

Greenville explodes in second half, tops Roxana 52-49

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ROXANA — It was a very cold night outside **Larry Milazzo Gym** on Friday night as **Roxana's boys basketball team** opened its 2017 portion of the schedule with a South Central Conference matchup with Greenville.

Unfortunately, the Shells went just as cold offensively in the second half as the Comets outscored Roxana 26-8, including a 16-4 third term, as **Greenville** came from behind to defeat Roxana 52-39.

That the Shells hit a cold spell is a credit to Greenville's defensive effort in the second half, according to **Roxana head coach Mark Briggs**.

“Defensively was the difference,” Briggs said. “They did a nice job; I don’t think (Zach) Golenor scored a point in the second half. So, tip your cap to their effort and their intensity level and what they did.”

The Comet defense was able to stop the Shells on numerous occasions, and when Roxana did have opportunities, the Shells couldn’t score.

“Offensively, we just hit a brick wall,” Briggs said. “You take away our best player, make it really tough to catch, and when he does have opportunities, everything’s contested. We missed some easy baskets in that stretch also. We just hit a big run, and we did nothing to stop the bleeding.”

It was Roxana the team that started well from the opening tip. Golenor and Cody McMillen both hit early shots, then Golenor hit a three ball to put the Shells up 7-6. The Shells extended the lead on a Mickey Ross floater and another lay-in by Golenor before the first quarter buzzer that put Roxana up 13-8.

McMillen hit on a three-point play in the opening stages of the second term to put Roxana up by eight, then saw Jacob Maguire score on a lay-up and Golenor hit on another three to put the Shells’ lead to 21-8. After a brief Greenville run, the Shells went back up by 10 on baskets by Zach Hass and Golenor. Near the end of the period, the Comets suddenly got hot, as Brock Nelson connected three time from behind the three-point line. Ross and Haas countered with three balls of their own, the Hass shot coming before the halftime buzzer that made the score 31-24 for Roxana.

The Nelson threes helped turned the game in Greenville’s favor.

“That game could have been a 15, 20 point on the plus side for us. At least 15,” Briggs said. “And then that kid comes into the game and knocks down a couple of threes. We knew he could shoot it from the JV level, but he hadn’t demonstrated that in the varsity level to this point. So that kid had some big shots, with the three threes in the first half.”

It definitely set the tone for the second half. After an exchange of baskets to start the third, Christian Moss hit a three to cut the Roxana lead to 33-29, then forced a Shell turnover to get the ball back. Lucas Carlson hit twice in a row to tie the game, then took the lead on a three ball from Ryan Hutchinson. Brady Simpson scored off a steal and Carlson hit in the lane, sandwiched between a basket by McMillen, that made the score 40-35 in favor of the Comets at three quarter time.



The aggressive Greenville defense was doing a tremendous job of stopping Roxana.

“I think from their standpoint, they did what they needed to do,” Briggs said. “We just didn’t do a very good job in combatting it. We have a few guys that know their role, what they can and can’t do, and we’ve got to be able to counter punch occasionally with some guys and step up and make some shots. We just didn’t do it.”

The Comets continued to pull away and extend their lead in the final term, getting key baskets from Moss and Seth Moore, while the Shells couldn’t score, going long stretches without a point. The Shells only baskets in the term came from McMillen, but the Comets held on, winning by the final 52-39 margin.

Both teams showed balanced scoring, with Golenor scoring 13 and McMillen getting 12 for Roxana. But not one Comet hit double figures, with Nelson scoring nine and Kaleb Ephron and Lucas Carlson scoring eight for Greenville.

“They’re balanced,” Briggs said. “They’re a little better, plus the Simpson kid has been out four or five games with an injury, so he creates some things for them. He does some things off the dribble that what makes them a little better team than what they have been playing. And we’re balanced too, for the most part. We’ve had our scoring spread out, just tonight, we didn’t get it done in the second half.”

The Shells have another big week ahead, traveling to Madison Tuesday night before hosting Staunton in a SCC matchup next Friday. It's a key part of the schedule that will help the Shells become a better team as the season goes on.

"Our schedule is set up to, at this point, to be a tough stretch, but that's what we want," Briggs said. "We want to get better, and play some teams that are gonna make us better. We feel like we did take steps backwards tonight, but we're getting better, so I think overall, from what we were playing early in the year, we're pleased with that.'



