

Boys basketball: Lazarevic, Rolling Meadows rally past Downers Grove North

Marty Maciaszek

Starting games doesn't matter to Rolling Meadows senior Lazar Lazarevic as long as he's finishing.

And the 6-foot-6 Lazarevic was crucial in the Mustangs overcoming a sluggish start for a happy ending in Saturday night's final WSC/MSL Challenge game against Downers Grove North at Buffalo Grove.

Lazarevic had 8 points and made a big impact with his passing and defense as Meadows (13-2) came back from a 9-point deficit late in the third quarter for a 39-37 victory.

"He's a big piece off the bench and this year we're so blessed with having such a deep team," said Meadows' senior Ian Miletic after he got 10 of his 14 points and 7 of his 8 rebounds in the second half.

"What's special about us is we're one team and we're all together and we're all friends," said Lazarevic, who started last year. "Even if things aren't going our way we know we can get there."

It wasn't easy as the Trojans (12-4) led 8-0, 16-4 and 30-21 with 2:22 left in the third behind senior Bobby Grganto (19 points on 7-for-11 shooting). But Lazarevic's second 3 with 6:58 to play during a 12-0 run put Meadows ahead to stay.

Ryan Meyer got a layup off Kenan Pekovic's feed, Jack Duffer beat the third-quarter buzzer with a high-arcing running lefty floater and Miletic had 5 points en route to a 33-30 lead with 5:35 left. And Lazarevic found Duffer for a layup to make it 39-34 at 1:03.

"Our defense was our offense and that helped get us going," Lazarevic said.

"Lazar has just been great for us," said screechy-voiced Meadows coach Kevin Katovich, who got a lot of help with his ailing vocal cords from assistant Sean Benka. "Tonight not only scoring, but he played really good defense."

DGN was just 2-for-16 on 3s and went 13:07 in the second half without a field goal but got within 39-37 on Grganto's 3 with :47.6 left.

"I feel like we had them in plan B and eventually C on defense," said DGN coach Jim Thomas. "They went to a combination zone and we had them in a suicide defense and we didn't take care of the ball.

"I told the kids it was my fault because I screwed up and shortened our bench and guys got tired."

DGN was unable to connect on 4 shots — two inside and two outside the arc — in the final 10 seconds.

“This was huge and it shows how connected we are,” Lazarevic said. “Even through adversity we stuck together and battled together.”