

Dec. 20 Boys Basketball: Spartans, 'Stars win first



Shaquan Worthy had 12 points to help Nottingham get past West Windsor-Plainsboro North for its first win of the young season (Photo by Wes "The Media Mogul" Kirkpatrick).

LaMarca on the mark with game-winning 3-pointer in second overtime

By Rich Fisher

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Dec. 20: If there was any question that this is a new season for the Steinert High basketball team, it was probably answered tonight.

In a game the Spartans probably would have lost nine times out of 10 last year, the outcome went the other way as Ryan LaMarca nailed a three-pointer with three seconds left in the second overtime to give the Spartans a 58-56 victory over visiting Hightstown at the Spartans Arena.

During last year's 2-22 nightmare, these games always seemed to go against the Spartans.

"This is huge for us, we needed one win under our belt," said LaMarca after being mobbed by the Bleacher Creatures. "Last year we got our first win in our 15th game, this year we got it in our second game."

And what a win it was.

Steinert appeared to be in control with a 12-7 lead after one quarter. But in a game of dueling runs, Hightstown scored nine straight for a 16-12 advantage, only to have the Spartans respond with 11 straight for a 23-16 edge.

The Spartans (1-1) maintained that lead until halftime but the Rams tied it 30-30 after three quarters. In the fourth quarter, two straight buckets by Jarrett Varanyak (15 points) opened a 35-30 lead for Steinert, but Hightstown would eventually tie it at 37.

The Spartans failed to put the game away due to poor foul shooting, as they hit just 19 of 36 from the line. But they kept plugging and went ahead again, holding a 43-41 edge with 20.8 remaining. The Rams tied it with nine seconds to go and LaMarca's last-second shot was short and James Locklear (17 points, 7 rebounds) missed a chance at a possible conversion when the ball went through his hands.

That set up two overtimes in which there were two ties and nine lead changes.

Varanyak forced the second OT when he hit two foul shots with 1:36 left. Hightstown played for the final shot but Ryan Borden was called for traveling just before he appeared to have hit the game-winning lay-up at the buzzer.

LaMarca went to work in the second



When Ryan LaMarca let fly with three seconds to go in the second OT tonight, it gave Steinert three winning points (Photo by Dennis Symons Jr./purchase photos at www.denissymons.com).

OT, scoring seven of his 13 points during that time. He hit two foul shots to put Steinert up 53-52 with 1:43 left then made a driving lay-up to make it 55-54 with 42 seconds left.

Hightstown reclaimed the lead on a baseline jumper by Rob Reddington with 14.3 remaining. After a timeout, LaMarca took the inbounds, dribbled upcourt and, with no one covering him, drained a 3-pointer from the left of the circle and a foot behind the line.

The senior guard decided to shoot because Hightstown packed in a zone after his driving lay-up on the last attempt.

"The possession before that, we went inside to they wanted to go compact and not let us shoot in there," he said. "They went to the zone, so you know what, I had the opportunity and I took it."

And how did it feel when it left his hand?

"Honestly, I knew it was going in, I really did," he said with a grin. "I'll make that shot maybe 50 percent of the time. I guess this was one of the times I made it."

LaMarca said he may have even made a game-winner like this before.

"Maybe when I was little," said. "But nothing as big as this."

Nottingham tops WW-P North as sophomore Hendryx has big game

Nottingham won its first of the year, 53-46, at West Windsor-Plainsboro North as sophomore James Hendryx, playing his first game of the season, tallied 14 points. Hendryx hit two 3-pointers and hit two foul shots down the stretch to cement the win.

Shaquan Worthy, another sophomore, tallied 12 points and junior Gerald Alexis took on the Northern Knights top player, Juwan Harnson, and held him scoreless.

"A major key to this game was jumping to the ball in our team man-to-man defense and not getting caught in their curls," coach "Irish" Mike Walsh said. "We struggled with that against Princeton.

"And Gerald Alexis defended without fouling. He was relentless."

Hamilton comes close but Trenton overtakes Hornets in the final quarter

For one half, it looked like Jason Malloy's first career victory as Hamilton West head coach would be one to remember.

Well, most likely he will remember it anyway, but to win your first in Tornado Alley would really be special. Unfortunately, the Hornets could not hold on as Trenton rallied for a 63-57 victory.

Hamilton led 21-10 after one quarter and carried a 32-25 advantage into halftime. But Tornado coach Greg Grant takes pride in Trenton wearing other teams down and the Tornadoes had it tied 46-46 after three quarters and won the final quarter to move to 2-0.

The Hornets (0-2) got 17 from Bret Stroman and 10 from Joshua Giddens.