

# Boys basketball: Miletic's 31 points helps Rolling Meadows clinch fifth straight MSL East title

By Dick Quagliano

Ian Miletic made sure it was thumbs up for Rolling Meadows Friday.

Miletic got off to a sizzling start, scoring nearly half of his 31 points in the first quarter as the Mustangs held off Hersey, 63-57.

The win gave Rolling Meadows its fifth consecutive MSL East title. They will play West winner Fremd in the MSL title game. Fremd won the West with a 64-52 win over Barrington on Friday.

"Five in a row, that is something special," said Rolling Meadows coach Kevin Katovich, whose Mustangs are 2-2 in their previous four MSL title game appearances.

"It is a testament to the kids who we have had that have come through here."

Katovich said that his team's depth played a key factor.

"This was two really talented team going after each other," Katovich said. "When we hit foul trouble, we knew we could put other guys in and we are not going to miss a beat. That's what makes this team special."

The first half turned into a shooting contest between Miletic and Hersey's Charlie Pomis.

The first quarter was all Miletic. The Marquette commit scored the first 10 points of the game as the Mustangs appeared to be on their way.

Meadows (22-3, 9-0) led 23-15 at the end of the first quarter. Miletic scored 15 of those points, hitting 5-of-8 including a trio of three-pointers. He would finish the first half with 21 points.

“I loved playing in front of our crowd and it was great to win a title in front of them,” said Miletic, who had 10 rebounds, 3 assists and 2 blocks.

“We stayed even-keel throughout. We played their runs, kept our composure and played our game and took care of business. My teammates put me in a position to score early. And that’s what I did.”

Now it was Pomis’ turn.

Pomis, who knocked down a three-pointer just before the end of the first quarter, really heated up. He then drilled three more triples, along with a basket, to finish the quarter with 11 of his 16 first-half points. That effort helped lead the Huskies back.

Hersey (18-5, 6-3) got all the way back when Jackson Hupp rebounded a Mustangs miss. He then fired a quick outlet pass to Logan Luxem, who drove for a layup just before the end of the end of the half to tie the game at 34-34.

Jack Duffer’s basket with one second left in the half gave the Mustangs a 36-34 lead at halftime. It was a lead that Meadows would never surrender again.

Meadows led 39-37 midway through the third quarter when the Mustangs made a huge move.

Again, it was Miletic who sparked them. Meadows went on a 9-0 run, with Miletic scoring 7 of those points as the Mustangs opened up a 48-37 lead with 1:20 left in the third quarter.

Hersey made a few runs from there, but could never quite catch up.

The Huskies got to within 49-42 at the end of three quarters, then closed to 53-51 on a basket by Pomis with 4:13 left to play.

With Hersey focusing on stopping Miletic, the Mustangs went to three of their other seven seniors to put the game away.

Gavin Escobedo (5 points), Patrick Coen (4 points) and Duffer all knocked down huge shots to spark a modest 6-2 run. That gave Meadows a 59-53 lead and Hersey would never get closer than four from there.

“It is special to win here,” said Duffer, who finished with 11 points.

“This group of seniors has played together since we were in sixth grade. We all just want to win, we love each other and we don’t care who gets the credit.”

Pomis finished with 21 points and Luxem 8 points, while Jackson Hupp, who was in foul trouble, scored 7 points and had 10 rebounds. Brody Variano also had 7 points.

“It was a very competitive basketball game,” Hersey coach Bob Widlowski said. “I thought we came in with a very determined effort. We are pleased with our effort. Our execution was a little bit off at times.”