

Jan. 10 Boys Basketball



While Tyler Wrenn (right) and his Hamilton teammates took a second straight win tonight, it was another tough night for Nick LaBelle (25) and Steinert at WW-P South (Photo by Mike Dill/purchase photos at www.michaeldillphotography.com).

Mesday's move from guard to forward starting to pay off for Northstars

By Rich Fisher

Fish4Scores.com

Jan. 10: While Nottingham High's boys' basketball team had a lot of young perimeter guys returning this year, one thing it needed to replace was the rebounding and shot blocking ability of the graduated Bill Kiernan.

Fortunately for the Northstars, Zach Mesday moved into Hamilton from Bordentown. Of course, he too is a guard, but coach "Irish" Mike Walsh needed him to play forward. And not on the wing, but the block.

Mesday has slowly but surely been adapting to the role and was one of many contributors in the Northstars 64-54 win over visiting Hopewell Valley tonight.

The 6-foot-2 junior had 12 points (on 4-for-7 shooting) and seven rebounds to help Nottingham snap a two-game losing streak and move to 3-4.

"I've been a guard my whole life and I had to become a big man when I came here," Mesday said. "Coach said get rebounds and make lay-ups. That's all I gotta do."

Oh, is that all?

Mesday shrugs off his new role by saying "You just gotta play basketball, that's it. It's not really any different. You just gotta box out and be strong with the ball."

Walsh said it "took a month" for Mesday to get comfortable in his new role.

"But he's doing it," the Irish one said, adding with a grin. "He plays linebacker in football, he's tough.

"He and Nabil (Jemal) aren't shot blockers, but they play good interior defense. Our interior defense is better."

One thing to keep in mind is that Mesday is learning a new position at a new level.

"He played JV at Bordentown last year," Walsh said. "In AAU he's a perimeter player and now we're asking him to play the interior, and he's also learning to be a varsity player at the same time."

Mesday was one of many heroes tonight, as Nottingham bounced back from a bad day of practice that saw Walsh throw them out 30 minutes before it was over. He was upset with the effort two days after the Northstars took a strong Notre Dame team into overtime before losing.

"It was the worst practice of the year," the coach said. "I told them 'I hope you don't think that because you lost a close game to a good opponent that the rest of the league is easy.'

"With about a half hour to go I kicked everyone out and I told them 'You disrespected your opponent by how you prepared. If you don't come to play tomorrow you're gonna get smoked.'"

They came to play, and early on they were doing the smoking as the Northstars roared to a 20-6 advantage.

But Hopewell (2-5), which plays a gritty brand of basketball under second-year coach Jeff Molinelli, started to claw back in it and tied the game at 27-27, 30-30 and 32-32 early in the third quarter.

"We were upset at the referees," Walsh said. "Both refs tonight are outstanding refs but our guys didn't think we were getting calls. They're still young, they need to learn. I told them 'This is part of Mercer County basketball. You're sophomores, the county is gonna make you earn it. You won't get calls you might get, maybe as a junior or senior.'

"I thought the refs were fine tonight, but when my young guys thought they weren't getting the calls, they moped and their heads dropped. But then, they picked it up and played hard."

They did just that as buckets by Mesday and Gerald Alexis and a 3-pointer by Kevin Alexis gave Nottingham a 39-32 advantage. The lead stretched to 51-37 midway through the fourth quarter when Mesday and James Hendryx converted back-to-back three-point plays in the midst of a 9-0 run.

"They had the momentum," Mesday said. "We had to start making shots and get the lead back."

Hopewell again fought back and cut it to 54-40 before Nottingham made 6 of 8 foul shots in the final 1:30.

Mesday was just one of many heroes. Jamir Jenkins had nine points and eight rebounds, Hendryx and Kevin Alexis came off the bench for 13 and 15 points, respectively, with Alexis hitting three 3-pointers.

Shaquan Worthy had a number of steals and assists along with seven points, and the sophomore point guard made 5 of 6 foul shots in the fourth quarter. Jemal chipped in with five rebounds.

"They didn't allow us to run our stuff so we had to pass to the open man and make plays," Walsh said. "I'm very proud of them tonight."

Hamilton stays intense throughout in victory over Robbinsville

Make it two in a row for Hamilton West, as the Hornets pulled away in the fourth quarter for a 52-37 victory over Robbinsville at the Nest.

Hamilton held a 35-28 lead entering the final quarter, then built upon it by outscoring the Ravens 16-9.

The guys played very well today," coach Jason Malloy said. "We wanted to play as intense as possible for all 32 minutes and we did a great job of doing that.

"We were able to let our defense be our offense in the second half and did a good job of pushing the ball off missed shots so Robbinsville couldn't get set in their zone defenses."

Lenwood Squire followed up his big game against Steinert Friday by popping in 18 (including three 3-pointers), while Tyleer Wrenn continues to make strides in his freshman season with 10 points.

"Tyleer Wrenn played another great game with 10 points and some more great defense," Malloy said.

Bret Stroman added nine points and Dan Garcia chipped in with six.

"Stroman played well today," Malloy said. "He was very active and he had to guard their best kid (Andrew Burum) all game, but he still managed a solid nine points to help out."

Aside from good defense, the coach was also happy with his squad's rebounding.

"In addition to our bigs (Squire and Willie Leach), Stroman and Wrenn rebounded very well," Malloy said. "Hopefully the momentum from Friday and tonight will help us as we have two tough ones on Thursday at home with New Egypt at home and on Friday at West Windsor South."

WW-P South starts fast and never looks back in win over Steinert

It was just a night to forget for Steinert as it dropped a 73-35 home decision to West Windsor-Plainsboro South. The Pirates (8-1) led 24-8 after one quarter, 44-16 at halftime and 64-26 after three quarters.

James Locklear had 15 for the Spartans. (2-5)