

## Red-hot RoughRiders win again

Written by Jim Ecker

Saturday, 29 November 2014 23:15 -

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Imagine being just 16 years old and playing for the hottest team in the United States Hockey League.

Imagine scoring the decisive goal for the Cedar Rapids RoughRiders before 3,014 roaring fans against an arch-rival and hearing the crowd go nuts at The Stable.

Imagine having all that much fun.

That's Hugh McGing, and it's all real.

McGing snapped a 2-2 tie in the third period on a gorgeous pass from Derek Daschke as the RoughRiders posted a 5-2 victory over the slumping Waterloo Black Hawks Saturday night.

Daschke, who is also 16, flipped a diagonal pass in front of the Waterloo goal to McGing, who was yelling for the puck.

"He saw me wide open and I was screaming," said McGing. "He made a perfect pass right to me and I had an open net."

McGing raised his arms in celebration and banged the glass behind the goal. "Yeah, I was crazy happy," he said with a big smile.

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Daschke, from Troy, Mich., was born on Jan. 6, 1998. McGing, who is from Chicago, was born on July 11, 1988, making him the youngest player on the club and making Daschke the second-youngest in a league that's filled with players several years older.

One kid set up the other for the game-winner.

"I love the goal: Daschke to McGing," said RoughRiders Coach Mark Carlson. "One '98 birth year to another '98 birth year. Our two youngest guys teaming up on that. That was awesome. That's a pretty special thing."

Don't be fooled by the final score. The game was tight throughout, but the RoughRiders scored two empty-net goals in the final 27 seconds to make it look like a laugh.

Cedar Rapids raised its record to 18-2 for 36 points, by far the best ledger in the USHL at the one-third mark of the regular season.

The RoughRiders won their fifth game in nine days, a grueling stretch that included two victories in Ann Arbor, Mich., last weekend, followed by a shootout victory in Lincoln, Neb., on Wednesday and a 4-1 verdict in Waterloo Thursday night.

"It's really tough and really grueling on me, but all the guys make it really fun," said McGing, who even enjoys the long bus rides. "Especially after a big win, we have the music going, the lights are on, playing cards, singing.

"It's so fun," he said. "It's crazy. The fans are awesome. Really loud, too."

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Jiri Fronk scored his league-leading 17th goal in the first period to give Cedar Rapids a 1-0 lead and it stayed that way into the third period.

Waterloo tied the game, 1-1, but Casey Jerry gave the RoughRiders a 2-1 edge with 12:38 left.

The Black Hawks tied the game again, 2-2, but McGing delivered with 7:01 left to play for the 3-2 lead. Tyler Gernhofer and Andrew Gaus collected empty-net goals in the final seconds.

Waterloo lost its ninth straight game, but the Black Hawks (5-12-2) put up a good fight.

Carlson, the only coach in the 16-year history of the RoughRiders, does not think the club has ever gotten off to an 18-2 start before, but he's not sure. He likes the way his team is playing, but noted there's a long way to go with 40 more regular-season games.

"It's just a really, really good group," he said. "And I think our leaders and our captains have done a great job of running their team.

"The first-year guys are fabulous," he said. "They're working hard, just trying to get better.

"I think the biggest thing is, our leadership doesn't panic, our team doesn't panic. They believe in themselves. They're a pretty composed group for this early in the year."

Ben Blacker, who has the best goals-against average in the USHL at slightly less than two goals per game, raised his record to 12-2.

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Waterloo 0 0 2 - 2

RoughRiders 1 0 4 - 5

CR - Jiri Fronk (Erik Foley, Bryce Hatten)

WAT - Tyler Sheehy (Max Coatta, Ethan Spaxman)

CR - Casey Jerry (Erik Foley, Jiri Fronk)

WAT - Ethan Spaxman (unassisted)

CR - Hugh McGing (Derek Daschke, Casey Jerry)

CR - Tyler Gernhofer (empty net) (Dylan McLaughlin)

CR - Andrew Gaus (empty net) (Casey Jerry)