

Hanna's shot lifts Prairie at buzzer

Written by Jim Ecker

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Jace Hanna showed Tuesday night that he can race 80 feet in less than four seconds when he has to.

So did James Moses.

Hanna drove the length of the court in the final seconds and hit a floater as time expired to give Cedar Rapids Prairie a dramatic 55-53 victory over Mount Pleasant in the Prairie gym.

Moments after Hanna hit his winning bucket, Moses flew out of his chair and raced around the court to celebrate the victory with his players and Prairie students. Moses moved almost as quickly as he did 20 years ago when he starred for the Iowa Hawkeyes.

"Don't let this big body fool you," he said with a big smile after the victory.

Prairie trailed by 10 points with 2:19 left, but the Hawks turned up the heat, hit clutch shots and caught a break when Mount Pleasant missed four of five free throws.

Matt MacDougall tied the game for Prairie, 53-53, with a 17-foot jumper with 29 seconds left. Jordan Ashton missed a shot for Mount Pleasant and Hanna grabbed the rebound, but he fell to the floor and was called for traveling with 4.7 seconds left.

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Prairie freshman Bryce Meeker deflected the inbounds pass and Hanna grabbed the ball, roughly 80 feet from his own basket. He covered the ground in a hurry.

Hanna eluded defenders, drove down the lane and deftly tossed the ball in the bucket as the horn sounded. "I just pushed it as fast as I could," he said. "It was close."

Moses hesitated for a second, wanting to make sure the basket was good.

"I looked around at the referees and they didn't wave it off," Moses said. "Once I saw the ball go through the net, I felt like the players. I had to run and cheer."

Mount Pleasant blasted Prairie last year, 70-34, but the Hawks closed that 36-point bulge Tuesday night and collected their third victory of the season, matching their total from last season when they finished with a 3-19 record.

"It's a big step," said MacDougall, who scored 17 points. "Last year we lost to them pretty handily. That alone shows how much we've been improving."

Mount Pleasant finished 23-3 last season and reached the semifinals of the Class 3A state tournament. The Panthers (3-1) graduated all five of their starters, but Ashton and two 6-foot-7 bruisers returned from that ballclub.

Mount Pleasant is ranked sixth in the Class 3A poll.

"I think it was a great win for our program," Hanna said. "It shows we can play with anybody. Even though they're 3A, they're a great 3A team. Hopefully we can build off this one."

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Prairie trailed, 38-24, midway through the third period before mounting its furious comeback. The Hawks sliced the 14-point deficit to seven points, fell back by 10 and then outscored Mount Pleasant 13-1 down the stretch after trailing 52-42 with 2:19 left.

"Two minutes is a lot of time," said Moses, in his second year of rebuilding the Hawks.

"These kids, they fought," he said. "And that's what's so beautiful about it. It was just a beautiful ending."

Ashton led Mount Pleasant with 22 points. Nick Lyon, a 6-foot-7 senior, collected 14 points.

MOUNT PLEASANT (53): Dalton Conrad 0 0-0 0, Cameron Frank 3 1-2 7, Jordan Ashton 6 8-8 22, Blake Vandenberg 3 2-6 8, Nick Lyon 6 2-6 14, Connor Shull 1 0-0 2, Ryan Hanna 0 0-0 0. Totals 19 13-22 53.

PRAIRIE (55): Jacob Aune 3 1-2 8, Brooks Kehoe 3 0-0 8, Jace Hanna 4 2-2 11, Thomas Eilers 1 0-2 2, Matt MacDougall 8 0-1 17, Kentral Smith 1 0-0 3, Bryce Meeker 1 0-0 2, Demetrius Harper 1 0-2 2, Tyler Mouglin 0 0-0 0, Garrett Rasmussen 1 0-0 2, Mitchell Adams 0 0-0 0. Totals 23 3-9 55.

Halftime - Mount Pleasant 29, Prairie 23. 3-point goals - Mount Pleasant 2 (Ashton 2), Prairie 6 (Kehoe 2, Aune 1, Hanna 1, MacDougal 1, Smith 1).