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U.S. Beats Czech Republic to Advance to Hockey Semifinals

By The Moscow Times

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SOCHI — The U.S. romped to a 5-2 victory over the Czech Republic to secure a place in the semifinals of the Olympic men's hockey tournament.

While host nation Russia crashed out against Finland, the U.S. swiftly dealt with any fears of a similar shock by storming to a 3-1 lead in the first period of Wednesday's game, as Czech goaltender Ondrej Pavalec suffered.

The win secures a much-anticipated semifinal meeting with old rival Canada, which dispatched plucky underdog Latvia 2-1 in the other game Wednesday evening.

The U.S. got on the scoreboard 1 minute 39 seconds into the first period when James van Riemsdyk picked his spot and lasered a shot past Pavelec from a narrow angle.

The Czechs tied up the game within three minutes with a slice of luck, Ales Hemsky credited

with the goal following a scrum in the U.S. crease as the puck appeared to go in off Ryan McDonagh's skate.

From then on, the U.S. took control, scoring their second when Dustin Brown shot from a sharp angle off an assist from David Backes, who grabbed a goal of his own with a rebound shot two seconds before the first-period buzzer.

Zach Parise scored off another rebound on a second-period power play, with an assist for Chris Pavelski, after which the hapless Pavelec was pulled for Alexander Salak.

A fifth U.S. goal, this one for Phil Kessel, killed off the last remnants of Czech hope early in the third period, and Czech forward Ales Hemsky's unassisted reply for 5-2 meant little.

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