

Boys basketball: Rolling Meadows dominates second quarter, pulls away from cold-shooting St. Francis

Lou Nunez Jr.

Since Hinsdale South's Holiday Tournament ended after its second edition in 2012, Rolling Meadows was among several that decided to go to the expanded 32 team Jack Tosh Holiday Classic at York High School the following year.

It has become their holiday hoop headquarters ever since as they are making their 11th consecutive Tosh appearance this year.

"There's no bad teams here, so it's a great challenge. They do such a nice job running it," Meadows coach Kevin Katovich said.

"I think it's the best tournament in the state. Everyday you get to play (here) it's another day of fun and our guys look forward to it."

Erin Dwyer, coach of the Mustangs' second round Tosh foe St. Francis, echoed those sentiments. The Spartans are making their sixth straight appearance after a lengthy stay at the also-defunct Glenbard West tourney.

"We were looking to add to our (then Metro Suburban) conference schedule," Dwyer said.

Unfortunately for Dwyer and his Spartans, Rolling Meadows added a second quarter spectacle of basketball that became too much for St. Francis to overcome.

The Mustangs pulled away to post a 55-23 triumph at York's South Gym that sends them to a 3 p.m. Saturday quarterfinal against reigning Tosh Champ Metamora (11-2), a 63-55 winner over Palatine.

"Each of us know what we've got to do in order to get the win," Meadows senior Gavin Escobedo said after he scored 5 of his 7 points during the game's decisive 17-3 run over the first 5:30 of the second period that allowed the Mustangs (11-1) to break away from a 12-11 advantage after one. "We know what we're supposed to do on the court."

The run also featured a pair of buckets from Escobedo's senior backcourt teammate Jack Duffer, and a triple from the game's leading scorer, 6-foot-7 senior Ian Miletic (18 points), that had Meadows up comfortably 29-14 with 3:29 remaining until halftime.

Fellow Mustang senior guard Jaeden Warrener also added a trey during the decisive surge to finish with 9 points for the game.

Six-foot senior guard Niko Quaranta led St. Francis with 13 points as the Spartans (6-6) struggled the floor going just 10 for 43 (23%). They will face Palatine (7-5) in a 3 p.m. return to the South Gym on Saturday.

Katovich praised his team's effort.

"They do a really nice job," Katovich said. "A lot of times the guys will give ideas and thoughts at halftime for adjustments. They're very smart basketball players and they're all super-coachable."