get to this point."

Wanserski spoiled a gallant comeback effort for the Red Panthers.

In a 3-1 hole to start the final period, Point/Rapids rallied behind goals from Margot DeBot and Emily Haluska — her second of the game — in the opening 2:07 to tie the game.

Both teams had their share of scoring chances over the final 15 minutes of regulation, but diminutive Pagliara and Storm goalie Hillary Drake stood tall.

"I definitely felt like momentum was on our side (in the overtime), but the penal-

ty turned the momentum around," Point/Rapids coach Hayli Hupp said. "I definitely prefer to go out this way with our players showing what they're made of. Our four seniors played their hearts out."

The only problem was the Red Panthers never found a way to beat Central Wisconsin this season.

The Storm swept all three meetings, winning the regular season matchups 4-1 and 5-2, but none was nearly as important as the sectional final.

With goals being tough to come by of late, Central Wisconsin looked like a scoring machine in building a comfortable 3-1 cushion after two periods.

Kathy Kalinski, Sam Hendrickson and Cally Gorski all found the back of the net, and all indications pointed to another relatively easy win for the Storm.

That turned out to be easier said than done.

"After the second period I knew we could never relax because Point/Rapids has so much firepower," Drake said. "After they tied it we were like, 'O.K. Let's get after it. We've been here before.'"

As a result, the Storm gets to go to Madison.



DOUG WOJCIK/WAUSAU DAILY HERALD
Central Wisconsin Storm's Michelle Wanserski, left, celebrates with Morgan Pearson after scoring the game-winning goal in overtime of Saturday's WIAA sectional final at K.B. Willett Arena in Stevens Point.