

Flash Sale! Unlimited Digital Access – Start Today for \$1

Advertisement

Brought to you by **Le Moyne College** ⓘ

Central New York's real-life 'Troy Bolton' juggles the high school musical and hoops

Updated: Feb. 17, 2025, 8:37 a.m. | Published: Feb. 17, 2025, 8:30 a.m.



Central Square junior Preston Lacey, center, in front of his boys basketball teammates after they watched him perform in his first musical, "Hadestown." Jennifer Schantz



By [Julianna Schwindt](#) | [Contributing Writer](#)

Central Square junior [Preston Lacey](#) peeked through the crack in the backstage door and did a double take.

It was the opening night of Paul V. Moore High School's "Hadestown." When the varsity basketball player looked out into the crowd, he saw one of his teammates sitting in the fourth row.

"I turn to my castmate and I go, 'What is he doing here?' And then I just scanned the row and my whole team was sitting there," Lacey said.

Opening night, Feb. 8, was a snow day, but the entire varsity basketball team, coaches included, showed up to watch Lacey in his first musical.

Initially, he felt nervous, but by the end, he was excited that his teammates cared enough to come out and watch him.



Central Square basketball players and coaches at the opening night of teammate Preston Lacey's musical, Hadestown. Jennifer Schantz

“It makes you feel wanted,” Lacey said. “It’s definitely not any of their cups of tea, a musical or drama club in general. So just to see that they were able to come out and sit for two and a half hours to watch me was really amazing.”

Assistant coach Kevin Madison had the idea for the whole team to go see Lacey and reached out to the musical’s director, Jennifer Schantz, to reserve tickets.

“I was completely shocked,” Schantz said. “The whole catch line, our emails back and forth was, ‘Troy Bolton lives in Central Square.’”

Much like Troy Bolton, played by actor Zach Efron, from “High School Musical,” Lacey had to balance basketball and the show. He’d leave musical rehearsals early to get to basketball practice, rehearsing for two hours and practicing basketball for hours after. He made it to every basketball game and every practice.

Up until the last few weeks before opening night, head coach Beth Bonin didn’t even know he was in the musical.

"I kind of was scared to let my coach know that I was in the musical, afraid that it was going to affect my playing time," Lacey said. "I was kind of realizing that it was unfair that I was skipping so much of the musical just for basketball. So I went and talked to my coach and she was way easier on it than I thought she was going to be. She had no problem with it whatsoever."

Lacey and his castmates got together on snow days to rehearse without Schantz ever asking them to.

"Preston wanted it so badly that it didn't matter if he was missing rehearsal or if he was missing practice, he was going to take and make up whatever he had to on either end," Schantz said.

Although Lacey didn't always get the playing time he wanted on the court, he worked as hard as he could to make the team better. Lacey played basketball most of his life, but he said this season has been his favorite. That's because of the support he and his teammates gave each other.

"He's very respected by the players," Bonin said. "You could tell that just by them attending the musical and not even asking any second questions about that. He never has bad body language, whether he misses a shot or even if it's somebody else giving a bad pass, he's just always really positive."

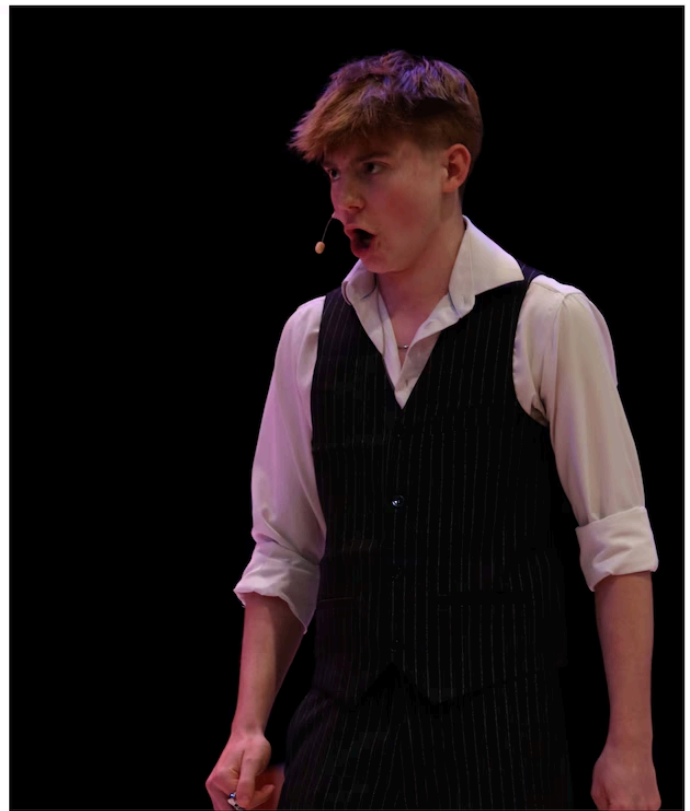
Lacey plays the titular character, Hades, in the musical. Though he's just 5 feet, 8 inches (on a good day, he said), his booming voice carries into the audience. Bonin and the rest of the team were shocked when they heard him sing.

"Somebody who's always smiling, you're never going to get anything that's going to sound remotely like Hades, right?" Schantz said. "To hear the sound come out of his mouth it just was the most beautiful low bass sound. Just serious command of the whole stage."

Lacey and the rest of the cast will perform again from Feb. 27 through March 1.

It would be a long shot for the RedHawks (5-15) to make it out of the opening rounds of the Class AA sectional playoffs as the likely lowest seed, but if they do, the team could have a quarterfinal game on one of those nights.

Much like Troy Bolton, Lacey could be forced to choose between the stage and the court.



Central Square junior Preston Lacey performs in his first musical. He is also a member of the RedHawks boys basketball team. Provided photo

MORE BOYS BASKETBALL

Final state boys basketball rankings: Section III team ends year at the top

Live scoreboard, recaps for Sunday's high school basketball state championship playoffs (2 games)

Live scoreboard, recaps for Saturday's high school basketball state championship playoffs (2 games)

Live scoreboard, recaps for Friday's high school basketball state championship playoffs (2 games)

Boys basketball state semifinals preview: Meet the 2 Section III teams playing for a state crown
