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Basketball Basketball Stories

Zach Norcia's passion drives Leigh through CCS

By Chris Jackson - February 21, 2022

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Zach Norcia makes a play in Leigh's win over Independence. Chris Jackson / Staff Photo

Leigh junior point guard Zach Norcia loves this game too much to let anything stop him.

Over recent times, Norcia has dealt with various injuries. Knee problems. Shin splints – this one especially this year. But Norcia plays through it.

Basketball is a love he does not want to stop. And he wants to win. Bring joy to his teammates.

Everything he can do, he will do.

"It's kind of a give and take," Norcia said. "I love it so much. I feel some pain, but it's nothing compared to winning, all that joy that comes with being with a team and stuff like that."

With Norcia as one of the leaders, Leigh is winning and keeps advancing in the Central Coast Section playoffs.

Last year, Norcia averaged 11.4 points on a 57% clip, alongside 4.4 assists and 3.3 rebounds, as the Longhorns went 10 in the abbreviated spring slate while reaching the CCS Division II semifinals.

One season later, Norcia is posting 12.6 points per game, plus 4.4 assists and 1.9 steals. He has scored 20-plus points twice, including 23 versus Branham, and produced seven-plus steals four times, with a season-best of 10 against Pacific Grove.

The Longhorns are in the CCS Division II quarterfinals and face Lynbrook for a trip to the semifinals at 7 p.m. Tuesday.

"I love to get my teammates involved," Norcia said. "I think the fact that we've had so many different players have big games and stuff like that – I think that's been good as a point guard knowing that I can get everybody involved. I think personally I've been pretty happy with how I'm playing. Obviously I'd like to put up more numbers, more points, more assists, stuff like that, but overall I've been pretty happy."

Where Norcia saw the most growth is in his shooting.

Although the offseason was shortened because of the later spring 2021 season, he put up 500 shots a day during the summer and was enhancing his skills on the AAU circuit.

Leadership skills – which he began really garnering in middle school with leadership – are growing, too.

"I thought any team I was ever on I'm always a leader," Norcia said. "I always try to get people better. I study the game. I talk to people about it, so I know a lot about the game and I try to make sure everybody on our team is on the same page."

Obtaining a scholarship is the dream for Norcia, whose work ethic, instilled from family, drives him. They give so much to him. So he wants to pay them back.

Norcia is not picky about where he goes to school. A Christian University is preferable. He loves the small-school feel.

And Norcia said he's always been looking at the Coast Guard Academy and a military school. Service is steeped in his family's history with grandparents and uncles.

"It's always been something that I'm passionate about, our country," Norcia said.

Studying kinesiology and sports medicine are also big interests.

"Since last season in AAU I've been dealing with knee issues and now shin splints that I'm still playing through," Norcia said. "And I learned a lot about it. I went on YouTube. I talked to a lot of doctors. And I really sparked my interest, and even before that during COVID I got really into lifting and how the muscles work and all that stuff."

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