

THUNDER

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The winner-take-all Game 7 is Saturday night in Allen, where Wichita won Game 1 before the Americans took Games 2 and 5 by a combined score of 10-4. The Thunder is buying into the philosophy that a Game 7 offers no circumstantial advantage to either team.

"Anyone can win, right?" Thunder defenseman Kevin Young said. "It's a one-game series. We just need to go there and keep this energy up. If we can get the pace going right off the bat, I think we have a great chance to win."

Wichita dictated the pace early, at least after Allen notched the opening goal on the game's first power play, but it still came down to those final minutes when the Americans smelled a chance for a championship and the Thunder fixated on keeping Allen away from the net.

The conditions favored an emotionally charged performance for Wichita, but playing at home in a do-or-die situation perhaps downplayed what the Thunder was up against.

The Americans weren't keen on having to worry about Game 7, and they were coming off a dominating Game 5 performance at home, where they won 5-1 with a rapid succession of four goals.

"They say the fourth win is the hardest one to get," Young said. "We've had to win four games (in the previous two series), and we know what they're up against to try to get that fourth, especially in our barn. We had to bring it. We knew it was going to be tough, and they've got that hunger to win that championship, so we needed to battle even harder than them."

In-game momentum has



Marc Browning/Eagle correspondent

The Thunder celebrates its Game 6 win over Allen in the CHL Finals at Intrust Bank Arena on Friday.

been key throughout the series, with teams earning their margin of victories by scoring in bunches. That was Wichita's method Friday, as it scored three times in the first period after facing an early deficit.

The Thunder's tying goal was scored by Greger Hanson, who left the game in the second period. When asked after the game if Hanson was OK, Wichita coach Kevin McClelland said, "I don't know."

Young gave Wichita the lead and Ian Lowe provided what proved to be the game-winner with less than a minute to go in the first period. The three goals were scored in less than five minutes, re-energizing the 5,009 in attendance and carrying the Thunder emotionally over the next two periods.

Allen scored before the

midway point of the second, but Thunder defensemen and goalie Torrie Jung protected the perilous lead.

The two penalty kills in the third period embodied the importance the Thunder placed on Friday's game.

"They came at us with those power plays," Lowe said.

"They came at us, but guys stepped up and blocked shots and did what it took. That's huge. That takes momentum from those kills. We're up one goal, and they have momentum from those power plays."

The two longest layoffs between games in the series have both preceded Thunder victories, including the two days off between Game 5 and Friday. But Wichita isn't pinning for another break, preferring the quick turnaround to Saturday so not much time is spent playing out possible

scenarios for Game 7.

"It's easy for the coaches," McClelland said. "The guys are expending a lot of energy, and they're going to have to get re-hydrated tonight and get ready to go at it. But there's no time to dwell on it, no time to think about it. Just get going."

Allen	1	1	0	2
Wichita	3	0	0	3

First period

Scoring—1. Allen, McMillin (Hendrix, Deitsch), 7:36 (pp); 2. Wichita, Hanson (Flath, Martens), 14:42; 3. Wichita, Young (Painchaud, Robinson), 15:12; 4. Wichita, Lowe (Lutz, Trimm), 19:01. Penalties—Wichita, Lizon (boarding), 7:13; Allen, McKenzie (roughing), 14:42; Wichita, Lutz (roughing), 14:42.

Second period

Scoring—5. Allen, Maiani (McKenzie, Bootland), 8:05. Penalties—Allen, McKenzie (hooking), 5:49; Allen, McMillin (tripping), 13:16; Wichita, Madden (roughing), 13:16.

Third period

Scoring—None. Penalties—Wichita, Summers (high sticking), 10:45; Wichita, Wight (handling the puck), 15:13. Power play—Allen 1 for 3, Wichita 0 for 1. Shots—Allen 4-14-7—25, Wichita 14-14-6—34. Saves—Allen, Dell 31 on 34 shots; Wichita, Jung 23 on 25 shots. T—2:23. A—5,009.

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Clipped By:
jeffdlutz13
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