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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

BLOOMFIELD - The Dexter Bearcats set out with a goal during their contest against Holcomb: hold Jamie Massey to half of his 32 point total from the night before. With a solid defensive performance in the paint from Jake Lee and Tyler Miller, the 'Cats did just that in a 61-56 victory.

"We tried to front him and back him all night," DHS head coach Rob Nichols said after the game. "We knew he had that big 32 point game last night, and we wanted to try to cut that in half tonight. He's a good player, and for the most part I thought Jake Lee did a good job of not giving him position down low."

The 'Cats maintained a lead throughout the first quarter, but the Hornets were able to pull within one midway through the frame. A steal from Chase Young led to a quick bucket for Jordan Fitts to push the Bearcats to a 13-10 advantage after the first.

Brad Potts dropped in a 12-footer to open the second quarter, but it didn't stop the Hornets from pulling within one again late in the second. A three point play from D.J. Dowdy and a deep three from Cody Neldon put the 'Cats on top by five, 28-23, heading into halftime.

Patrick Skelton scored Holcomb's first four points of the third quarter, but the 'Cats were

able to exploit the Hornets' 1-3-1 zone for a three pointer from Miller to get a 35-30 lead. Neldon made a freak-show assist to Potts - the sophomore drove the lane and was tripped up; during the fall, he blindly passed the ball over his right shoulder to Potts, who was directly behind him - to put the 'Cats on top 39-31 at the end of the third.

The Hornets fought back during the fourth quarter and scored a game-high 25 points, but a three from Young and two more from Miller were enough to seal the 61-56 victory for DHS.

Poor free-throw shooting continues to plague the 'Cats in their third-straight contest at 50% or less, and Nichols noted it as an area of concern moving forward.

"We made some big shots against that 1-3-1, especially with Tyler Miller down in the corner. At the same time, we need to make a few more free throws down the stretch," he said. "They're a very good team. They're going to beat a lot of people, and they have a good chance to go pretty far in Class 3."

"I think we played better than we played the last two or three games," Nichols continued. "We gave up a few too many offensive rebounds, but we were focusing so much on Massey that a few times we didn't have anyone there to block out on the weak side. You take him away, you give something up." Miller led Dexter with 16 points; Lee and Fitts were the only other Bearcats in double-figures with 11 points apiece.

The Hornets were paced by Skelton with 20; Ryan Reeves added 15, while Massey was held to just 13 points.

The Hornets will move on to face Hayti in the fifth-place bracket at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday. The Bearcats advance to the Championship Bracket semifinals, where they will face the top-seeded Kennett Indians.

"It'll be a different team than what we played tonight," Nichols said. "They're a little more fast-paced and guard oriented. It'll definitely be a big challenge for us, but it's one that I hope we're ready for."

Tipoff is set for 6:00 p.m.

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