

Domask's Triple-Double Leads No. 3 Illinois To First-Round Win Over Morehead State

by Eric Olson

March 22 2024 9:17 AM



OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Marcus Domask posted the NCAA Tournament's first triple-double since 2019 and Terrence Shannon scored 26 points, helping No. 3 seed Illinois pull away from No. 14 Morehead State for an 85-69 first-round win on Thursday.

Domask had 12 points, 11 rebounds, and 10 assists in his first career triple-double. It was the first triple-double in the NCAA tourney since Ja Morant accomplished the feat and the 10th ever.

“It’s definitely a cool accomplishment to have my name up there with some of the greats, and so few have done it so far,” Domask said. “At this point in my career I’m past the personal accolades. At this point in March, it’s all about winning. That’s all I’m trying to do.”

Dain Dainja scored 17 of his 21 points in the second half as the Illini shook off the pesky Eagles. Dainja went 9 for 9 from the field and matched his career high with eight rebounds in 23 minutes off the bench.

“I try to come out and do whatever I can to help the team win, whatever that looks like, whether that’s me rim-running or rebounding,” Dainja said. “This is a team effort. We’re in it together.”

Next up for Illinois (27-8) is No. 11 seed Duquesne (25-11) on Saturday. The Dukes advanced with a [71-67 victory](#) over BYU.

Riley Minix led the Eagles with 27 points, giving him at least 20 in 13 of his last 14 games. Jordan Lathon added 23 points.

“We tell our team there will be times we don’t play very well and win,” Eagles coach Preston Spradlin said, “and there are going to be times we play extremely well and come up short. That is that instance here today. If you’re going to have your season end, we want to check three boxes: Play well, stay together, and we truly did that despite the score, and then you want to lose to a worthy opponent, and Illinois was.”

[Ohio Valley Conference champion](#) Morehead State (26-9) dictated the action early. Minix, Kalil Thomas, and Lathon made three straight 3s to get the Eagles out to a 9-0 lead before two minutes were gone.

Then Shannon picked up where he left off in the [Big Ten Tournament](#) when he averaged 34 points while leading the Illini to the title.

Shannon, who had 19 points in the first half, took an outlet pass that was nearly intercepted by Drew Thelwell and went unimpeded to the basket for a big dunk. Then he hit a 3 from the wing, and a few minutes later he snaked to the basket for a layup.

It was Dainja's turn to star in the second half. The 6-foot-9, 255-pounder caused major problems for whoever was guarding him. He scored 13 of the Illini's first 17 points to break open the game.

Domask was a three-time All-Missouri Valley Conference pick in his four seasons at Southern Illinois. He transferred to Illinois for his final season to play on the stage he was on Thursday.

"Through the portal and in the process, me and (Illinois coach Brad Underwood) pretty much had conversations about winning big games in March," Domask said. "I trusted Coach and felt we had an opportunity to do that here. This is where all the time you put in the gym pays off."

The loss ended the college career of Minix, a two-time NAIA All-American at Southeastern University in Florida who transferred to Morehead State for his final season. He was the OVC player of the year.

"I wanted to challenge myself to play at the Division I level and make it to this point," Minix said. "I credit my teammates for allowing me to. We got to where I wanted to be and they allowed my dream come true."