

Boys basketball: Bench play helps Rolling Meadows take down Prospect

Lou Nunez Jr.

As archrival Prospect came to pay a visit, Rolling Meadows knew how important staying focused to their Friday evening task was as it sought to keep its share of first place with Hersey in Mid-Suburban East play.

Thanks to their ability to maintain that tunnel vision the Mustangs were able to do just that in a 62-45 win.

The victory keeps them atop the MSL East standings at 3-0 and 9-1 overall as they begin opening round play against Timothy Christian at York's Jack Tosh Holiday Classic the day after Christmas.

"I knew this game with Prospect and us was going to have many runs throughout," Meadows senior guard Gavin Escobedo said after his 10-point effort helped pace the victory.

"They're going to score a lot and we're going to score a lot. We kept our composure and made sure that we just stayed focused in the game."

Meadows used a decisive 11-0 surge to turn the tide the second quarter that featured treys from seniors Lazar Lazarevic and Jack Duffer and a steal, drive, and layup by fellow senior Ryan Meyer that put them ahead 31-23 with 2:09 left in the opening half.

With the Mustangs ahead 33-26 entering the third quarter they picked up where they left off going on a 7-0 run to extend their lead to 40-26 on two of 6-foot-8 senior center Patrick Coen's 9 points with 5:21 left.

Prospect (4-6, 1-2) could get no closer than 46-38 on a Ben Schneider free throw with 54 seconds left in the period before the home team went on a 12-2 binge that settled matters when senior forward Lazar Lazarevic connected from the charity stripe for a 58-40 lead with 2:07 to play.

Meadows senior swingman Ian Miletic's 12 points led the way for the hosts along with 8 rebounds and 6 assists.

But it was the Mustangs reserves that coach Kevin Katovich gave props to a group including seniors Aaron Kossack and Jonathan Tolomeo, and juniors Andrew Krestel, Ben Babula, Mike Murray and Marty Lesner that are nicknamed "The Goon Squad" who played the Knights in practice.

Katovich said the group aided successfully in the game's preparation Friday.

"They really did a nice job executing the game plan. An absolutely phenomenal job," Katovich said. "They certainly take a lot of pride in getting us ready."

Senior guard Ryan Lifton's 10 points led the Knights in the scoring column followed by junior guard Colin Tucker and senior forward Jack Skoog with 9 each.

Prospect begins opening round play at the Wheeling Hardwood Classic vs. Oak Forest on Monday afternoon.

Fourth-year coach Brad Rathe talked about how his team needs to simply keep its nose to the grindstone while gaining valuable experience.

"When you go against a team like Rolling Meadows that has a lot of varsity experience and we don't we have things that we need to improve on," Rathe said. "We have a young team and we have to keep trying to build a little bit a day at a time."