

Floater over two near-7-footers helps Lexington Catholic upset No. 9 Danville Christian

BY JARED PECK
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Lexington Catholic sophomore Jacob Holland acknowledged he wasn't the first option of coach Brandon Salsman's inbounds play with 5.3 seconds left as the Knights trailed No. 9 Danville Christian by a single point at home on Tuesday.

Holland received the pass from Jack Gambrell at the top of LexCath's "LC" logo near midcourt and flung himself toward the lane where DCA's 6-foot-11 Lual Ayiei and 6-foot-10 Leek Ateny stepped up ready to swat his effort.

Holland sprung off one foot just inside the right elbow and lofted a right-handed shot high over Ayiei and Ateny that swished through the net off the bottom of the back iron for a 55-54 lead with 1.2 seconds left.

Call it a runner. Call it a floater. Call it good. DCA, the reigning All "A" Classic champion who knocked off No. 4 Bryan Station earlier this month, could not answer.

"Once I got it, I just knew I had to make a play. I kind of went blank, and I tried to drive it over two 7-footers and it went in," said Holland, who finished with 11 points. "It was a great team win. It's definitely not a shot I thought I would shoot at



MARK MAHAN

Lexington Catholic celebrated sophomore Jacob Holland's last-second shot that helped the Knights defeat No. 9 Danville Christian 55-54 at Lexington Catholic High School on Tuesday.

that time. Usually, I'm a 3-point shooter. I'm just glad we won."

The improbable play for the lead was made even more so because Lexington Catholic trailed by three points with 14 seconds left. DCA hadn't committed enough fouls yet in the fourth quarter to have one result in free throws, so it tried to use a foul to delay LexCath's final attack.

Unfortunately, when DCA's Titus Boyd reached at LexCath senior Ryan Harward, the foul at Harward's elbow appeared to take the senior guard to the ground. After a discussion, the officials ruled the foul intentional and gave Lex-

Cath two free throws and possession of the ball. Harward made both to trim DCA's lead to 54-53 and set up Holland's game-winner.

Even though Holland might have been Plan B, Salsman said his players made the right play given how DCA's defense set up. The Warriors were ready for Plan A, a double-screen in the paint to free Harward for a shot from the right baseline. But who could have planned for what Holland did?

"I've seen that runner in practice. I don't think I've seen it in a game yet, but I think we'll probably see it going down the line," Salsman said, smiling.

"It was a great shot and a great moment for him."

Lexington Catholic trailed 28-23 at halftime but opened the third quarter with a 16-3 run that included a pair of Holland 3-pointers, three

Hank Woodall layups and two Harward free throws that put Lexington Catholic up 39-31 with 2:49 left in the third quarter.

But, like it did in the fourth quarter against Bryan Station in a 45-44 upset win at Lafayette's Jock Sutherland Classic on Feb. 8, Danville Christian (23-3) responded with withering defensive pressure and the shot-blocking of Ateny and Ayiei, who finished with four and two blocks, respectively.

The Warriors outscored LexCath 22-10 over the game's next 10 minutes and held a 53-49 lead with 39 seconds left. A tough Woodall bucket in the paint cut DCA's lead to 53-51 with 22 seconds left. Eli Perez hit one of two free throws to put DCA up 54-51 for the game's final sequence.

Harward led Lexington Catholic with 16 points. Max Meagher and Woodall added 14 and 12

points, respectively. DCA was led by Ateny's 15 points and Boyd's 12.

Saddled with an un-Lexington Catholic-like 7-8 record through Jan. 12, the Knights (19-9) have been overshadowed this season by the 11th Region's overdogs — No. 2 Great Crossing, No. 3 Frederick Douglass and No. 4 Bryan Station.

"I kind of like the idea of being the underdog," Salsman joked.

Now, Lexington Catholic has quietly won 12 of its last 13 games, and it will be the 43rd District Tournament's top seed for the sixth year in a row. Salsman admitted getting more upsets this postseason like the one his team achieved Tuesday will be difficult. But he likes how his team is playing.

"Everybody's told them for the entire year that they're not up to it. And I think they've just kind of put it on their back and said, 'We're Lexington Catholic,'" Salsman said. "I've told them from the very beginning it's a marathon, not a sprint. And we seem to be sprinting here in the last mile of the marathon. So I hope we're hitting our peak right about the right time."

Jared Peck: 859-488-2883, @HLpreps

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• SRC. First quarter technical review violation of the local cadmium limit. IPL0218664 Feb 21 2025

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